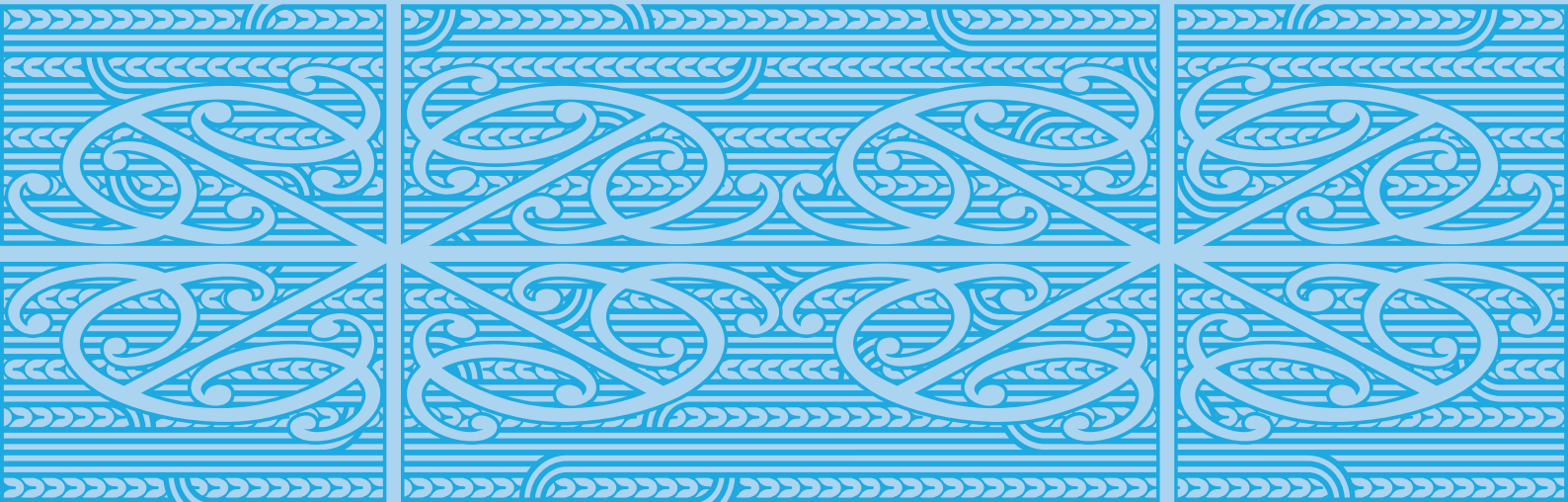


The Māori Achievement Collaborative Evaluation report

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The Māori Achievement Collaborative

Evaluation report

Jackson Rowe-Williams and Nicola Bright

2026

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He wāhinga kōrero | Foreword

KI TE WHEIAO, KI TE AO MĀRAMA

Foreword—Tumu Whakarae, Te Arahou o Aotearoa Trust

Ka tau aku tapuae ki te papa nekeneke o te marae e pae nei—my footsteps descend upon this threshold with gratitude, with hope, and with a profound sense of responsibility.

I write the foreword to this research report, reflecting on the past and with a sense of renewal for the future. We pause to honour the journey that has brought us here, and turn our faces with confidence toward what lies ahead.

The Māori Achievement Collaborative (MAC) emerged from a simple but revolutionary premise: that Māori educational success as Māori” would become a reality only when every school principal truly understood, in their heart and in their mind, what that meant. Not as a policy directive. Not as a compliance exercise. But as a deep, personal, and professional transformation.

For 13 years, MAC grew into something extraordinary. A kaupapa by principals, for principals, unlike anything else in Aotearoa’s education landscape, MAC is grounded in *Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori*. It walks tumuaki through a journey of genuine cultural conscientisation, building school principals’ capacity to lead kura in which every tamaiti can thrive.

The kaupapa spread across the motu, reaching into communities large and small, urban and rural, taking root wherever a principal was willing to ask: What must I change in myself, so that my school can change for our tamariki? Culturally sustainable leadership is as important now as it ever was, and this kaupapa remains the most powerful pathway we have to make it a reality in every kura across Aotearoa.

The MAC kaupapa, whakapapa, relationships, mana, and responsibilities now sit with Te Arahou o Aotearoa Trust. This is not a departure from the original MAC. It is its next section.

Te Arahou o Aotearoa Trust, a not-for-profit charitable trust, was established to deliver MAC in early 2025. The mana of the MAC kaupapa could never be measured in profit margins or commercial return. It had to live within a framework grounded in service, in equity, and in an unwavering commitment to tamariki. Like *Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori*, the sacred house at the heart of our kaupapa, Te Arahou o Aotearoa Trust is built pou by pou. Ngākau Kaitiaki, the custodianship of what we protect. Ngākau Manaaki, the hospitality with which we welcome all who enter. Ngākau Ora, the commitment to the life and wellbeing of every learner. The Trust was built to be that whare, a home that holds its own mana, stands on its own foundation, and endures.

Central to our purpose is the conviction that every tumuaki in Aotearoa, regardless of the size or location of their kura, deserves equitable access to transformational professional learning. The not-for-profit model is not simply a governance structure. It is a statement of values. The quality and cost of professional learning a principal receives should be accessible and equitable. That is the commitment Te Arahou o Aotearoa carries into the future.

We sincerely acknowledge the support of the Ministry of Education over the past 13 years. The Ministry recognised the value of this mahi early on—that changing the hearts and minds of principals was one of the most powerful levers for improving outcomes for ākonga Māori. They backed that belief with sustained funding and support. When the Ministry funding contract concluded at the end of 2025, it marked the end of a significant and valued chapter. Te Arahou o Aotearoa Trust was, however, well placed and ready to step forward as the organisation to carry the MAC kaupapa into its future. That this kaupapa continues is a testament to the strength of the whakapapa that has endured for 13 years. The Ministry of Education should stand proudly alongside every tumuaki, every kaihoe mātauranga, and every tamaiti whose learning journey has been positively reshaped by this mahi.

We acknowledge the New Zealand Principals' Federation and Te Akatea, the Māori Principals' Association, for the years they served as kaitiaki and fund holders for this kaupapa. We honour the Te Arahou o Aotearoa Trust Board members, kaihoe mātauranga and kaimahi, past and present, who have given this kaupapa its life and its mana. You walked tumuaki through the tomokanga of new understanding and guided them through each pou of *Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori*. This kaupapa bears your fingerprints, and we honour and thank you.

We extend a warm, open invitation to the Government to continue supporting the MAC kaupapa in the future, alongside Te Arahou o Aotearoa Trust. The door is open. The kaupapa is proven. The evidence of success is before you in this research. The Trust's board and kaihoe mātauranga are proceeding with optimism because they know the MAC kaupapa drives down educational inequities and allows tamariki Māori to truly succeed as Māori.

The whakapapa of this mahi is too strong, the responsibility too great, and the aroha for our tamariki too deep for this kaupapa to ever stand still.

Ka puta ki te wheiao, ki te ao mārama.

Mauri ora.

Leanne Otene

Tumu Whakarae | National Director

Te Arahou o Aotearoa Trust

Mihi | Acknowledgements

Tēnei rā te mihi ki tō tatou Pītau Mātauranga, ko koe te kaihautu o te waka e hoe ana ki ngā tōpito o te ākonga i ngā kaupapa o te ao Māori, te reo me ōna tikanga. Ko koe e ārahi ana i tō taua ki te pakanga mō ngā mātapono o Te Tiriti o Waitangi ki roto i ngā kura. Ko koe e akiaki nei i te hunga poari, tumuaki me ngā kaiako o ngā kura ki te whai i te ara hou, he ara tika mō ngā ākonga. He mihi aroha, he mihi rangatira kia koe e Hoana.

Over the past 13 years, I have had the privilege of walking alongside Hoana Pearson as part of a Māori Achievement Collaborative (MAC) kaupapa that has challenged systems, transformed thinking, and strengthened the aspirations we hold for our tamariki and mokopuna across the motu. It is difficult to capture in words the depth of gratitude and admiration felt for Hoana, because her contribution reaches far beyond leadership in the conventional sense. Her work has always been anchored in manaakitanga, aroha, and whakapapa, in service, and in an unwavering commitment to the wellbeing and success of Māori learners and their whānau.

Hoana carries with her a whakapapa of leadership that is both inherited and embodied. Her mana does not come from title or position, but from the way she walks in the world with her ngākau Māori, ngākau manaaki, ngākau kaitiaki, ngākau ora, ngākau aroha, ngākau māhaki, ngākau whānau, for people. She has always understood that leadership is not about standing above others, but about standing with them, often in the hardest spaces, holding firm to kaupapa when the pressures to compromise become overwhelming. She leads in a way that reminds us of our obligations to each other as Māori—to nurture, to protect, to uplift, and to leave pathways stronger for those who come after us.

Over the years, I witnessed many moments that revealed the true depth of who Hoana is. I saw her enter rooms where Māori aspirations were questioned or misunderstood, and yet she remained steadfast and composed, never wavering from the belief that our children deserve to be seen, valued, and educated through the fullness of who they are. I saw her hold space for principals, kaiako, whānau, and communities who were searching for direction and reassurance. I saw her challenge systems with grace, but also with the fierce determination of someone who knew the cost of silence and inaction. There were moments when the kaupapa was fragile—times when the work demanded extraordinary resilience, when resources were stretched, when the burden of carrying Māori aspirations within mainstream systems felt immense. Through all of this, Hoana remained a tāhuhu (spine of strength) of the vision. She protected the integrity of the MAC kaupapa with the heart of a warrior. Not a warrior driven by ego or conflict, but one grounded in responsibility and aroha.



Te Rōpū Pou Toki: The architects of Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori



Te Arahou o Aotearoa—Māori Achievement Collaborative Whānau, 2022

She understood that this work was bigger than any individual. It was about creating transformational change for generations of Māori learners.

One of Hoana's greatest gifts to this kaupapa is the emergence and nurturing of *Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori*. This framework stands as a profound expression of mātauranga Māori and educational transformation. It gives language, structure, and meaning to what many Māori have always known that our tamariki flourish when their identity, language, culture, and humanity are honoured and protected within education. The last bastion of Maoridom is the marae. *Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori* is more than a framework; it is a living expression of hope, healing, belonging, and potential. It challenges schools and systems to move beyond tokenism and towards genuine transformation grounded in relationship, wairua, and cultural integrity.

For many kura, *Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori* has become a pou that helps guide both reflection and action. It reminds us that Māori achievement cannot be measured solely through narrow academic outcomes, but through the wellbeing, confidence, identity, connectedness, and future pathways of our young people. The framework invites educators to see Māori learners not as problems to be solved, but as taonga to be nurtured. That shift in thinking is one of the most significant contributions this kaupapa has made to education in Aotearoa.

The transition of this mahi into the hands of Te Arahou o Aotearoa Trust marks an important chapter in this journey. Transitions of this kind are never easy, particularly when a kaupapa has been carried with such mana, care, and sacrifice over many years. Yet Hoana approached this transition with the same wisdom and foresight that has defined her leadership throughout. She understood that for kaupapa Māori to endure, they must continue to evolve and find safe hands to carry them forward. In many ways, this transition reflects the very essence of rangatiratanga—ensuring the kaupapa remains strong, protected, and capable of serving future generations.

As Hoana now steps into leadership as Chairperson, I hold deep hope for what this next chapter will bring. I believe her leadership will continue to anchor Te Arahou o Aotearoa Trust in values that matter most, whakapapa, manaakitanga, integrity, courage, and an uncompromising commitment to Māori success as Māori. Her leadership offers stability and vision at a time when education continues to face enormous challenges and opportunities. More importantly, it offers reassurance to kura, whānau, and communities that this kaupapa remains firmly grounded in the aspirations of our people.

Under Hoana's guidance, Te Arahou o Aotearoa Trust will continue to grow the collective strength of schools and leaders across the motu, helping them create environments where Māori learners can thrive unapologetically as themselves. I hope more educators come to understand that culturally sustaining education is not an "add-on," but essential to the future of Aotearoa. I hope our tamariki and mokopuna continue to see themselves reflected with pride, dignity, and possibility within their learning journeys.

Most of all, I hope Hoana knows the profound impact she has had on so many lives. Much of leadership happens quietly, often without recognition, in the unseen moments of sacrifice, advocacy, encouragement, and care. But the legacy of this work lives on in the hearts of those kaihoe mātauranga that delivered our kaupapa, the schools she has transformed, and the generations of Māori learners who will benefit because she chose to stand firm in this kaupapa.

E te mana wahine, e te pītau mātauranga, pou tokomanawa o tēnei kaupapa, tēnei mātou e mihi atu nei ki a koe. Tō māia, to kaha, tō manawanui e hāpai ana te kaupapa o te arahou mō ngā tātarakihi, ngā tamariki o te motu.

On behalf of your MAC whānau we thank you for your courage, your wisdom, your compassion, and your unwavering belief in our people. The seeds you have planted will continue to grow for generations to come.

Quality Service to Māori—Hoana Pearson QSM

Heke mai he kawa ora,

Damon Ritai

Tumu Whakarito | CEO

Te Kāhui o Taranaki Trust

Further acknowledgements by Te Wāhanga—NZCER

E ngā rau rangatira e kawe nei i tēnei kaupapa, e kore te puna o mihi e mimiti.

Te Wāhanga would like to acknowledge all those involved in this evaluation. First and foremost, our thanks go to the MAC team. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work alongside such a passionate and committed group of people. Your contributions in wānanga and your careful reviews of the numerous iterations of the report were much appreciated.

We extend our warm thanks to all those who participated in interviews, including MAC facilitators, key people involved in the development of MAC, and the many tumuaki who have been part of the kaupapa. Your stories provided much of the evidence that informed this evaluation and your personal reflections about the impact of MAC have made the final report so much richer.

Finally, our thanks go to the wider NZCER team involved in this project, including Hinemaia Priestley for her assistance with participant interviews, Sheridan McKinley and Sally Boyd for reviewing drafts and providing advice, David Coblenz for the quantitative analysis, and the editing and publishing team.

He whakarāpopototanga | Executive summary

Evaluation context and purpose

Te Arahou o Aotearoa—the Māori Achievement Collaborative (MAC) is a nationwide, grassroots kaupapa focused on changing the hearts and minds of principals. Established in 2013, MAC emerged as a collective response to the education system’s failure to meet its Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations and provide equitable opportunities for ākonga Māori to achieve educational and cultural success on their own terms.

Grounded in kaupapa Māori, critical theory, and decolonising and Tiriti-informed approaches, MAC supports tumuaki to lead with cultural confidence by enabling shifts in leadership practices that foster the conditions in which ākonga Māori can thrive and achieve success as Māori. Its goal is long-term, systemic change within the education sector.

MAC commissioned NZCER to evaluate the kaupapa in 2025, during the final phase of its Ministry-funded cycle. The evaluation documented MAC’s development, examined its contribution to changes in leadership practice, teaching practices, and wider school culture, explored outcomes for ākonga, whānau, and communities, and identified lessons for system-level change. It’s Māori-centred, mixed-method approach drew on interviews, workshops, wānanga, survey data, and MAC reporting.

Overall evaluation conclusion

The evaluation found that MAC provides a clear pathway through which changes in leadership practice contribute to changes in school environments and outcomes for ākonga Māori, students more broadly, whānau, and wider school communities.

The overall evaluative determination regarding the contribution of MAC towards outcomes for MAC schools sits at Te Rea, reflecting strong and consistent evidence of change across multiple areas, with changes becoming sustained and embedded in everyday practice. Evidence from different sources aligns and demonstrates clear, meaningful impact for tumuaki and staff (schools).

Overall, we would place the contribution of MAC towards changes in communities, structures, and systems at Te Aka, with evidence of some spread to new schools and leaders and organisations (outside of MAC schools), and many schools having authentic partnerships with whānau, hapū, and iwi.

The kaupapa is particularly valuable because of its “ripple effect”: learning initially centred on tumuaki extends to leadership teams, kaiako, ākonga, whānau, schools, and communities, and often travels with leaders into new kura and roles.

The strongest evidence concerns changes in leadership practice and school environments. Positive outcomes for ākonga Māori were consistently associated with these changes, while outcomes for whānau and non-Māori students were also evident. Although these shifts in outcomes cannot be solely attributed to MAC, the evidence indicates MAC has made an important contribution.

How the MAC kaupapa enables change

MAC supports change in leadership practice and school environments through the relational and non-judgemental nature of the kaupapa. Its critical success factors are:

- facilitation based on aroha and trust that provides both challenge and support
- supportive environments where leaders can engage openly and honestly
- an approach that starts with the needs of tumuaki and schools rather than being a set programme
- learning between peers that creates a sense of whānau and collective responsibility
- ongoing mentoring, reflection, and critical dialogue
- experiential learning connected to people, places, and spaces that supports shifts in perspective.

Facilitation is a central driver of change. MAC facilitators are trusted experts, mentors, and role models grounded in te ao Māori and the realities of school leadership. They constructively challenge tumuaki to confront deficit thinking and question assumptions about equity, identity, and culture. This enables tumuaki to move beyond surface-level understanding and develop the confidence and courage required to enact and sustain change. This reflects the premise that schools will not change unless the principal does.

Changes in leadership practice

The evaluation identified a pattern of change beginning with shifts in leaders' understanding, confidence, identity, and disposition and extending into changes in practice and influence. Leadership practices associated with MAC include enhanced:

- critical conscious and courageous leadership
- awareness of personal identity, power, and positionality
- culturally grounded, values-driven leadership
- valuing of Māori identity and knowledge of te ao Māori
- collective responsibility and peer support
- support of change and learning in others (the ripple effect).

Leaders reported becoming more confident and willing to challenge the status quo, model culturally sustaining practice, and influence others. For tumuaki Māori, this often included greater confidence to lead as Māori. For tauhiwi leaders, it included increased humility, allyship, and recognition that responsibility for Māori success must be shared. These shifts strengthened collective responsibility to challenge deficit narratives and reduce reliance on individual Māori staff.

Changes within schools

Through its focus on leadership, MAC contributes to changes in school culture, pedagogy, and, to a lesser extent, systems and structures. Positive changes were most evident in:

- school culture, values, and collective responsibility
- increased use of te reo Māori and tikanga Māori in everyday school life
- more culturally sustaining pedagogy and localised curriculum
- stronger relationships with whānau, hapū, iwi, and mana whenua
- changes to strategic planning, governance, policies, and decision making.

Participants commonly described schools as shifting from symbolic or superficial engagement with te ao Māori towards practice that was more embedded and locally grounded. The findings suggest that leadership shifts are associated first with changes in school culture and pedagogy, and then with changes in systems and structures.

Outcomes for ākonga, whānau, and communities

The most consistently reported outcomes were for ākonga Māori. Participants described increased pride in Māori identity, belonging, cultural connection, confidence, engagement, wellbeing, and participation. These outcomes are significant in their own right and should not be treated only as a means to conventional academic achievement.

School-reported attendance and learning-progress data showed positive movement, while survey respondents reported improved engagement, confidence, participation, and educational success. These measures do not establish cause and effect but indicate that MAC was one plausible contributor among wider influences.

For non-Māori ākonga, benefits included increased engagement with te ao Māori, cultural understanding, participation in te reo Māori and tikanga-based practices, and connection to place and identity. For whānau and communities, participants described stronger relationships with schools, increased involvement and trust, stronger connections with hapū, iwi, mana whenua, and kaumātua, and shared cultural pride.

Wider lessons and future considerations

The evaluation highlights three central lessons:

1. Skilled facilitation and sustained engagement are essential—significant personal, professional, and organisational change is unlikely to result from one-off professional development.
2. Networks of relationships are critical to maintaining courageous and culturally sustaining leadership practice.
3. Change occurs through a ripple effect across schools, communities, and leadership contexts.

The findings indicate the importance of protecting the kaupapa Māori, relational, and facilitator-led foundations of MAC; maintaining continuity and duration of engagement; sustaining peer networks and support for experienced participants; and investing in facilitator capability and succession. Further longitudinal and case-study research could strengthen understanding of how changes become embedded and contribute to longer-term outcomes.

1. He kupu whakataki | Introduction

E kore au e ngaro, he kākano i ruia mai i Rangiātea

I will never be lost, for I am a seed sown in Rangiātea

1.1 A brief description of the Māori Achievement Collaborative

Te Arahou o Aotearoa—the Māori Achievement Collaborative (MAC) is a nationwide, grassroots kaupapa that has provided professional development in educational leadership to primary, intermediate, and secondary school principals for more than a decade. Founded in 2013, MAC is a highly regarded values-based, relationship-driven kaupapa focused on changing the hearts and minds of principals. It has supported principals to grow personally and professionally so they can make transformative and sustainable shifts in their leadership practice. Since its inception, MAC has nurtured communities of principals, senior leaders, leaders, teachers, ākonga, school boards, whānau, hapū, and iwi to grow and work together to realise the vision that:

Māori students are engaging in relevant, authentic, and culturally affirming contexts, enjoying and achieving educational and cultural success as Māori. (MAC, 2024, p. 12)

The kaupapa is underpinned by the following core values:

- Te Whānau—Relationships and connections
- Te Pono—Truth, trust, and respect
- Te Āwhina—Care, support, and safety
- Te Kotahitanga—Unity and collaboration
- Te Wero—Challenge to critically reflect and change practice
- Te Tika—Moral purpose
- Te Māia—Courage.

Over time, MAC’s work has helped foster school environments that support Māori students to achieve educational success as Māori. These efforts have also yielded broader benefits, with non-Māori students experiencing positive educational outcomes alongside their Māori peers, while schools have developed stronger connections with whānau and local communities.

1.2 Background and purpose of the evaluation

Background

MAC was established to develop a critical mass of effective school leaders capable of challenging the systems, practices, and assumptions that have contributed to inequitable educational outcomes for Māori (Santamaría et al., 2016, p. 100). The kaupapa was designed to support Māori and non-Māori principals in English-medium schools to strengthen culturally affirming leadership practices and learning environments.

The original goals of MAC were to:

- provide an education that enhances what it means to be Māori
- ensure Māori students have access to te ao Māori—access to language, culture, marae, tikanga, and resources
- guarantee the absolute right for an education that fits Māori learners
- promote self-learning, strong secure relationships, cultural identity, and whānau-centred practice that is valued as much as academic achievement (Pearson et al., 2014).

Previous evaluation

The first evaluation of MAC was undertaken within its first 3 years of operation by the Cross-Cultural Research Collaborative (CCRC) (Santamaría et al., 2016). At that time, MAC principals were focused on transforming school culture to create environments that would better realise the aspirations of the kaupapa.

The CCRC evaluation measured MAC’s progress against educational and leadership frameworks, including *Ka Hikitia* (Ministry of Education, 2009, 2013) and applied critical leadership, and identified the types of leadership actions necessary for shifting school culture for Māori to succeed as Māori.

The findings suggested shifts were occurring in leaders’ practice “from responding to student’s culture to making deliberate choices that result in actions and practices that positively impact upon and change school culture” (Santamaría et al., 2016, pp. 99–100). The evaluation also found evidence of shifts in schools that “reflect a Māori world view as the norm, rather than the exception, even in mainstream schools where there are relatively low numbers of Māori.” (Santamaría et al., 2016, p. 100).

A subsequent snapshot report of the evaluation (Webber, 2017) identified six key leadership practices emerging from the evaluation that supported Māori success as Māori:

- collective leadership
- collective agency, efficacy, and support
- esteeming Māori identity, knowledge, and belief systems
- whānau, hapū, and iwi leadership in schools
- culturally responsive pedagogy
- critically conscious and courageous leadership (Webber, 2017).

Webber’s (2017) analysis further suggested that positive growth in National Standards Achievement by Māori students from 2013 to 2015 was related to the impact MAC had had on school leaders and subsequent shifts in school culture.

According to 2015 Ministry of Education National Standards Achievement data for Writing (English medium), Māori students in MAC schools were “collectively achieving at least 3% ahead of the rest of the country” (Webber, 2017). Furthermore, between 2013 and 2015, these schools saw steady annual growth in the number of Māori students meeting or exceeding standards, with a 3% increase in Reading (English medium) and a 2% increase in Maths (English medium) (Webber, 2017).

The CCRC concluded that MAC “shows promise in terms of promoting practice that benefits Māori, all learners, schools, and their communities ...” (Santamaría et al., 2016, p. 100), and described MAC as “a culturally situated, culturally appropriate, and Māori-centric group of Māori and non-Māori principals committed to shifting their own leadership practice and school culture from what is to what can be” (Santamaría et al., 2016, p. 99).

Current evaluation

MAC commissioned NZCER to conduct an evaluation of the kaupapa in 2025, during the final phase of its last Ministry of Education-funded cycle. MAC chose to commission the evaluation independently, recognising the importance of documenting the whakapapa of the kaupapa and its long-term impact on principals and their communities, while building on the findings of the earlier CCRC evaluation.

The evaluation adopted a Māori-centred mixed-methods approach, drawing on both quantitative and qualitative evidence to surface rich narratives of change over time and identify how the MAC kaupapa has contributed to shifts in leadership and teaching practices, school culture, and outcomes for ākonga Māori. In this Māori-centred approach to evaluation, enacting kaupapa Māori principles (L. T. Smith, 2021) ensured the mātauranga, perspectives, and experiences of Māori were central to all stages of the evaluation, privileging Māori perspectives and outcomes that are meaningful for Māori.

He Awa Whiria—the braided river metaphor (Macfarlane & Macfarlane, 2019; Macfarlane et al., 2015) provides a useful way of conceptualising Māori and Western knowledge as streams that are recognised as distinct yet complementary, flowing alongside one another and at times converging, while also maintaining space “for Kaupapa Māori research as a distinct stream” (Macfarlane & Macfarlane, 2019, p. 53). Where these knowledge streams converge, “the space created is one of learning, not assimilating” (Macfarlane & Macfarlane, 2019, p. 53). This framing is reflected in the integration of data from Māori and non-Māori involved in MAC and informed the design of the evaluation as well as the analysis and interpretation of findings.

The evaluation approach prioritises Te Tiriti o Waitangi, equity, Te Mana Raraunga: Principles of Māori Data Sovereignty (Te Mana Raraunga, 2018), and rangatiratanga. This approach was reflected in the ways NZCER worked with MAC and evaluation participants, and the ethical protocols around collection, use, and management of evaluation data.

Evaluation objectives

This evaluation traces the evolution of MAC over time focusing on examining the impact of MAC on leadership practice, school culture, and outcomes for ākonga Māori and the wider school community.

The objectives of the evaluation were to:

- document the development and evolution of MAC since its inception in 2013, including shifts in its design, structure, and delivery
- provide insight into MAC’s contribution to supporting culturally affirming leadership practice and equity-focused school development
- generate learning about the conditions, mechanisms, kaupapa and values, and success factors that enable systems change, and support MAC to improve outcomes for ākonga Māori and their whānau
- support accountability and inform planning and decision-making by assessing the alignment of MAC with key education priorities and frameworks (e.g., ERO indicators)
- contribute to system-level learning by identifying how MAC supports culturally grounded leadership, challenges monocultural practices, and fosters long-term structural change across the education system.

Key evaluation questions

The key evaluation questions (KEQs) were:

- KEQ 1: How has the Māori Achievement Collaborative developed over time?
- KEQ 2: What are the critical success factors underpinning the Māori Achievement Collaborative kaupapa?
- KEQ 3: What changes have occurred in school leaders' practice as a result of involvement in the Māori Achievement Collaborative?
- KEQ 4: What changes in schools, pedagogy, and teaching practice is the Māori Achievement Collaborative contributing to?
- KEQ 5: What outcomes have been observed for ākonga Māori, other students, whānau, and the wider school community, in terms of engagement, achievement, wellbeing, and cultural identity?
- KEQ 6: What lessons can be drawn from the development and implementation of the Māori Achievement Collaborative?

1.3 Data

This evaluation prioritised the collection and use of qualitative data to provide evidence of changes participants attributed to the MAC kaupapa. Across the qualitative evaluation activities, there were 45 instances of participation involving 34 unique individuals. This distinction reflects that some individuals contributed to more than one activity. The activities included a workshop ($n = 19$), tumuaki wānanga ($n = 15$), a MAC facilitator wānanga ($n = 8$), and key informant interviews ($n = 3$). The insights shared by tumuaki, facilitators, and key people involved in MAC provide a compelling narrative of impact.

Quantitative data—primarily from the 2025 MAC tumuaki survey administered by MAC ($n = 121$)—supports these findings by illustrating broader patterns across kura working with MAC facilitators. NZCER added questions to the survey that were specifically designed to address the key evaluation questions.

Where relevant, supplementary information is drawn from MAC's reporting to the Ministry of Education (MAC, 2026). This includes attendance and progress data collected from kura working with MAC facilitators across 2024 and 2025 ($n = 142$). These supplementary data provide additional context and to support the triangulation and interpretation of the evaluation findings.

A detailed description of the evaluation approach and methodology is provided in Appendix A. The written and illustrated narrative of the Theory of Change—*Te Huarahi Ako* for ākonga developed by MAC and presented on pages 1–16 of *Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori* (Pearson et al., 2022) is included in Appendix B.

Naming

Interview participants could choose whether to be named in the report. Participants who agreed to be identified are quoted by name; others are identified by role. In quote attribution, “tumuaki” refers to Māori principals and “principal” to non-Māori principals. Elsewhere, “tumuaki” is used collectively for all principals.

Within the writeup and analysis, the terms “ākonga Māori”, “non-Māori ākonga”, “whānau Māori”, and “non-Māori whānau” are used where it is important to distinguish between Māori and non-Māori. Where this distinction is not necessary, “ākonga” and “whānau” are used inclusively to refer to all learners and families.

Use of qualitative quantifiers in this report

Qualitative quantifiers (e.g., “some”, “most”, “almost all/all”) are used throughout the findings to indicate the relative prevalence of themes across participants (Table 1). These descriptors correspond to approximate percentage ranges based on the participants whose interview or wānanga data were included in the qualitative analysis ($n = 26$), including the tumuaki ($n = 15$), facilitator ($n = 8$), and key informant ($n = 3$) subgroups.

Where only one participant contributed a particular view, this is reported using the whole number (“one”) rather than a qualitative quantifier. Due to the small number of key informants ($n = 3$), qualitative quantifiers are not used for this group.

The ranges in are indicative and are used to support interpretation rather than provide precise quantitative measurement.

TABLE 1: Qualitative quantifiers

Quantifier	Range	Tumuaki (n=15)	Facilitators (n=8)	All participants (n=26)
One / A few	1–19%	1–2 participants	1 participant	1–5 participants
Some	20–49%	3–7 participants	2–3 participants	6–12 participants
Most	50–89%	8–13 participants	4–6 participants	13–23 participants
Almost all / All	90–100%	14–15 participants	7–8 participants	24–26 participants

1.4 Structure of the report

This report presents the findings of the evaluation and tells the story of the MAC kaupapa—its origins, its approach, and the changes in leadership practice it has contributed to over time.

Section 2 records the whakapapa of MAC, outlining its origins and the theoretical foundations that underpin how the kaupapa operates.

Section 3 focuses on the evaluation findings and presents sections aligned to each of the key evaluation questions. The section begins with an exploration of the critical success factors underpinning the MAC kaupapa, including the role of facilitation, relational learning environments, and collective leadership networks.

Subsequent sections examine the changes that have occurred in school leaders’ practice because of MAC (Section 4), and the ways these leadership shifts have influenced school culture, pedagogy, and teaching practice (Section 5). Section 6 explores the resulting outcomes observed for ākonga Māori, other students, adults, school staff, whānau, and wider school communities.

Finally, Section 7 reflects on the progress and impact of MAC over time. By identifying key lessons from the kaupapa, we consider how best to support culturally grounded leadership development across the broader education system and beyond.

2. Te whakapapa o te kaupapa | A history of the Māori Achievement Collaborative

The big thing is ... [tumuaki] feel really connected to each other, to us, and to what we are as a national collective ... they're doing it to change the future, nationally ... It's about ... 'bi-cultural' nation building.

(Hoana Pearson, Te Pītau Mātauranga, MAC)

This section describes how the Māori Achievement Collaborative has developed over the past 13 years. It traces MAC's whakapapa from its conceptual foundations and maps key points in its evolution over time, drawing on key documents and interviews with those involved in its establishment and early growth.

2.1 Origins of the Māori Achievement Collaborative kaupapa

Conceptual and theoretical foundations

MAC emerged as a collective response to the education system's failure to meet its obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi to provide equitable access and opportunities to support ākonga Māori to achieve cultural and academic success on their own terms (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 5). At the heart of the MAC kaupapa is a collective and relational approach to transforming leadership. This approach aims to raise critical awareness and inspire—in individuals and groups—a heightened passion for equity and the confidence and courage to recognise and disrupt deficit narratives about ākonga Māori.

MACs' vision of 'A Change in the Hearts and Minds of Principals' reflects an intention to foster collaboration and personal and professional growth leading to changes in individual school leadership practices aimed at Māori success. MACs have worked to create a critical mass of collective leadership so that positive change is sustainable and enduring and impacts on all members of a school community, staff, students, parents and whānau. (MAC, n.d.)

The approach is underpinned by an interwoven set of theoretical traditions that, together, position leadership development as a means of creating personal, institutional, and system change. Central to this approach is the understanding—rooted in critical theory—that educational inequity is produced and maintained through dominant belief systems, institutional norms, and inherited narratives about capability and deficit (Rubie-Davies & O'Regan, 2025; Walker, 2016). Within this framing, leadership development is not primarily about technical skill acquisition, but about shifting consciousness, assumptions, and ways of seeing (Dugan, 2024; Dugan & Humbles, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016; Lowery et al., 2023).

This understanding sits alongside kaupapa Māori theory, critical pedagogy, critical race perspectives, decolonising praxis, and relational approaches to system change (Santamaría et al., 2016). Across these traditions, educational change is both a pedagogical and political endeavour. It is a deeply relational process that demands critical examination of how power and knowledge are experienced and enacted in classrooms, past and present. These traditions inform MAC's emphasis on the re-shaping of leadership practice through relational trust, collective learning, and ongoing engagement.

A foundational element of this framing is Te Tiriti o Waitangi and its role in the Aotearoa New Zealand education system. Legislation came into play in 2020, aiming “to establish and regulate an education system that ... honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi” and provides equitable outcomes for all students (Bright et al., 2021, p. 14; Education and Training Act, 2020). At the time this was seen as a positive step towards the education system meeting its obligations to Māori. However, this commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi has since been removed through the 2025 amendment to the Act (Education and Training Amendment Act, 2025). Regardless of this change, many educational leaders, schools, and groups across Aotearoa New Zealand have stated their intention to continue to give effect to Te Tiriti (Bailey-McDowell, 2025).

Within MAC, Te Tiriti locates leadership practice within ongoing relations of power, accountability, and obligation. Leadership is never neutral—it is enacted within a context where Māori educational success is both an equity imperative and relational responsibility. The intent of MAC to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi, transform the education system, and disrupt racist and deficit narratives about Māori is evident in the following comment by Hoana Pearson.

We’re building a critical mass to fight a revolution ... the transformation of our education system from within, through the hearts and minds [of principals] ... and the biggest thing across that [is] ‘undoing the myths’, because so much of people’s belief systems in this nation is based on myth, not on reality. (Hoana Pearson, Te Pītau Mātauranga, MAC)

This framing aligns closely with Graham Smith’s (1997; 2017) articulation of transformative praxis within kaupapa Māori theory, in which critique of structural inequity is inseparable from action aimed at transforming practice. It reflects Linda Smith’s (2021) argument that knowledge production is embedded within colonial power relations, and that transformation requires both critique and the reenvisioning of knowledge practices.

MAC has focused on conscientising tumuaki in Aotearoa. Rooted in Paulo Freire’s (1970) critical pedagogy, conscientisation refers to the development of critical awareness and the capacity to act on that awareness through sustained reflection and action. This process is iterative rather than linear, requiring ongoing examination of how assumptions shape leadership practice and how those practices reproduce or disrupt inequity.

If you don’t know you’re doing something that’s really offensive, you’ll just keep on doing it ... and it’s only when you hear one, two, or three times that you’re doing something that you start to go, ‘Oh ...’ ... It’s that process of conscientisation, or consciousness raising—it takes a while ... You’ve got to catch yourself in your thinking and become aware of what you’re thinking—to know you’re thinking it—to make the change. (Hoana Pearson, Te Pītau Mātauranga, MAC)

Alongside these critical and decolonising foundations, MAC is shaped by relational approaches to leadership and learning. Angus Macfarlane’s braided river metaphor *He Awa Whiria* (Macfarlane et al., 2015; Macfarlane & Macfarlane, 2019) lends itself to understanding the bicultural nature of the kaupapa. This framing conceptualises educational practice as the dynamic interweaving of knowledge systems, relationships, and contexts, where different epistemologies are held in productive relationship rather than hierarchy (Macfarlane et al., 2015). Within MAC, this is reflected in the way facilitation, peer learning, and leadership development are enacted with both Māori and tauwiwi tumuaki.

MAC is grounded in whanaungatanga—a foundational concept within te ao Māori emphasising relationships, kinship, and a deep sense of collective connection (Bishop et al., 2007). Whanaungatanga extends beyond interpersonal relationships to encompass the enduring connections and responsibilities that are nurtured through working, learning, and thinking together. Within the MAC context, relationships enable transformation. Through MAC, strong and trusting relationships

are fostered between facilitators and tumuaki, and among tumuaki and their peers. In these spaces, tumuaki can express vulnerability and engage in critical reflection, enabling them to confront deficit thinking and rethink established practices.

This emphasis on relationships aligns with wider research on relational trust, which demonstrates that trust supports risk-taking and enables authentic collaborative learning and change (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Hargreaves, 1994; Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990). Within MAC, relational trust is therefore an intentional and necessary condition for critical reflection and shifts in practice.

Early formation and development

The origins of MAC can be traced to a convergence of factors in the early 2010s, alongside a growing recognition within the education sector that many school leaders were not well equipped to support ākonga Māori to achieve success as Māori. The release of the first *Ka Hikitia* strategy (Ministry of Education, 2009) brought increased expectations on schools to demonstrate how they were giving effect to this aspiration. However, for many school leaders—particularly non-Māori principals—there was uncertainty about what this meant in practice, with leaders feeling they lacked the capability, confidence, and support to meaningfully interpret and enact these expectations.

In response, tumuaki Māori from Aka Tokerau— a regional collective of Māori principals operating in Northland and a rōpū of Te Akatea (the New Zealand Māori Principals' Association)—began informally supporting their colleagues through sharing knowledge, providing guidance, and helping to interpret what “Māori succeeding as Māori” could look like in practice.

Ka Hikitia ... had just come out, and we noted that if we didn't do something ... Because there was no professional development that was offered by the Ministry in regards to that resource ... And ERO was coming around and saying, 'What are you doing, and how are you meeting the needs of your ... Māori ākonga?' And that kind of freaked people out, because they hadn't either the capacity or capability, the connections, [or] the professional development to support [that]. So, tumuaki Māori in the north decided to offer our services to tumuaki and to our colleagues. (Leanne Otene, President, NZPF)

The group experienced a period of rapid growth as more school leaders recognised the impact that their efforts were having in their colleagues' schools. What began as informal, relational support quickly grew beyond what could be sustained in this way. This period was considered one in which demand organically increased, driven by a recognition of need and a willingness among leaders to be challenged and supported in their practice.

At the same time, there was a broader recognition among tumuaki—as noted in *Ka Hikitia* (Ministry of Education, 2009)—that systemic change was needed, particularly in relation to deficit thinking, persistent inequities, and limited understanding of te ao Māori within education. The establishment of MAC was driven by a shared commitment to challenge monocultural practices and address the inequities that were negatively impacting ākonga Māori.

As described by one key informant, a pivotal moment in the formation of the kaupapa was the development of the MAC framework, which articulated what schooling could look like when grounded in Te Tiriti o Waitangi and aligned with the aspirations of *Ka Hikitia*. This initial framework was used in the successful proposal to the Ministry of Education for centrally funded PLD, supported through a partnership between Te Akatea, the New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF), and the Ministry of Education.

Early efforts by MAC to form clusters of principals were met with strong interest from tumuaki, reflecting both a clear need for and readiness to engage in this work.

Principals were really jumping on board. We said ... 'You know when you asked us for *Ka Hikitia* support? Here it is. It's free ... It's through the Ministry, it's fully funded. It's for you as a principal to grow your understanding of what Māori succeeding as Māori looks like.' (Leanne Otene, President, NZPF)

In the early years of the MAC kaupapa, facilitators used the Measurable Gains Framework to help measure the extent to which the kaupapa was making a difference to Māori enjoying and achieving education success as Māori, focusing on identity, language and culture, and responding to Ministry priorities and reporting requirements of the time (Ministry of Education, 2016). As the kaupapa evolved, facilitators drew on a wider range of evaluative tools selected to best match the needs, priorities, contexts, and circumstances of individual tumuaki and kura.

The 2013 MAC cohort initially included 47 schools in six regional clusters. Leadership development support was delivered largely through cluster-based hui and annual wānanga that brought principals together to learn, reflect, and challenge one another. These hui and wānanga created important opportunities to share practice and develop strong relational connections.

Resourcing in the early years was limited, with facilitators themselves working as full-time principals. Despite the challenges, people remained passionate and committed to the kaupapa. Key informants described this time as both challenging and transformative—confronting, yet profoundly rewarding. MAC provided a space that required tumuaki to meaningfully engage with issues of equity and identity, confront their own assumptions, and begin shifting their leadership practice in fundamental ways.

MAC was a ... shining light, and it opened a door, and it enabled [tumuaki] through a collaborative to get other ideas and ... some āwhina, some help, to make them feel that they were on the right path ... So, I think it's really about that social change, and they were very committed ... (Anaru Morgan, Kaiurungi Mātauranga, MAC)

Importantly, early participants were often motivated by a strong sense of social conscience as a result of having witnessed inequities play out over time. In many cases, they had already been attempting to address these inequities within their schools but required a safe and supportive space to continue this work.

2.2 Evolution of the Māori Achievement Collaborative kaupapa

Since 2013, MAC has expanded into a nationwide network that supports more than 500 schools. Between 2013 and 2023, the number of ākonga Māori enrolled in MAC schools grew from 6,111 to 35,139. Of these ākonga, 12,059 (34%) were identified as having learning support needs (MAC, n.d.).

The growth of the MAC kaupapa has been driven by relationships, word of mouth, and the credibility of both the kaupapa and the facilitators, rather than through formal promotion. Demand from school leaders for the support offered through MAC consistently exceeded capacity, demonstrating an intense desire among tumuaki for the transformational teachings of the kaupapa.

At the NZPF principal conference in 2012 ... there were ... about 40 schools on that list ... and it kind of went from there ... [By 2015, we] grew MAC from 49 to 157 schools in that time ... and [again,] from there we grew, and grew, and grew, and grew. (Hoana Pearson, Te Pītau Mātauranga, MAC)

The employment of a fulltime National Co-ordinator in 2016 enabled MAC to extend its reach to more schools (MAC, n.d.). In 2018 the introduction of centrally funded PLD contracts meant that MAC was able to deliver a broader range of support to schools. By this point, delivery had shifted towards a combination of group facilitation via regional and cluster-based hui and sustained one-to-one work

with tumuaki. From 2020 to 2021, there was a period of transition as MAC moved into FTTE-funded roles, with COVID adding further complexity to this shift.

By 2025, MAC was working with over 500 schools across Aotearoa New Zealand, including many kura that have remained connected to the kaupapa for significant amounts of time (MAC, 2026). Data from the 2025 MAC tumuaki survey ($n = 121$) indicate that more than one-third (38%, 46 of 121) had been working with MAC for 5 years or more, and two-thirds (66%, 80 of 121) had engaged with the kaupapa for at least 3 years (Figure 1). This reflects the ongoing demand from school leaders for MAC and the growing reach of the kaupapa across the education system.

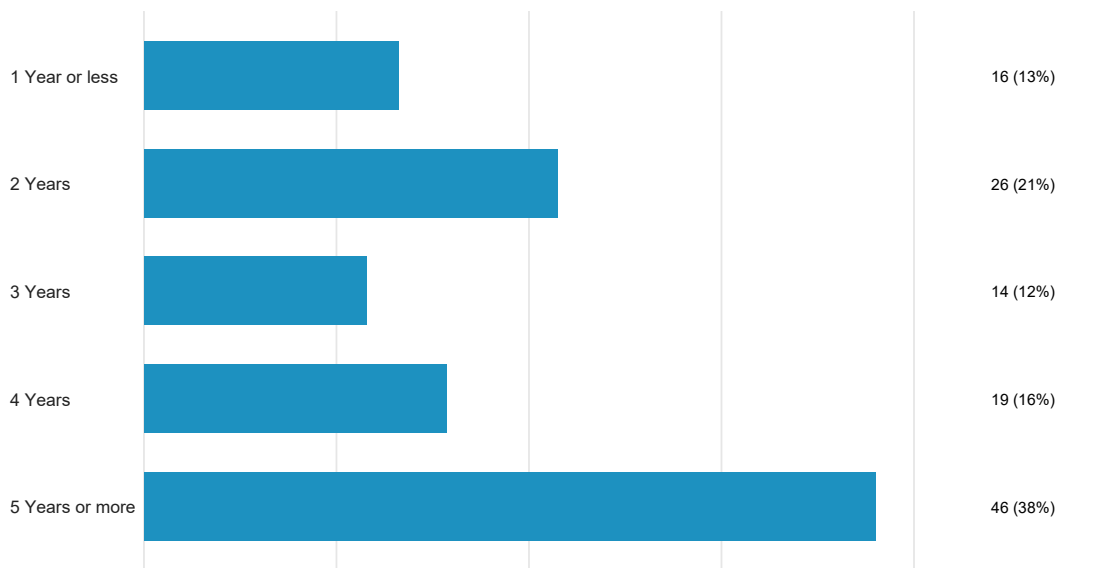


FIGURE 1: How long kura have been working with MAC Te Arahou

Alongside this growth in scale, MAC became more structured internally. Administrative, financial, and reporting systems were strengthened, leadership roles became clearer, and organisational coordination was increasingly streamlined. Taken together, these changes supported cohesion and efficiencies across the kaupapa.

The move to more sustained resourcing significantly expanded both the amount and intensity of support MAC facilitators were able to provide. Across the combined 2024 and 2025 period, MAC facilitators delivered more than 22,000 hours of one-to-one and collaborative delivery interactions. This included over 7,600 one-to-one sessions, largely focused on principals and senior leadership teams (MAC, 2026), reflecting the central role of leadership as the primary lever for change within the kaupapa.

This increase in resourcing meant facilitators were able to spend more time in schools building deeper and trusting relationships. They not only worked with tumuaki, but with staff, school boards, whānau, and ākonga. This enabled the kaupapa to extend across school communities.

Having the [PLD] contracts ... [meant] we could work with schools to develop stuff that they needed as well—resources so that they could put things into practice. So, we got to know [them] ... [and] could spend more time in their schools, get to know their schools. Meet with their staff, meet with their boards, meet with their whānau, meet with the tamariki ... [It] permeated more and more across the entire school, rather than just the principal ... and at a deeper and a [broader] level ... across the whole

school community ... And I think it was about access—that they knew we were there ... That they could reach out when they needed to and that we would be there ... No one was standing on a cliff without knowing that they had someone holding onto them ... standing behind them to catch them. (Hoana Pearson, Te Pītau Mātauranga, MAC)

As the kaupapa developed, the focus of the work also shifted. Initially, there was a strong emphasis on building understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, equity, and social justice, and on challenging entrenched assumptions and deficit thinking. Over time, this focus expanded to include the use of relational mentoring and tools to support leaders to change their practice which created shifts in school culture, curriculum, pedagogy, and systems.

2.3 Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori

A significant milestone in MAC's work to support tumuaki to change their leadership practice was the publication of *Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori: Ki te Wheiao, ki te Ao Mārama* (Pearson et al., 2022), co-written by Hoana Pearson, Leanne Otene, Damon Ritai, Te Ringakaha Tia-Ward, and Hayley Read.

This book is available to MAC schools working with MAC facilitators and, alongside a suite of resources, is intended to be used to support the implementation of the kaupapa within each school's context.

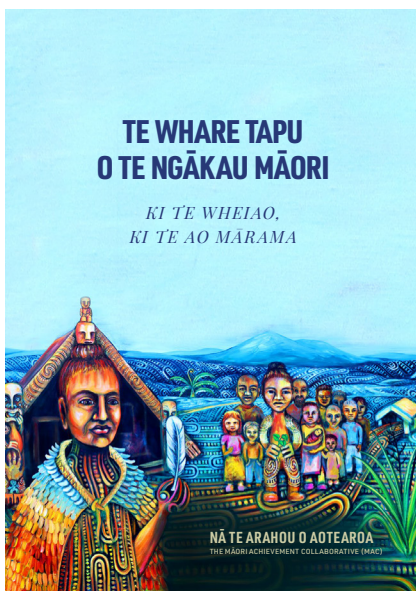


FIGURE 2: *Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori: Ki te Wheiao, ki te ao Mārama* (Pearson et al., 2022)

Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori offers a framework for learning that is contextually authentic and confirms te reo Māori me ōna tikanga (Māori language and culture), mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge and ways of understanding), and identity as pou (pillars) for educational and cultural success. (Pearson et al., 2022, pp. 3–4)

Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori is described as an Āhuetanga o te Ākonga—graduate profile, and Te Mahere Marautanga—curriculum framework. Most interview participants described the publication of *Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori* as a pivotal moment in the progression of the MAC kaupapa. The resource provides clear guidance to assist schools to purposefully move beyond surface-level engagement towards structured and sustained change.

Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori ... supported the centralisation ... to bring together clarity, te reo me ōna tikanga, mātauranga Māori, and the frameworks provided opportunities for us as a measure, as progress, and then also [the] strategic direction that strengthened—it helped us and schools to find focus for themselves within that framework, and with lots of change, the

journey of the kura ... We had a greater sense of urgency once that book arrived and we had a clarity of direction. (Kim Nikora, Kaihoe Mātauranga, MAC)

In effect, this book outlines a theory of change through *Te Huarahi Ako* which describes the journey ākonga take towards he ngākau Māori, to grow their competence and confidence in their reo, kawa, and tikanga “so that they can stand tall, strong and resilient in te ao Māori” and can “contribute positively to all the worlds to which they belong: te ao Māori, te ao Pākehā, and te ao whānui” (Pearson et al., 2022, p. 1).

This is an invaluable resource developed by MAC to support shifts in leadership practice, school environments, and effect systemic change. The guidance within has been tested and proven over time.

Te Āhua o Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori is a visual depiction of the concepts underpinning Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori. It highlights the holistic and deeply spiritual nature of the learning that takes place as ākonga move into the marae, across the marae ātea, and through the whare tūpuna. (Pearson et al., 2022, p. 5)

The seven ngākau (deep-seated affections of the heart and mind) of *Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori* are described in Table 2. Each of the ngākau represent a central and integrated component of Māori identity and expression.

Within the report, we have included quotes that exemplify how the seven ngākau might be reflected in leaders' practices, values, understandings, and ways of engaging with others.

TABLE 2: Seven ngākau from *Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori*

Seven Ngākau	
 Ngākau Kaitiaki (custodianship)	Ngākau Kaitiaki (custodianship) <i>Kia tiaki koe i te mauri</i>
 Ngākau Manaaki (nurturing)	Ngākau Manaaki (nurturing) <i>Kia akiaki te mana o te tangata</i>
 Ngākau Ora (life, health, vitality)	Ngākau Ora (life, health, vitality) <i>Kia whiti ora te ngākau Māori</i>
 Ngākau Aroha (unconditional love, empathy)	Ngākau Aroha (unconditional love, empathy) <i>Aro mai, aro atu ki te hā tapu o te tangata</i>
 Ngākau Māhaki (humility, compassion, generosity, service, sacrifice)	Ngākau Māhaki (humility, compassion, generosity, service, sacrifice) <i>He huarahi mana hāpai te ngākau māhaki</i>
 Ngākau Whānau (kinship)	Ngākau Whānau (kinship) <i>Kia whārikihia tō whānau i a koe</i>
 Ngākau Māori (Māori)	Ngākau Māori (Māori) <i>Whakairo mai te whare mā te kupu</i>



FIGURE 3: Te Āhua o te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori (Pearson et al., 2022, pp. 3–4).

The goal of the MAC kaupapa is long-term, systemic change within the education system. Its pathway for change—exemplified in *Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori*—supports tumuaki to become transformative leaders who create culturally affirming environments in which ākonga Māori can enjoy and achieve education and cultural success as Māori. The changes in leadership practice MAC encourages were primarily intended to benefit ākonga Māori but, over time, it has become clear MAC is benefiting all ākonga and the wider school community.

2.4 Summary

Grounded in kaupapa Māori, critical, decolonising, and Tiriti-informed approaches to educational change, the MAC kaupapa has evolved from a small-scale grassroots initiative into a nationally significant movement for leadership change characterised by strong connections and collective commitment. It has grown in scale and capability, while retaining a clear moral purpose; to support school leaders in developing a self-sustaining community that fosters the conditions in which ākonga Māori can achieve success as Māori.

The safe environments created by MAC facilitators allow tumuaki to engage with vulnerability, confront deficit thinking, and develop the confidence and courage required to enact and sustain change. This reflects the premise that schools will not change unless the principal does, positioning leadership as the starting point for system-wide transformation.

Over time, MAC has expanded in response to increasing demand from school leaders seeking support for culturally sustaining leadership and improved outcomes for ākonga Māori. The MAC kaupapa has continued to adapt in response to shifts in funding, policy settings, and wider system conditions, while retaining its core intent.

3. Te whakaaweawe i ngā ngākau me ngā hinengaro kia huri ai i te pūnaha mātauranga—ngā āhuatanga angitu matua | Changing hearts and minds to transform the education system—critical success factors

From day one ... it was made very clear that, 'this is your job and it's your responsibility, and you're here because you put your hand up ... Māori can't do this by themselves—we need to do it together—and if you're Pākehā and you've put your hand up, then there's no excuses' ... For some of my colleagues that was quite confronting, but actually, that's why you're here.
(Tumuaki)

This section identifies the critical success factors underpinning the Māori Achievement Collaborative kaupapa that have been influential in changing the hearts and minds of tumuaki and school communities. It examines how MAC assists tumuaki to change their leadership practice through supportive learning environments, relationships, facilitation practices, and experiential learning.

Our kaupapa is about the principal—facilitator and principal—first. A principal that can't change—doesn't change his heart or mind, doesn't let you in the door—nothing's going to change in his school and that's for anything. (Anaru Morgan, Kaiurungi Mātauranga, MAC)

3.1 A supportive learning environment

Most participants described the supportive learning environment of MAC as collaborative, relational, safe, and non-judgemental. These factors were considered to be central to its effectiveness. The facilitators created environments in which tumuaki could engage openly and honestly without fear of judgement. This was particularly important given the nature of the learning involved, which often included difficult conversations and critical reflection on practice.

The biggest impact is it keeps te ao Māori in the forefront of my mind ... And I think, too, because it's delivered in a way that is both confronting, challenging, but also with much aroha, that you can't help but be drawn into it ... And I guess that's because of the people. (Principal)



Ngākau Aroha
(unconditional love, empathy)

This sense of safety supported openness and vulnerability. Tumuaki reported being able to acknowledge gaps in their knowledge, question their own assumptions, and engage in challenging conversations without feeling judged or undermined.

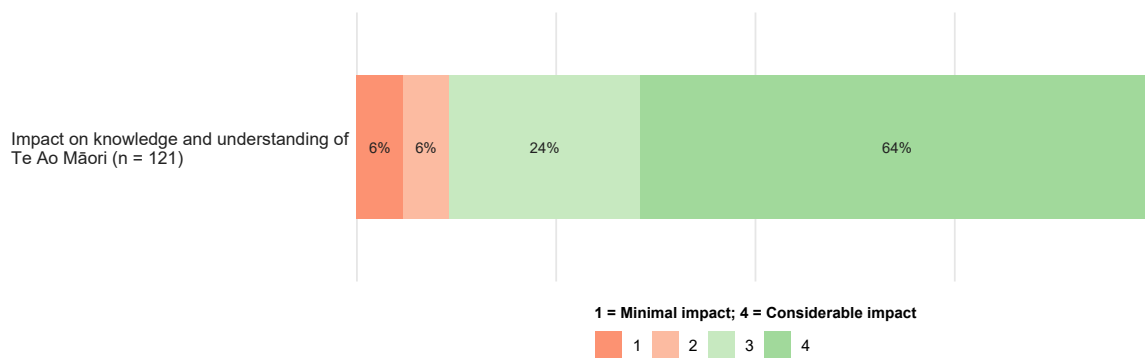


FIGURE 4: Impact of MAC on tumuaki knowledge and understanding of te ao Māori

Findings from the 2025 survey of tumuaki suggest this learning was widespread and substantial. Overall, 88% (106 of 121) of respondents reported that involvement in MAC had a moderate or considerable impact on their knowledge and understanding of te ao Māori, including nearly two-thirds (64%, 77 of 121) who reported a considerable impact (Figure 4).

Three-quarters of tumuaki (75%, 91 of 121) reported that they had worked with MAC facilitators on culturally sustainable pedagogy/practice. Over half of respondents (55%, 67 of 121) reported working on tikanga/mātauranga.

These findings suggest that MAC supported tumuaki to go through a significant and emotional learning journey that strengthened their cultural understanding and confidence to engage more deeply with te ao Māori in their leadership practice. The kaupapa was described as markedly different from other professional environments where expectations to demonstrate competence could limit openness to deep reflection and change.

What I have found—because ... I don't have a Māori background—is the lack of judgement and the 'walking alongside' you as you learn and you grow into this change, has been the best thing, because it's just removed any barriers from not just myself, but the other staff that have engaged with the MAC PD. And I think that's probably been the biggest catalyst for change—is that you can have a go or you can share what your understanding is and have that understand developed without judgement. (Natasha Luxford, Assistant Principal, St Joseph's Catholic School)



Most participants highlighted the importance of the voluntary nature of MAC. Tumuaki and principals chose to participate in the kaupapa, reflecting their commitment to engaging in the kaupapa and the learning it offered.

It's different to other hui ... If you go to a MAC hui ... you're whānau, you know? It's people you want to be with, and kaupapa you want to listen to, talk to. (Wayne Whitney, Tumuaki, Hikutaia School)

3.2 Relationships

The collaborative and relational nature of the kaupapa meant prioritising opportunities for tumuaki to learn together as a whānau. This focus on relationships is embedded throughout the design of MAC, and was enacted through wānanga, cluster-based learning, and ongoing engagement over time. This focus supported collective learning, where leaders could grow and develop alongside others, openly share their experiences—including successes and challenges—and engage in dialogue about their practice.

The key component of the MAC kaupapa is you became a whānau, and whānau is forever, and that we're there regardless [of who you are]. So, we operated from a very non-judgmental position and we were prepared to hold the hands or nurture people through these processes of change. As a result of that, people became more conscious through knowledge and understanding. (Hoana Pearson, Te Pītau Mātauranga, MAC)

Leaders were not working in isolation—they were part of a wider kaupapa and a whānau of peers that supported and challenged them. These connections reinforced accountability, and a desire to continuously grow. Learning alongside others enabled leaders to see what was possible in different contexts, helping to expand their thinking and inform their own practice.

Hearing the stories of the other MAC schools and their journey inspires us to do that next thing. (Nic Mason, Tumuaki, Winchester School)

Going back to what makes it successful is, because we are a cluster ... you get to build those really tight relationships, and you see how good [tumuaki]'s doing down the road ... There's a ... not necessarily a 'competitiveness,' but ... you're aware of what everyone else is doing, whereas if you're ... sitting alone in your own little kura ... you don't know what anyone else is doing, and you don't know what else you could do or what else is possible. (Jen Rodgers, Principal, St Clair School)

Relationships or kinship often extended beyond the formal hui and wānanga into informal professional networks where leaders could seek advice and problem-solve in real time, reinforcing learning outside of structured sessions.

MAC's been really useful in that space, that ... through your facilitator, you can tap into so many kura. 'Well, what are they doing? What's happened there?' ... 'Oh, cool. I can have a conversation with [a person] around what he's doing in this space.'

And then that means, you know, '[that person] is talking to [that person]', or '[that person] is talking to [that person]', or whatever that process is. (Tumuaki)

I'll be able to bounce ideas, work collaboratively. Yeah, especially our rohe. A lot of our schools are MAC schools now, and it gives us an opportunity to work together—just within our rohe. (Wayne Whitney, Tumuaki, Hikutaia School)



The importance of these ongoing relational networks was evident in findings from the 2025 survey of tumuaki. Around three-quarters of respondents (73%, 88 of 121) agreed or strongly agreed that they sought support from the MAC network when facing leadership challenges relating to Māori success, including more than half (54%, 65 of 121) who strongly agreed (Figure 5).

3.3 Facilitation as a central driver of change

Almost all those we interviewed saw facilitators as being central to the success of MAC. Tumuaki described facilitators as trusted experts, mentors, and role models. They were seen as credible, knowledgeable, and grounded in te ao Māori and the realities of school leadership. Facilitators did not simply deliver content. They worked alongside leaders over time to support their development and help them navigate leadership challenges. In doing so, they modelled what culturally grounded leadership looks like in practice.

The facilitators ... They're not demanding that things happen ... They sit alongside—get to know you, get to know your kura, and allow you to make those decisions, or give you some prompts and things like that ... They're not like a 'checklist.' (Rachael Coll, Tumuaki, Waihi Beach School)

Being a principal of a school is such a huge, busy job [but] having somebody that can guide you, that knows the ways of the area ... That's been massive for me. Moving to Taranaki and having [name of

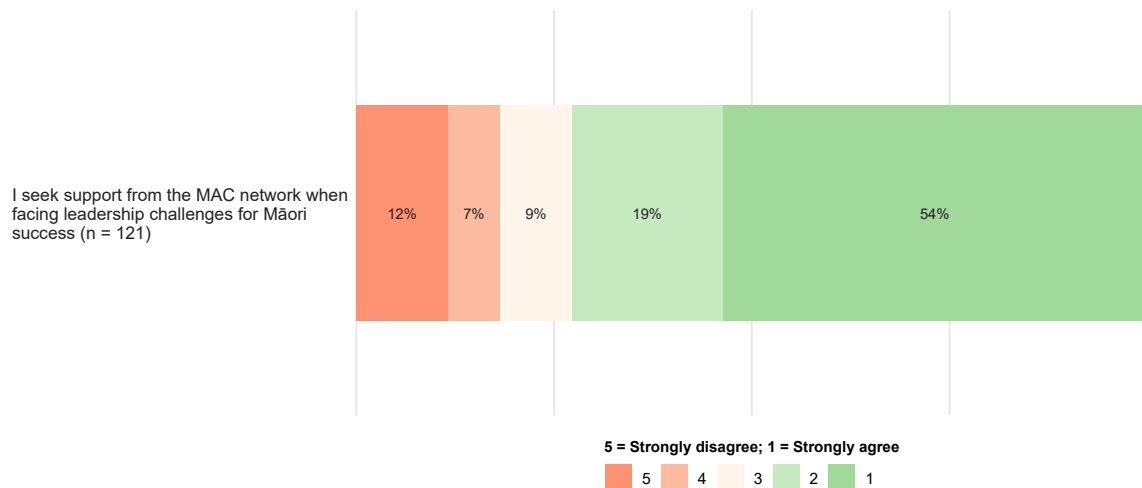
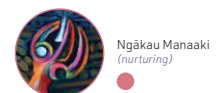


FIGURE 5: Seeking support from the MAC network for leadership challenges

facilitator] ... He is such a treasure, but having him know ... what's tikanga about the area, especially if you're moving into it—they know. Their expert guidance, but ... not in a judgmental way, but in a ... 'How can I help you?' ... It's been very empowering ... It's successful ... It's set up to help you. You can see the shift and the changes in your school, and it's just such an exciting thing. You probably are so busy you wouldn't be able to do [it all yourself], and it's so blinken important. (Katherine Pascoe, Principal, Puketapu School)

A defining feature of the facilitators' practice—emphasised by most tumuaki—was the focus on questioning thinking and challenging assumptions. Tumuaki spoke about being challenged to rethink their assumptions in relation to equity, deficit thinking, and the role of culture in education—a process that was seen as uncomfortable but necessary. An important factor in the success of this approach was the aroha that facilitators brought to challenging discussions which supported tumuaki to shift their thinking.

The supports of ... the facilitators, because of their experiences, [they] know how far to push you, but not too far, and back off when they realise they've gone a bit too hard. But [it gives you] the confidence to go, 'Hey, I have no idea. What am I meant to do with this?' And they will take you through, from a simple way to a more complex way, without you feeling dumb, stupid, or ... racist ... It's all done in a beautiful way that ... means that everyone's mana is kept intact. (Principal)



Tumuaki accounts show that they moved beyond surface-level understanding to confront aspects of their thinking and practice that had previously gone unexamined.

[Facilitator] showed us that pictogram of the 'Treaty Bridge' ... And so often we ask Māori to come over to the Pākehā side and to gift and to tell and to share and show, and that really hit me. And I realised that, actually, it was all about me, and that it was my job to go over to the Māori side and to demonstrate and model for all how important this work is ... and take the lead ... and, in that space, show vulnerability. Of course, using my kaiako Māori as guides—help me write my pepeha ... help me do stuff, but that... Then, it shifted. (Louise Doyle, Principal, Oaklynn Special School)

Leaders were encouraged to think critically about their beliefs, values, and practices. This reflective process supported leaders to move beyond surface-level cultural awareness and begin to apply new understandings within their own leadership practice.

I think MAC has really challenged us, by giving us as leaders and teachers those really authentic, meaningful experiences, and challenged us on ways in which we take that back into our kura. That ‘knowing’—‘Once you know better, do better.’ And that ‘changing hearts and minds’ kaupapa that they have ... I think that they hold that ... dear to what the mahi they do, and they empower and inspire us to do the same. So, I think they have employed amazing people who have had great knowledge in this space. I think that they’ve had a really clear kaupapa and direction of their own, which has allowed us to have that as well, and I don’t think we can underestimate any of that leadership from Hoana and her team. (Tumuaki)

The fact that all MAC facilitators were current or former tumuaki contributed to their credibility with other leaders, and strengthened their ability to provide practical, contextually relevant support grounded in lived experiences of school leadership.

That ‘wrap-around’ ... is amazing, because ... they come in and talk to your board about where you’re going, and ... you feel like they’re championing you all of the time ... Having them there for you and having been in the role of a principal before—they know what you need ... I think that’s a big thing. They helped you along the way and helped you succeed—they didn’t just tell you what to do. (Katherine Pascoe, Principal, Puketapu School)

Some tumuaki described the approach facilitators took as relational and bicultural, viewing them as approachable and authentic.

[Having] facilitators who’ve been there—facilitators who’ve got credibility, that do know their stuff. So, they’ve attended board meetings ... especially through that hapū rep time and things, [so it’s] not just my voice. (Rachael Coll, Tumuaki, Waihi Beach School)

Some participants reported that facilitation was responsive to the needs of tumuaki and their school contexts. They saw facilitators work in ways that reflected “where leaders were at” in their learning, responding to the specific needs of schools, rather than applying a fixed or standardised approach.

Findings from the 2025 survey of tumuaki indicated very high levels of satisfaction with MAC facilitation with almost all respondents (98%, 119 of 121) reporting moderate or considerable satisfaction, including almost three-quarters (73%, 88 of 121) who reported considerable satisfaction (Figure 6).

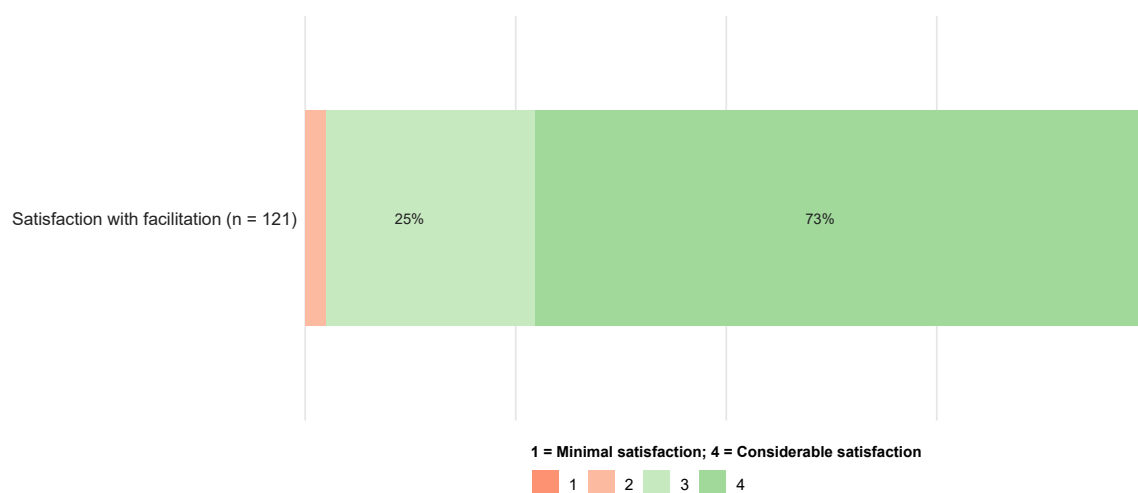


FIGURE 6: Satisfaction with MAC facilitation

These findings align with interview accounts describing facilitators as trusted experts, mentors, role models, and culturally grounded leaders.

3.4 Experiential learning connected to people, places, and spaces

Most participants highlighted the importance of the experiential nature of the kaupapa which focused on engagement with people, place, and local context to enable shifts in thinking. The following quote provides an example of the impact that visiting marae, hearing about local histories, and participating in learning connected to the communities they serve had on tumuaki.

What MAC has also done, through our hui and our wānanga and our regional hui, ... [is] learn our local stories ... We were over at Hauraki, on the marae over there, and learned those stories. And then down in Taupō and learned those stories. So, learning so many stories across the motu, that I've never known before, it ... MAC has opened those doors for me and for my kura and for my teachers. New Zealand, local history? Out the gate. And you're getting it from the people [with that knowledge], but MAC have been the coordinators of bringing these people together. (Suzanne Mariassoucé, Tumuaki, Tokoroa Intermediate School)

Some participants emphasised that hearing stories directly from local voices—including hapū, iwi, and mana whenua—made the learning far more engaging and accessible. Connecting with kaumātua, kuia, and others with deep knowledge of the local context was considered important to help ground learning in context.

MAC ... talks about changing the hearts and minds of our leaders, and ... the stories of going to significant places in Aotearoa—the most recent one at, in Waikato, and I went to one last year up at Waitangi, and learning the pūrākau through the kaumātua and the storytellers, and how ... it's woven through, and how it's connected with Aotearoa histories ... It's all part of our kete, and ... how things are all interconnected ... Learning about our history has been really enriching for me. (Nic Mason, Tumuaki, Winchester School)

Some tumuaki were deeply affected by these experiences, which prompted them to reconsider their assumptions about historical narratives of Aotearoa and structural inequities within communities. They learned to see their own cultural blind spots and changed how they understood their role and practice.

The multiple wānanga that we've had, or hīkois that we've been on, has given us the opportunity to see insights to different rohe. So ... one of our hīkoi ... We stayed at Papakura and did a hīkoi through Rangiriri. So, I took that myself, back to our rohe—I took our teachers there and replicated that same trip. I took our principal group there, and they did a reenactment there, and there [were] tears coming down from some of our principals from that group. We took our kids there, so they can see it as well. And I guess ... that's part of the MAC kaupapa that we, that's shared with the leaders of our kura—to take back to their own kura, to share and bring it back and get that flow on. (Wayne Whitney, Tumuaki, Hikutaia School)

3.5 Summary

The evidence presented in this section shows that MAC supported change in leadership practice and school environments through the relational and non-judgemental nature of the kaupapa—facilitation based on aroha and trust that provides both challenge and support; learning between peers that creates a sense of whānau; experiential learning that supports shifts in perspective; and connections to people, places, and spaces.

The next section examines how these critical success factors translate into changes in school leaders' thinking, behaviour, and leadership practice.

4. Ngā huringa ki ngā tikanga hautū | Changes in leadership practice

[MAC facilitator] said 'If you walked into the school as a parent, how would you know you were in a New Zealand school?' ... She said it right at the beginning to me, and I always think that ... Even moving to another school, and when those parents ... I still cry talking about it ... When those parents have come in and said, 'my kids belong here and this is a place I want to send my kids, and we feel like it's a safe place.' I mean, that's ... That's gold.

(Katherine Pascoe, Principal, Puketapu School)

This section explores the changes in leadership practice that tumuaki and facilitators experienced as a result of being involved in the Māori Achievement Collaborative. The following types of leadership practices were identified from an analysis of the interviews conducted with tumuaki and facilitators for this evaluation.

Leadership practices identified in this evaluation that support Māori to succeed as Māori include:

- critically conscious and courageous leadership
- awareness of personal identity, power, and positionality
- culturally grounded, values-driven leadership
- valuing Māori identity and knowledge of te ao Māori
- collective responsibility and peer-support
- supporting change/learning in others (the ripple effect).

Many of these practices mirror and build on the leadership practices that support Māori success as Māori identified in the 2016 evaluation (Webber, 2017).

The findings in this section show a pattern of change that begins with shifts in understanding, confidence, and disposition and extends into changes in leadership practice and influence.

4.1 Confidence, courage, and capability

Most interview participants reported increased confidence and courage in their leadership practice. This was strongly reinforced by findings from the 2025 tumuaki survey, in which 87% (105 of 121) of respondents reported that MAC had a moderate or considerable impact on their confidence and capability to lead, including 60% (73 of 121) who reported a considerable impact (Figure 7).

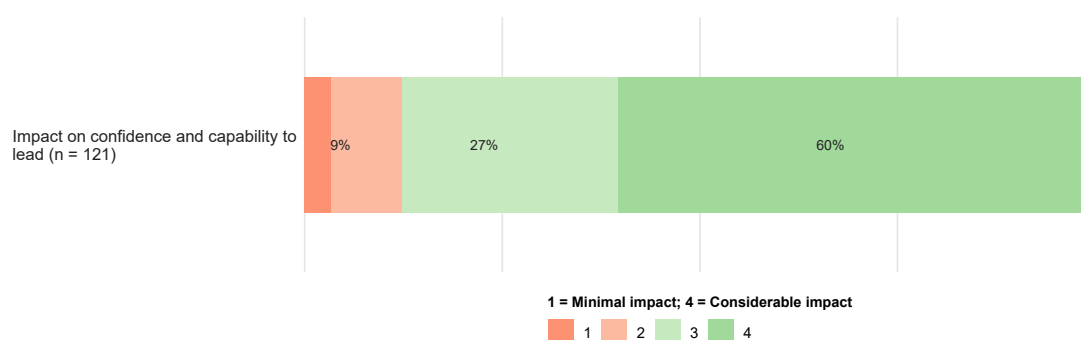
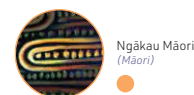


FIGURE 7: Impact of MAC on tumuaki confidence and capability to lead

Interviews suggested that MAC has had considerable impact on tumuaki capability to lead in ways that were more culturally grounded, values-driven, and aligned with the aspirations of the MAC kaupapa. Tumuaki were increasingly willing to take action and model culturally responsive and sustaining practice, and challenge deficit practices within their schools.

For Māori leaders ... it's given them the courage to set that expectation. Whereas previously, perhaps if you were Māori and you weren't [very] confident or you weren't sure, maybe you felt that if [you] pushed the tikanga it's going to make some people uncomfortable, or it's going to cause a raru or something like that. Whereas now, it's empowered them to be able to insist on that culturally sustainable practice and expectations for their schools. (Drew Manning, Kaihoe Mātauranga, MAC)



Increased confidence was an outcome of participation in MAC and an enabling condition for action. As confidence grew, leaders were more willing to take risks, implement change, and act in ways that aligned more closely with their values and aspirations for ākonga Māori.

In terms of tauwi as well ... our principals are becoming ... more confident about challenging systems ... in some very Eurocentric areas that can be really challenging in terms of community, [school] board, [and] staff that have always done it this way. It can be quite challenging in terms of system change, and then [also in] ... the reviewing of perspectives and values of staff, community, and themselves. (George Ihimaera, Kaihoe Mātauranga, MAC)

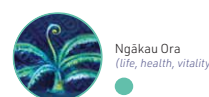
4.2 Identity, power, and positionality

Most participants talked about the changes they experienced in relation to their identity, power and positionality as leaders. These changes manifested differently depending on whether tumuaki identified as Māori or tauwi.

For me, MAC's given me the courage to step up as a Māori leader—to be Māori. If it doesn't challenge you, it doesn't change you. (Wayne Whitney, Tumuaki, Hikutaia School)

Most tumuaki Māori felt that they became more confident to lead as Māori. This included increased comfort in expressing Māori identity within leadership, greater use of te reo Māori, stronger connection to whakapapa, and a deeper sense of legitimacy in leading “as Māori”.

Yesterday, at ... the [MAC] pōwhiri, they talked about the ‘opening of the greenstone door’, and that’s a little bit like our interaction with MAC has been ... It’s empowered ... me, as a tumuaki, to be able to identify with my own [whakapapa] Māori ... and



sort of 'own' that a little bit more in my own space ... To be able to be undeniably Māori in my space, and not have to worry about what, who, or what anybody else might think about that ... MAC's given me ... the confidence to do that, but it's also given ... us as a kura ... the āwhina to be able to let our kaiako start or continue the journey that they're on. (Tumuaki)

Most tumuaki who identified as tauwi described themselves as growing in humility and allyship because of their involvement in MAC. MAC facilitators helped them develop a clearer understanding of te ao Māori and clarify their positionality (Chiseri-Strater, 1996; Herr & Anderson, 2005). Through this support, leaders built the confidence to engage in culturally appropriate and responsive ways and found the courage to work through personal resistance to change and assumptions.

Through a process of critical self-reflection, these tumuaki shifted from thinking that culturally responsive and sustaining practice should be left up to Māori, to understanding that the responsibility has to be shared.

There is a difficulty for ... tumuaki tauwi, 'Do I have the right to bring these things in? Do I have ... the mana? Is it appropriate for me to say the things that need to be said?' ... And gone are the days for a teacher to go, 'I don't do Māori.' ... That's just not an option. But sometimes we're not putting it in their face enough ... It's a shared [responsibility] ... It can't ... be carried ... by Māori alone. (Jen Rodgers, Principal, St Clair School)

The detrimental effect of the cultural taxation Māori experience in schools is well documented (Boyd et al., 2021; Bright et al., 2021), so the shift to shared responsibility is an important one. Some tumuaki described how they worked to more equitably resource Māori expertise through dedicated funding and roles. They also meant prioritising staff learning, even where this required trade-offs with other areas of school operations.

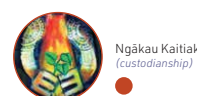
I was just talking to a principal today—tauwi—and ... since being in MAC, she challenges systems within [her kura] ... She's challenging now. Like, if people go ... 'Oh, we ...' They pay the ... literacy facilitator money, but they ... weren't paying the kaumatua. But they said, 'Oh, well, they're not qualified.' 'Qualified for what?' So ... she's now challenging systems ... and having discussions with her fellow colleagues around that. And I think, 'Yeah, man! Yeah! Yeah, challenge, man! That's awesome!' But that's just since she's been doing this. (George Ihimaera, Kaihoe Mātauranga, MAC)

If I look back over the last sort of 10 years, I think I've relied on my kaiako Māori to hold the space for our culturally responsive practice and what we do ... Karakia and tikanga and everything Māori. And then I joined MAC, and their kaupapa is, 'A school won't change unless the principal does', and that really resonated with me ... One of the first clusters I went to in our Hikurangi cluster was listening to another, a kaiako Māori, who talked about—in fact, the whole conversation was around the ... 'Burden' sounds a very negative word, but the 'heaviness' that kaiako Māori have in holding all that responsibility for school, and that ... they feel awkward and uncomfortable ... So, that sense of, 'Oh my gosh ...' That responsibility that they're expected to hold. [It clicked] (Louise Doyle, Principal, Oaklynn Special School)

4.3 Culturally grounded leadership practice

Some interview participants said culturally grounded leadership was increasingly shaping school direction. Tumuaki shared examples of where changes were being made to school values, priorities, and practices. This included embracing bilingualism in kura—through embedding te reo Māori and tikanga within everyday practice—strengthening connections with whānau, hapū, and iwi, and developing more locally grounded approaches to teaching and learning.

Next year we're opening—reestablishing—our reo rua pathway. So, through our Puanga breakfast and consultation ... it was just 100% support for the establishment of a reo pathway ... And again, ... MAC has just provided me with the courage and the mandate to just go out and do it—speak confidently about why it's important. Why it's so valuable. (Scott Walden, Tumuaki, Marfell Community School)



Leadership was positioned as a key mechanism through which culturally grounded practices were introduced and sustained.

4.4 Collective responsibility and sustainability of change

Some interview participants saw change as a collective responsibility for all leaders and staff—particularly in relation to tauwi leaders—emphasising the importance of shifting from individual responsibility toward a greater sense of shared purpose, accountability, and urgency.

I think the difference is that it is a kaupapa, not a PLD programme ... You get people on the waka, as a collective, as a whānau, as an extended whānau ... So, there's a ... shared focus, a shared sense of responsibility, a shared sense of accountability. (Hoana Pearson, Te Pītau Mātauranga, MAC)

A few participants talked about the importance of embedding changes in school practice to achieve more sustained and consistent approaches over time.

Well, that's the thing—you want it to be a long-lasting change, right? You don't want it just to be during your tenure at a school, or ... while those certain staff members [are there] ... I think that's probably what happened to our school previously—is that you had one or two staff members that held all the knowledge or all the expertise, and when they left, everything sort of fell to the wayside, whereas this is developing *everybody's* expertise and knowledge. (Natasha Luxford, Assistant Principal, St Joseph's Catholic School)

4.5 The ripple effect

Learning extends far beyond the tumuaki

Most participants identified modelling as a key part of leadership practice, emphasising the role of tumuaki in leading by example. This included demonstrating use of te reo Māori and tikanga Māori and signalling clear expectations for staff and ākonga.

My first interaction with the kids was in te reo Māori, and my first interactions with staff was in te reo Māori. And so, for them to be able to see that it was something that was significant for me, and that it was valued, and it was something that I valued in our kura. And so, for us, that journey, I guess over the last four years, is Māori isn't 'normalised' for us, Māori is just Māori—it just happens. (Tumuaki)

I felt the challenge from when I arrived ... already having a 3-class reo rua unit, having our largest group ... of peoples is Māori, ... I felt a ... positive pressure to put more emphasis—more learning—on ... being able to whaikōrero so I could role model in very key events, and not just be a[n] English-speaking participant ... [The] impact has been enormous ... Beyond what [one] would expect. You don't realise how powerful something is ... That's the great thing about MAC and being involved with it, is it takes you where you need to be. (Principal)

Most tumuaki shared examples of the wider influence that MAC has had on their staff and leadership teams. This was reinforced by findings from the 2025 tumuaki survey, which showed high levels of

staff engagement with MAC-related activities across participating kura. Overall, 71% (86 of 121) of respondents reported that most or all teaching staff had been directly involved during the year, including around half (47%, 57 of 121) who reported involvement from all teaching staff (Figure 8).

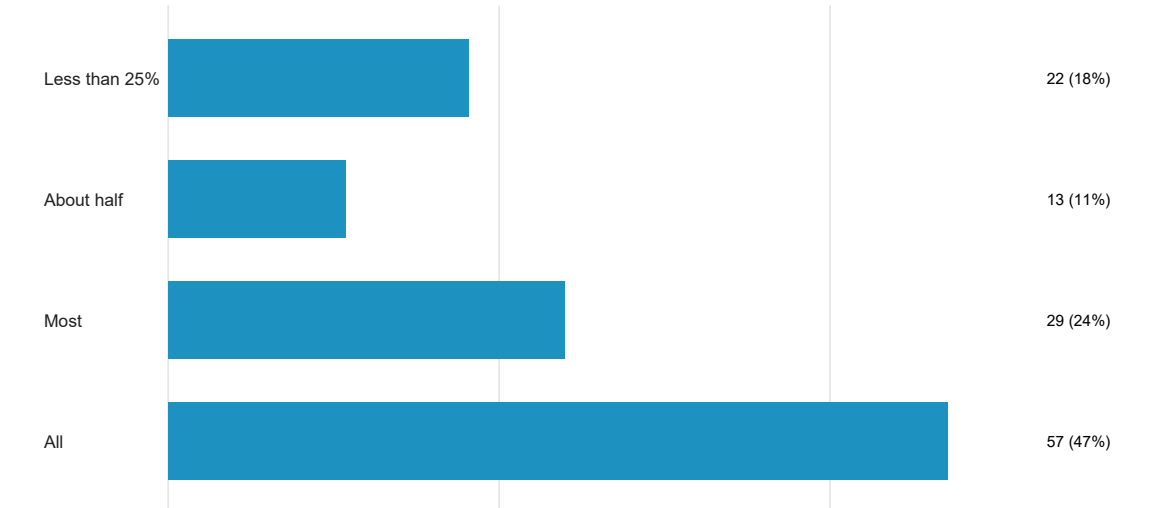


FIGURE 8: Proportion of teaching staff engaged directly in MAC activities this year

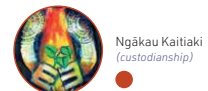
These findings suggest that the kaupapa has an impressive reach across school communities, even though the main focus is on developing the leadership practice of tumuaki.

We did a lot—we had three-quarters of the staff choose to do Te [Ahu o Te Reo Māori] online, and the buy-in there was incredible. [MAC facilitator] did a whole lot of staff meetings around that ‘re-visioning’ with us, and ... the buy-in from our staff—to feel part of that through the way that we worked with her—was just incredible. That it came out in our re-vision. (Katherine Pascoe, Principal, Puketapu School)

[MAC have always been accommodating] around bringing your team on—they’ve always been extremely open to the team. And as much as it’s about principals, we need to employ people that can help us do the mahi, ... and who believe what we believe, and ... trust to make the decisions when we’re not in the room, or ... that the school will still be in good hands ... because of it, rather than just what happens if one of us leaves. (Rachael Coll, Tumuaki, Waihi Beach School)

Some participants recounted efforts to foster understanding of te ao Māori among staff and others, focusing on shifting thinking, building confidence, and supporting more meaningful engagement. Influence was often enacted through relational, day-to-day interactions rather than formal structures. Tumuaki would encourage staff to try new approaches and develop their own capability.

In terms of my staff, one of the things they said to me was, back in the rā ... they were scolded for trying to speak [Māori]—he Pākehā katoa. [They were] scolded for trying to speak Māori and messing up the pronunciations and things like that. But I went in, ‘Kei te pa. Pai. You’re giving it a go.’ Correcting in a nice way—to be able to comfort them into being able to give it a go. So, for them, they were able to find the courage themselves and step up as leaders within their classrooms, within the school. (Wayne Whitney, Tumuaki, Hikutaia School)



Learning travels across schools

Some of the tumuaki and MAC facilitators interviewed shared examples of how MAC learning has travelled with leaders as they have moved to different schools. One tumuaki who had worked in three schools with very different contexts over the past 12 years described the MAC kaupapa as having been “a really fantastic lever for positive growth and positive change in all of those spaces.”

This pattern is reflected in findings from the 2025 tumuaki survey. One-quarter of respondents (24%, 29 of 121) reported having led in other kura since first engaging with MAC. Among this group, 86% (25 of 29) reported intentionally applying MAC-informed practices within those new leadership contexts (Figure 9).

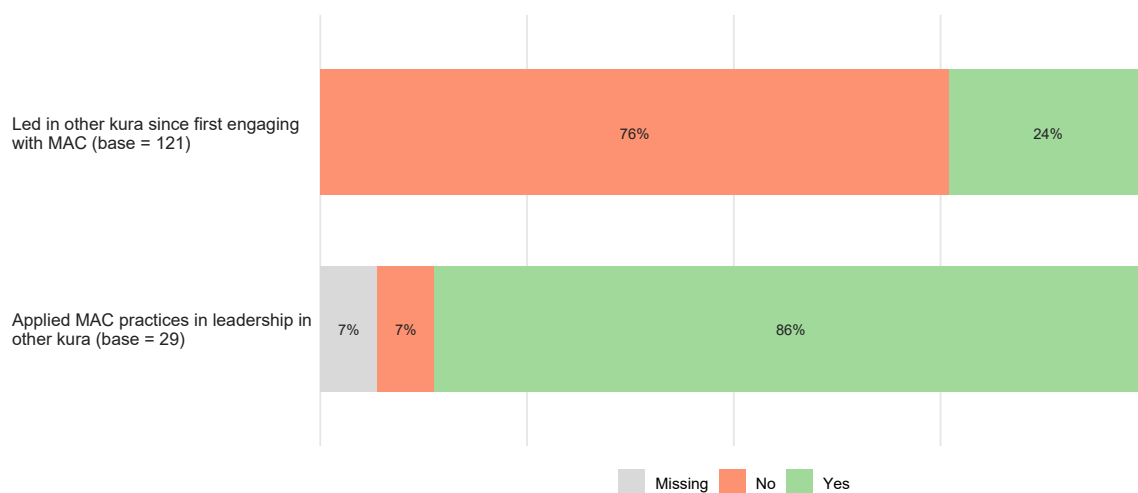


FIGURE 9: Leading in other kura and applying MAC practices elsewhere

Applying the lessons of MAC beyond schools

MAC was established primarily to support educational leadership within kura and schools and evidence has shown that the kaupapa can travel with leaders to other schools. We suggest that the MAC approach to leadership is applicable in other organisational and leadership settings beyond schools, as illustrated in the following vignette about how MAC has influenced leadership practice within the New Zealand Principals’ Federation (NZPF).

Case study 1: NZPF leadership example (Leanne Otene)

Former NZPF President Leanne Otene—now Tumu Whakarae – National Director of Te Arahou o Aotearoa Trust—has been involved with MAC since its establishment, including as a member of the original governance structures and later as a co-author of *Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori*.

Reflecting on her time as President of NZPF, she described how the understandings, values, and leadership approaches developed through MAC became foundational to how she approached organisational leadership at a national level. She also noted that participation in MAC contributed to the development of leadership identity and purpose.

I came to recognise that that was actually my korowai ... and MAC had put that together for me.

Upon becoming President of NZPF, Leanne explained that one of her key objectives was to “change the culture of this organisation”. Drawing on her longstanding involvement with MAC and deep understandings of *Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori*, she introduced values and ways of working grounded in te ao Māori, informed by her engagement with MAC and commitments to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

She also brought MAC facilitation processes into the NZPF executive, which operated as its own MAC cluster, with executive members engaging in the same relational and reflective learning processes that characterised the wider kaupapa.

These processes were described as contributing to significant organisational and cultural change over time. Importantly, the focus was not solely on changing organisational structures or policies, but on shifting “the hearts and minds” of those within the organisation so that the changes would endure beyond a single leader’s tenure.

It was really important for me knowing that going forward, all of that could be lost if I didn’t change the hearts and the minds of the people that were on the executive so that they could carry it through when I depart this place.

By the end of her presidency, the organisation was described as “unrecognisable” in terms of its culture, values, and ways of working. Importantly, these changes were also sufficiently embedded that incoming leadership subsequently confirmed ongoing commitment to the kaupapa, including continued engagement with MAC facilitation.

Further development of the MAC kaupapa could extend its reach to support leadership practice in organisations seeking to embed culturally sustaining leadership practices and more authentic enactment of Te Tiriti-informed practice.

4.6 Summary

MAC has helped change leadership practice in a range of significant ways. Most participants reported increases in critical thinking, confidence, and courage, which were situated as foundational shifts. They identified changes relating to identity, power, and positionality in leadership practice, including growing confidence among Māori tumuaki to lead as Māori, and increased humility and allyship among non-Māori leaders.

Most participants highlighted how leadership practice extended beyond the principal, supporting learning across staff and teams.

Some participants indicated that culturally grounded leadership was increasingly shaping school direction and fostering understanding of and engagement with te ao Māori.

These changes shape how leaders think, act, and influence others, providing a foundation for wider changes in school environments and practice, as explored in the following section.

5. Ngā huringa i ngā kura, ki ngā tikanga whakaako, me te mahi whakaako | Changes in schools, pedagogy, and teaching practice

*MAC kind of was the 'boost.' You know, the rocket up the backside ...
So it is MAC, but it's all the other little pieces that come in behind.*
(Louise Doyle, Principal, Oaklynn Special School)

This section considers how changes in leadership practice translate into changes in school environments, pedagogy, and teaching practice. Building on the changes in leadership practice identified in Section 4, this section shares examples of the types of shifts within schools noted by tumuaki, MAC facilitators, and key informants.

These changes were most evident in:

- school culture and values
- collective responsibility
- use of te reo Māori and tikanga in everyday school life
- culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy
- relationships with whānau, hapū, iwi, and mana whenua
- curriculum content
- systems and structures.

Overall, participants commonly described schools as shifting from symbolic or superficial engagement with te ao Māori toward more embedded and locally grounded practice.

5.1 School culture and values

A strong theme identified by tumuaki, MAC facilitators, and key participants related to changes in school culture and values. They shared examples of how schools were normalising, signalling a shift from te ao Māori being treated as an addition to school life, toward becoming an expected and everyday part of how schools operate.

Results from the 2025 tumuaki survey provide further evidence of this shift, where almost all respondents (96%) reported MAC had a moderate or considerable impact on normalising te reo and tikanga Māori within their kura, including 65% (79 of 121) who reported a considerable impact (Figure 10).

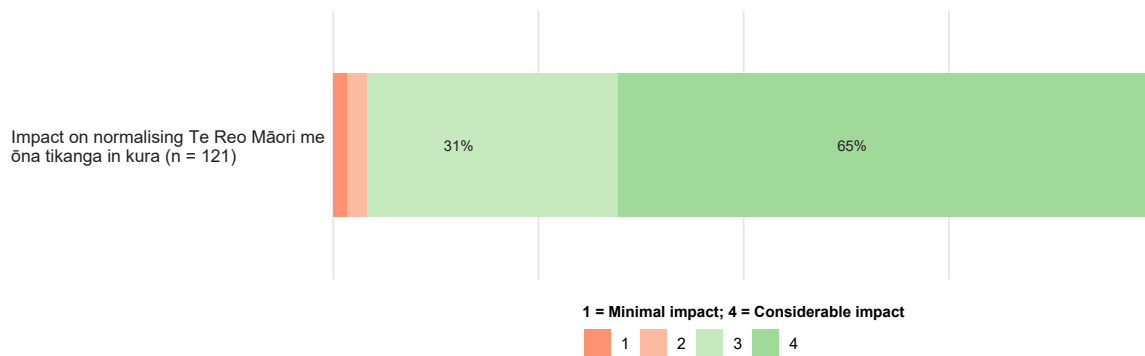
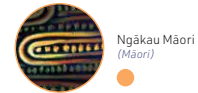


FIGURE 10: Impact of MAC on normalising te reo Māori me ōna tikanga in kura

According to tumuaki and MAC facilitators, te reo Māori, tikanga, and Māori ways of being were becoming increasingly visible across the wider school environment.

I developed ... a programme called 'Tikanga-based te reo Māori' for a school' ... There's a tikanga—a normalisation—of te ao Māori. Maybe they start the day ... with a karakia. A little bit of mihimihi. Maybe a waiata. Maybe someone ... learns that tikanga is to acknowledge the person who did the karakia and the mihi, and ... to recognise when we might need to have a bit of a wānanga about stuff, about something that's not gone well in the morning, at morning tea, right before we get into our learning ... kia tau te mauri o te tangata ... Those sorts of things which ... I think are a lovely, normal, Aotearoa, 'Kiwi' way ... I heard a teacher say ... 'Oh, this is like starting the day in Aotearoa way!' And I thought, 'Oh, what a neat little [phrase]...' So, that became a thing: 'Start the day in Aotearoa way' ... I've just used that phrase a lot. (Anaru Morgan, Kaiurungi Mātauranga, MAC)



Most tumuaki described how Māori values were directly shaping school culture. This included shifts in how relationships were understood, how wellbeing was framed, and how schools interpreted and practiced manaakitanga and whanaungatanga.

Now we're entering into that world ... [where] our PRIDE values have been ... I think it's going on 20 years they've been in place. We've reignited them, and now we're working into a cultural side of it, which incorporates aspects of mana, and using that as our key word, which will then roll into ... everything—mana motuhake, mana manaakitanga, and all these other values or attributes that we want. So, we're strengthening what's already really strong and using it as a framework to now give a cultural lens upon it. And again, that's the direct-indirect pathway that our involvement [with MAC] has had. (Principal)

Some tumuaki highlighted movement away from tokenistic or surface-level expressions of te ao Māori toward practices that were enacted consistently and meaningfully.

A lot of our kura have had like, a Māori name for a value, but really, they have an English translation and then they teach the English value. So, actually flipping that around and going, 'Well, actually, manaakitanga is a bit more than that—how about we look at it through a te ao Māori lens?' And then when people start to understand, 'Well, actually, manaakitanga is about what I do for other people, and I acknowledge that everyone who comes through my gate—or our gate—has value, and it's all of our collective responsibility to inspire, to encourage, to nurture, their wellbeing.' So, when you start truly enacting those values in a te ao Māori way, well, then it's good for everyone's wellbeing. (Scott Walden, Tumuaki, Marfell Community School)

Most tumuaki spoke about the importance of developing collective responsibility for practice associated with te ao Māori. This was a shift away from reliance on individual Māori staff members toward increased agency among all staff to consistently enact culturally grounded practice. This included increased expectations around the use of te reo Māori and engagement with tikanga.

I went and did a teacher-only [PLD] day ... on 'What does Te Tiriti o Waitangi look [like] ... in the school everyday practice?' ... And I actually remember saying, before morning tea ... that it's not one person or two peoples [job]—it's not the Māori ... person's job to ensure this happens in your school ... You are all responsible ... So, what are you doing? Because it can't fall on one person... there was this older Māori woman ... In a big school [of] about 500 students, she was the only Māori teacher in the school, and she came and sat with me at morning tea, and she cried ... She was saying, 'Oh, thank you, matua, for telling them that. Because they think I'm the be-all and end-all ... Because I'm Māori ... they think I know everything, where[as] ... my grandfather took us ... to the city, he said, "This is our new life in Auckland. We're leaving that Māori stuff behind. We've got to survive in this world." So, it got lost.' ... 'So, thank you so much for telling all these people that it's their job.' And it was an eye-opener for the tumuaki there, because he saw this woman cry, and she'd never shared that with him before, but she was sharing it, and a lot of people heard it. So, those sorts of impacts? I think MAC's had a massive impact. (Anaru Morgan, Kaiurungi Mātauranga, MAC)

Findings from the 2025 tumuaki survey indicated a strengthening of distributed leadership for Māori success within kura. Overall, more than two-thirds of respondents (68%, 82 of 121) agreed or strongly agreed that participation in MAC had strengthened distributed leadership for Māori success within their school, including 41% (50 of 121) who strongly agreed (Figure 11). A smaller group of respondents (32%, 28 of 121) reported disagreement.

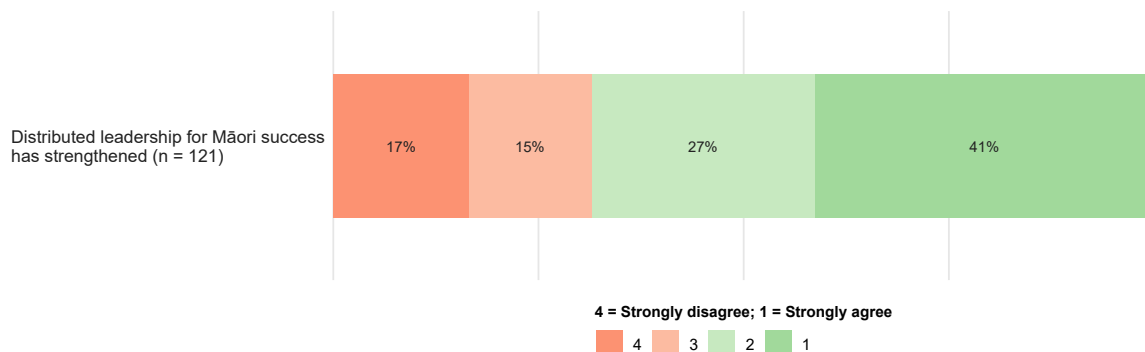


FIGURE 11: Impact of MAC on strengthening distributed leadership for Māori success

Changes in staff capability and engagement with te ao Māori

Almost all tumuaki interviewed described themselves and staff in their schools as having increased confidence, capability, and engagement with te ao Māori. Findings from the 2025 tumuaki survey similarly indicated widespread perceptions of improvement in this area, with 79% (96 of 121) of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that participation in MAC had improved staff confidence and competence in integrating Māori knowledge, values, and perspectives into teaching practice, including one-quarter (24%, 29 of 121) who strongly agreed (Figure 12).

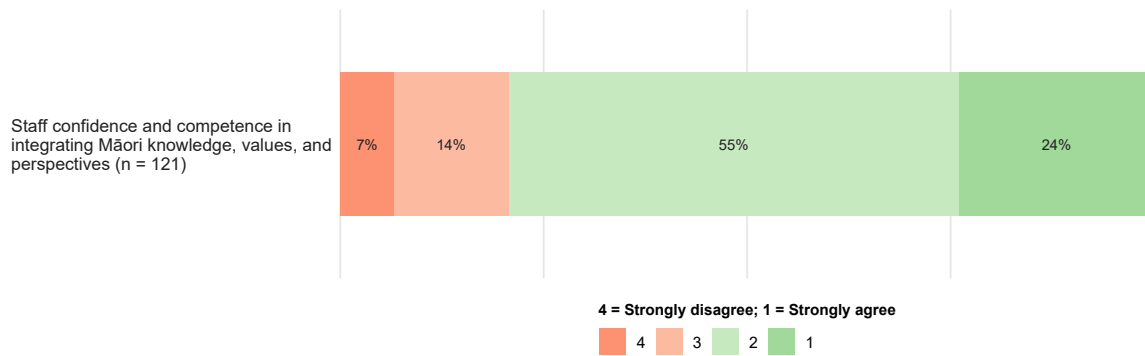
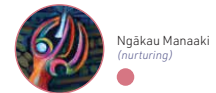


FIGURE 12: **Impact of MAC on staff confidence and competence in integrating Māori knowledge, values, and perspectives**

Tumuaki often linked the normalisation of te ao Māori within kura to changes that contributed to environments where staff felt more confident, supported, and able to engage in culturally grounded practice. This resulted in increased use of te reo Māori and tikanga in everyday school life.

There was community involvement ... there was families feeling it was safe, there was ... staff that actually felt safe to learn—to come from a school where it hadn't been, to go into a school where it was celebrated. It was just ... Ooh, incredible.
(Katherine Pascoe, Principal, Puketapu School)



Most tumuaki noted that staff had deepened their understanding of and engagement with te ao Māori, including increased willingness to apply learning in practice.

We're really lucky in that we've got a kaiako—or had a kaiako—who has been really supportive of that kara ... But also ... since I've been there, I've had three members of staff who have done level five, six, or seven te reo Māori while they've been with us—two of them we've supported through study leave in order to do their level sevens. And so that's been ... a bit of a shift for us, because we've effectively lost a staff member for a year, but it's empowering them, and then they come back into our kura ... An achievement for us in that space is ... [name] ... [who] did her level six and seven while she was with us and was empowered enough to be able to go, 'I want to be a DP and I can't be that here, so I'm going to do it somewhere else,' and so for us to be able to say, 'We're gonna nurture you as much as we can, and now we want you to take that skillset somewhere else. (Tumuaki)

For some tumuaki, these shifts included cultural reconnection and identity development—particularly among Māori staff—alongside increased uptake and use of te reo Māori.

[The] kids are proud to be Māori, as are staff ... so it's that thing ... We're growing the staff, we're growing the kids, we're growing our community ... It's a massive potential influence of change that we have. (Jen Rodgers, Principal, St Clair School)

A few participants referred to broader shifts in mindset, including increased openness to Māori values and strengthened relationships and collaboration within and across schools.

When you look across, and you look at our Pākehā families completely embracing the partnership, wanting to walk alongside, and the kids of those families being super excited to be a part of anything that happens Māori, and so much to the point that now things just happen regardless—they don't even realise that it's Māori ... So, you see those soft changes. And although we're a [small] school, we've never lost ... that real whānau, family feel, and ... if you're gonna be a kura that holds true to Māori-values, then that whānau feel is really important. (Brendon White, Tumuaki, Lucknow School)



5.2 Pedagogy and curriculum

Changes in pedagogy and curriculum were the second most frequently discussed form of change. Most participants had noted increased use of culturally sustaining teaching practices that affirmed the identities, language, and experiences of ākonga Māori in their schools.

These shifts were evident in results from the 2025 tumuaki survey, where 84% (102 of 121) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that participation in MAC had improved their school's ability to deliver culturally responsive teaching practices for Māori learners, including almost half (48%, 59 of 121) who strongly agreed (Figure 13).

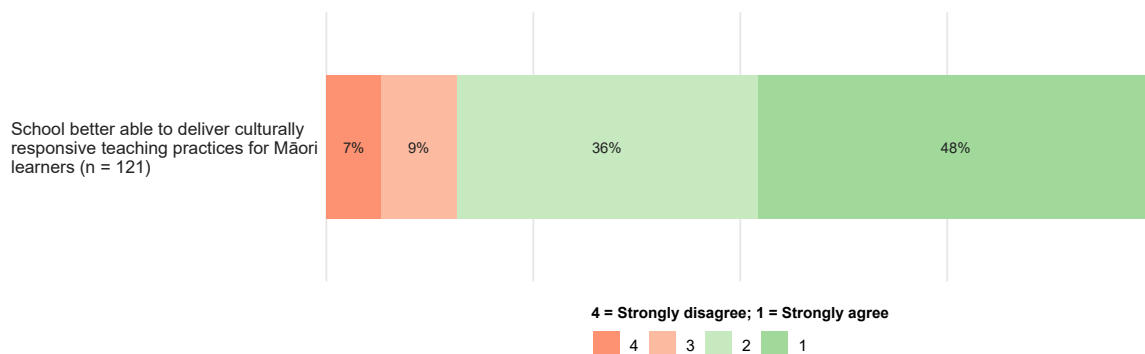


FIGURE 13: Impact of MAC on schools' ability to deliver culturally responsive teaching practices for Māori learners

These changes directly shaped pedagogy and curriculum content, including shifts in how te reo Māori was taught and learned and the integration of tikanga. Furthermore, schools adopted specific frameworks and tools to ensure teaching remained culturally grounded. The following example illustrates how one tumuaki led a shift towards more localised, place-based, and culturally grounded learning.

We had these epa that had arrived back in our country, and in our whare taonga, that were from our area, but they didn't have a lot of information around them, and I wanted to do a project around trying to predict the age. So, we had our ākonga involved in going through the archives in the museum, and looking at all of our artefacts, and having greenstone chisels aged, and we retrofitted old shipping nails to make them like the chisels. And we had these big wānanga to recreate parts of the epa, to work out the age.

And so that ... collaboration with iwi, with hapū, with our whare taonga staff ... [It] was really, really powerful. And so then we started evolving even the time that we spent on the marae—instead of painting Māori pictures on rocks, we had our tamariki presenting back about these projects they'd been involved with and teaching other kids about Taranaki and Te Ātiawa carving styles and getting the kids to practise doing that. Those that were into catering, we brought our local experts to teach about marae catering, instead of, 'Let's just have a hāngī' ...

So it was very, very cool, seeing that sort of shift away from what was traditionally quite token things to really deep, connecting learning that was valued by both our Māori and non-Māori whānau. Because we had out tauīwi tamariki involved, and their whānau came along to the wānanga on the weekends and were just as blown away as our own people. (Scott Walden, Tumuaki, Marfell Community School)

Strengthening relationships with hapū, iwi, and mana whenua

Most tumuaki involved with MAC reported increased engagement with whānau and community and stronger relationships with hapū and iwi. They recognised the important role these groups had in shaping teaching and learning. Tumuaiki shared examples of schools working in partnership with their communities, including co-designing learning experiences and responding to aspirations expressed by whānau and hapū.

So, in my kura, all of our students are able to do the mōteatea for 'Te Whare Tapu o Ngāpuhi' ... as part of their mihi when ... we've got taumata, or ... whenever we've got a pōwhiri or a whakatau ... One of the things that I wanted to do was to look at each of the maunga and ... [for] all of our ākonga to have a really in-depth understanding of that as a tupuna, and ... that we visit the marae there, ... learn about the tupuna, ... meet ... the hapū and the tangata whenua, ahi kā ... all of it. So ... every year, they do a different maunga, but when they leave at Year 8, they do a big hīkoi to every single maunga, and it takes a week ... They stay under the maunga at a marae, they ... have people come in and talk to them, but they have already done all this work right up till then ... I meet with those Year 8 students when they returned ... I tell you what—I could have sat there for *hours* listening to all of the new knowledge, all the new mātauranga Māori knowledge that they got on that hīkoi. That was it for me ... I said ... 'We've developed a programme where we were heading for that—for them, as ... tamariki o Ngāpuhi, [to be] able to articulate that mōteatea in-depth.' (Leanne Otene, President, NZPF)

Results from the 2025 tumuaki survey provide further evidence of these shifts. Over two-thirds of respondents (70%, 85 of 121) agreed or strongly agreed that their school was better able to work effectively with iwi as a result of their participation in MAC (Figure 14).

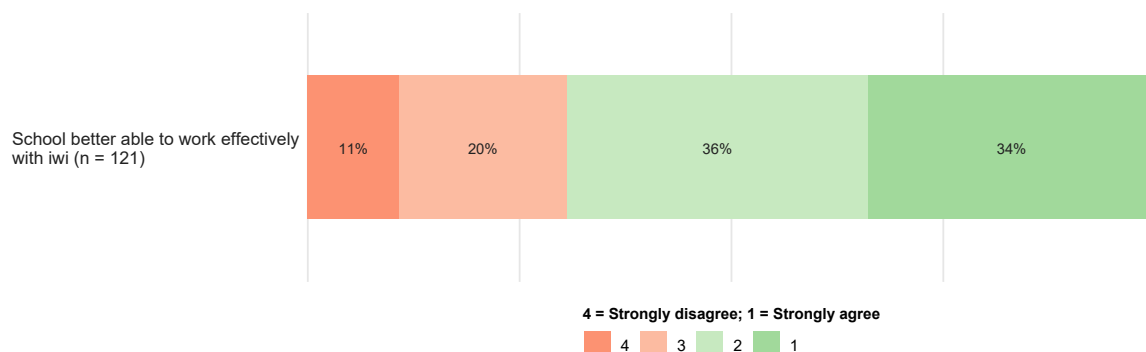


FIGURE 14: Impact of MAC on schools' ability to work effectively with iwi

Just under two-thirds of respondents (63%, 72 of 121) reported that MAC had a moderate (32%, 39 of 121) or considerable (31%, 38 of 121) impact on relationships with whānau, marae, and hapū/iwi, although responses showed slightly greater variation compared with other impact areas (Figure 15).

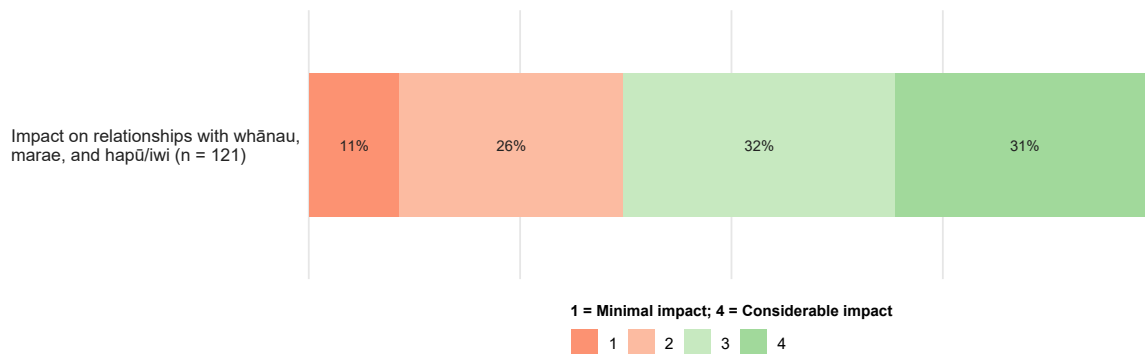


FIGURE 15: Impact of MAC on relationships with whānau, marae, and hapū/iwi

Developing localised curriculum

Most tumuaki highlighted the importance of developing localised curriculum and practice guided by hapū, iwi, and mana whenua. In the 2025 tumuaki survey, “local histories” was the third most frequently mentioned kaupapa worked on with MAC facilitators over the past two terms, reported by around half of respondents (48%, 58 of 121).

These findings aligned with the requirement gazetted in March 2022 that schools teach the new curriculum content for Aotearoa New Zealand’s histories in the *New Zealand Curriculum*, and Te Takanga o te Wā in *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* from 2023 onwards (Ministry of Education, 2022a, 2022b).

Place-based curriculum and teaching approaches grounded in local context, including pūrākau, histories, and whenua were seen to enhance the relevance and authenticity of learning within schools, and to strengthen ākonga connections to people, place, identity, and whakapapa.

5.3 Systems and structures

Changes to systems and structures were less frequently discussed in interviews than changes to school culture and pedagogy. However, the examples provided by interview participants, together with the survey findings, indicated that systems and structural changes were evident across MAC schools, and may be more widespread than the qualitative accounts along suggest.

Some tumuaki described how changes in school environments, pedagogy, and teaching practice were supported by strategic planning. This included deliberate efforts to embed commitment to including references to te ao Māori within strategic goals, reporting processes, and self-review practices.

We decided on ... a wee Te Tiriti o Waitangi leadership group. So, we’ve got [therapists] in there, a teacher in there, I’m in there, and another couple of senior leaders, and we look at ... the ‘Traffic Light’ ... the self-evaluation tool that MAC use, where you look at ... ‘Where are you?’ and ‘What things do you have to do next?’ So, we look at that together ... That generated me putting the Māori piece in as a strategic aim and then reporting to it every pānui that I send out fortnightly. So, there is a section called ‘Te Tiriti o Waitangi,’ and we talk about our work with MAC, or we talk about our work with Te Ara Whakamana, because we’ve brought that programme into our school, and also our work with Te Kāwarau ā Maki, our local iwi ... And the shifts for people around realising how important it is. (Louise Doyle, Principal, Oaklynn Special School)

Some tumuaki noted changes in staffing and appointments that reflected a commitment to te ao Māori, including efforts to recruit staff with relevant expertise, build capability within existing staff, and ensure expectations relating to te reo Māori and tikanga were clearly articulated.

I loved the fact that ... this time last year, when I advertised for teaching positions, I put in it that ... any applicant had to be able to function at level 4b—that was a non-negotiable requirement, and that brought a number of applications in that otherwise may not have, which is really cool. So, we're ticking along there really well. (Jen Rodgers, Principal, St Clair School)

A few tumuaki highlighted changes they saw were becoming embedded in school systems, and iwi or hapū representation at board level. Although less frequently mentioned, these accounts nevertheless indicate important movements toward more formalised or system-level changes.

In the last ... two and a half years, we've actually got a hapū—permanent hapū—seat on our Board of Trustees in that time as well. So, in terms of the Board's commitment, they've done it and it's there—it's a permanent seat, so they kind of have to keep putting their money where their mouth is ... for that partnership, or co-governance, 1 out of 7. (Rachael Coll, Tumuaki, Waihi Beach School)

A few tumuaki characterised MAC in ways that suggest it acts as a catalyst for wider school change, helping to strengthen, accelerate, or give greater clarity to broader transformation efforts.

Findings from the 2025 tumuaki survey suggest that systems and structural change may be more widespread across MAC schools than the interview data indicated. "Strategic planning" was identified as a kaupapa worked on with MAC facilitators over the past two terms by 43% of survey respondents. In addition, three-quarters of respondents (75%, 91 of 121) agreed or strongly agreed that Māori values and perspectives are embedded in school decision-making, policies, and everyday practices (Figure 16).



FIGURE 16: **Embedding of Māori values and perspectives in school decision-making, policies, and practice**

Similarly, just under three-quarters of respondents (71%, 86 of 121) agreed or strongly agreed that ākonga Māori opinions are actively considered in school-wide decision-making processes (Figure 17).

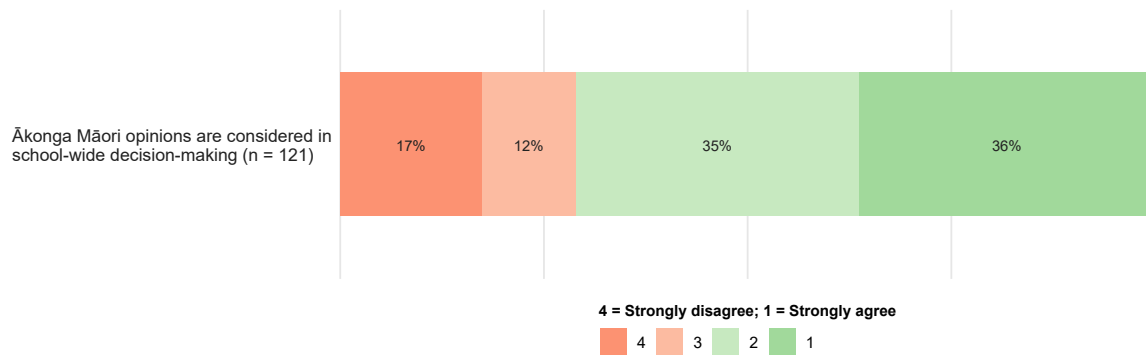


FIGURE 17: Inclusion of ākonga Māori perspectives in school-wide decision-making

Strong positive responses were evident in relation to leadership and governance impacts. Most respondents (85%, 103 of 121) agreed or strongly agreed that, as a result of MAC involvement, leadership, management, and governance had become more effective in creating and maintaining a welcoming and inclusive learning environment, including 59% (71 of 121) who strongly agreed (Figure 18).

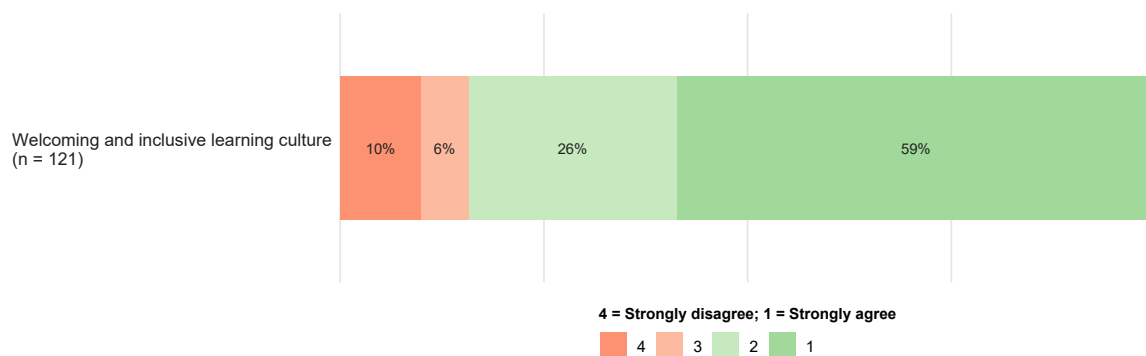


FIGURE 18: Impact of MAC on effectiveness of leadership management and governance in creating inclusive learning environments

Similarly, 86% (104 of 121) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that MAC had contributed to more effective leadership, management, and governance systems that support Māori learners to enjoy and achieve educational success as Māori, including over half (55%, 67 of 121) who strongly agreed (Figure 19).

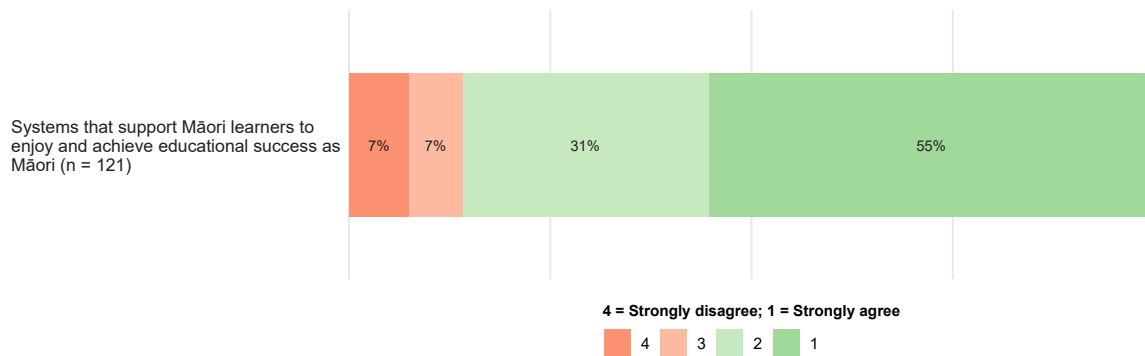


FIGURE 19: Impact of MAC on effectiveness of leadership management and governance in creating systems to support ākonga Māori success

5.4 Summary

Participation in MAC was associated with changes in school culture, pedagogy, and systems and structures.

Almost all interview participants talked about normalising te ao Māori within kura, and most reported that Māori values were increasingly shaping school values and culture. These changes, along with a growing sense of collective responsibility for culturally responsive and sustaining practice indicate an important widespread shift in school culture.

These shifts in culture were accompanied changes in pedagogy and curriculum, including increased use of culturally affirming teaching practices, stronger engagement with whānau and community, and localised approaches.

Changes to systems and structures were less frequently discussed in interviews. However, the qualitative accounts and survey findings indicated that such changes were evident across MAC schools, particularly in strategic planning, leadership, governance, decision-making, policies, and everyday practice.

The findings suggest a pattern of change in which shifts in leadership practice are associated first with changes in school culture and pedagogy, and then with changes in systems and structures.

6. Ngā hua mā ngā ākonga, mā ngā whānau, me te hāpori | Outcomes for ākonga, whānau, and community

For some of our kids, the biggest achievement is just that acknowledgement that 'I'm Māori' ... and being proud of that.
(Tumuaki)

This section identifies outcomes for ākonga Māori, other students, whānau, and the wider school community in terms of engagement, achievement, wellbeing, and cultural identity associated with participation in the MAC kaupapa.

Overall, these findings suggest that the changes identified in leadership practice and school environments are associated with meaningful shifts in how all ākonga, and whānau, experience and engage with schooling.

6.1 Ākonga Māori

Positive outcomes relating to ākonga Māori were reported by almost all participants. The most prominent changes observed related to identity, pride, and belonging, along with increased engagement, wellbeing, and achievement. These areas were often interconnected, with a stronger sense of identity and belonging underpinning broader changes in how ākonga Māori experienced school and their place within it.

Almost all participants highlighted strengthened cultural identity and pride as Māori as important outcomes. Ākonga were developing a stronger sense of who they were, and increased confidence to express their identity within school settings. This included greater participation in cultural practices, as well as a growing sense of belonging and legitimacy in being Māori within the school environment.

I got a young year-two Māori boy ... in one of the classes. He pipes up one day ... 'Oh, I like this teacher!'—Pākehā teacher—'She speaks Māori!' And that was powerful for him ... His identity is recognised, and it also gave a lift for the teacher ... to continue it more, because there's a kid in her class that's *soaking* up the reo, and he wanted it—*needed* it ... For me, I want those kids to be able to understand who they are as Māori ... and not be afraid to be Māori ... Be *proud* to be Māori. (Wayne Whitney, Tumuaki, Hikutaia School)

Participants noticed ākonga becoming proud of their identity, engaging more confidently in te ao Māori and developing a deeper understanding of their whakapapa and iwi connections. Māori identity was also increasingly visible and recognised within the school context, contributing to a sense that being Māori was valued, normal, and, for some, a source of strength.

We have our ākonga Māori—our whānau Māori—stand with pride in our kura because of ... what we've changed. We have this beautiful, big map, and everyone who is Māori ... can be on that map ... That's a *big* shift from being ... humble, but also whakamā, about being Māori, or not knowing that they're Māori, and if they did find out, then not knowing what to do with that. I love the fact ... that [the] kids are proud to be Māori. (Jen Rodgers, Principal, St Clair School)

Some participants noted outcomes for ākonga Māori related to improvements in engagement, attendance, wellbeing, and, in a few cases, achievement.

Our biggest thing is ... we've seen our achievement results for our tauira Māori sort of 'fly' because of that engagement and that sense of value. Like, at the end of last year, our kids that whakapapa Māori were outshining our non-Māori kids across the curriculum, and our results were significantly [better]—our Māori students were achieving better—and a whole lot of that processing was around that value and the fact that ... we made a real effort to ensure that they were getting the things that they needed ... Not through adaptation or changing anything, but just around that ... little bit of extra support through that processing ... MAC's been really useful in that space. (Tumuaki)

In these examples, ākonga were seen as being more motivated to attend school, more connected to their learning and environment, and more confident in themselves and their relationships.

The 'achievement' is lifting the achievement through the attendance. So, our attendance wasn't great, but we're seeing [it improve], because the kids are really motivated and want to come to school, and we've put a lot of support in. (Katherine Pascoe, Principal, Puketapu School)

Coming back this year ... we did some wellbeing surveys and, having seen a couple other schools' wellbeing surveys, we were really strong—that the kids feel connected, belonging, respected ... It really came through clear that their culture was being respected, and they got to learn their culture. (Steve Bodger, Tumuaki, Benneydale School)

A few participants noted increased access to Māori pathways and greater choice for ākonga Māori, including opportunities to engage in bilingual or immersion education.

One of my goals is for our year eights to leave and have a choice. When they get to college, to follow a bilingual pathway, or a rumaki pathway. Have a choice. I didn't have that choice. It was taken away from me, so I guess trying to make sure that they got that choice and giving them the tools if they wanna follow that pathway. (Wayne Whitney, Tumuaki, Hikutaia School)

They can also see themselves in other kura—in other spaces now—that they might not have before. (Mel Jewiss, Kaihoe Mātauranga, MAC)

The findings suggest a consistent pattern where strengthened cultural identity as Māori and connection within kura are associated with broader positive shifts in how ākonga Māori experience schooling, as noted in recent studies by Bright and Webber (2024), and Webber and Macfarlane (2020).

It might not be in our lifetime, but if I've empowered my Māori kids to be proud to be Māori, and they're achieving, then their kids aren't gonna deal with what their parents had to deal with. (Tumuaki)

Quantitative indicators of outcomes for ākonga Māori

Quantitative findings from the 2025 tumuaki survey, alongside attendance and progress data reported to the Ministry (MAC, 2026), provide further evidence of positive outcomes for ākonga Māori.

These measures should not be viewed as direct proof of cause and effect, as many factors—including involvement with MAC—likely combined to drive this change. However, it is reasonable to suggest that MAC contributed to these positive outcomes. Furthermore, these specific measures are not the only important signs of success—rather, they look at one part of a much broader story.

Attendance and progress data reported by MAC to the Ministry of Education (MAC, 2026) were collected from kura working with MAC facilitators across 2024 and 2025 ($n = 142$). Schools were asked to report the number of ākonga Māori meeting or exceeding expected progress in Pānui/Reading, Tuhituhi/Writing, and Pāngarau/Mathematics as at 1 March 2024 and 1 March 2025. Tumuaki-reported progress

data indicate positive shifts across all three learning areas, with increased proportions of ākonga Māori reported as meeting or exceeding expected progress in Pānui/Reading, Tuhituhi/Writing, and Pāngarau/Mathematics (Table 3).

TABLE 3: **Percentage of ākonga Māori reported by tumuaki to be meeting or exceeding expected progress¹**

Year	Pānui/Reading (%)	Tuhituhi/Writing (%)	Pāngarau/Mathematics (%)
2024	62.9	55.1	63.2
2025	67.6	57.3	66.1

Although these data are based on school-reported measures and should be interpreted cautiously, the overall pattern suggests perceived improvement in learning progress outcomes for ākonga Māori.

Kura also reported Term 1 attendance data for 2024 and 2025. These data show an increase in the proportion of ākonga Māori attending school more than 90% of the time, alongside attendance rates consistently higher than national Māori averages across both years (Table 4).

TABLE 4: **Ākonga Māori attendance rates (Term 1, 2024–25)²**

Year	MAC schools (%)	National Māori (%)
2024	54.95	47.2
2025	65.2	51.3

While attendance is used here primarily as a proxy indicator of engagement rather than achievement, these findings align with qualitative accounts describing increased motivation to attend school, stronger cultural belonging, and deeper connection to learning and school environments.

MAC reporting suggests that school leaders perceived culturally sustaining practices as contributing positively to student progress, attendance, and achievement (MAC, 2026, pp. 17–8). Across 10 survey items relating to culturally responsive and sustaining leadership, teaching practice, te reo Māori, localised curriculum, relationships, and partnerships with whānau, hapū, and iwi, 69% of responses indicated these practices had a “significant” or “considerable” impact on outcomes for ākonga Māori (MAC, 2026, pp. 17–8).

The highest levels of perceived impacts were reported for improved relationships with ākonga (81.9%), the normalisation of te reo Māori (77.3%), culturally sustaining teaching practice (75.0%), and deeper understanding of Māori achieving success as Māori (70.8%).

Similarly, findings from the 2025 tumuaki survey indicated broadly positive perceptions of outcomes for ākonga Māori across a range of domains. Overall, 79% (96 of 121) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Māori learners were enjoying and achieving educational success as Māori, including over one-third (34%, 41 of 121) who strongly agreed (Figure 20).

1 Percentages were calculated from aggregated counts reported by MAC (2026, p. 16)

2 MAC school attendance data sourced from MAC reporting to the Ministry of Education (MAC, 2026, p. 16). National Māori attendance data sourced from Ministry of Education regular attendance data for Term 1, 2024–2025 (Ministry of Education, 2025).

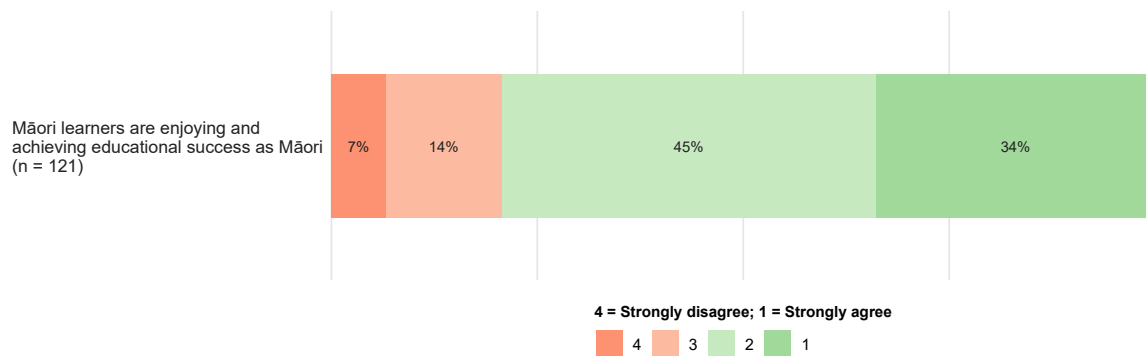


FIGURE 20: Views of ākonga Māori success—Māori learners are enjoying and achieving educational success as Māori

A similar proportion of tumuaki (79%, 96 of 121) agreed or strongly agreed that Māori learners were experiencing the learning gains needed to achieve across the curriculum, including 31% (38 of 121) who strongly agreed (Figure 21).

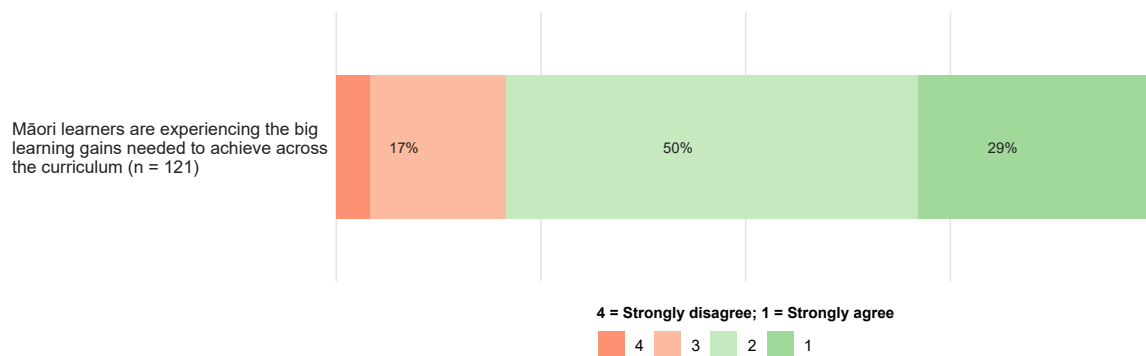


FIGURE 21: Views of ākonga Māori success—Māori learners are experiencing the big learning gains needed to achieve across the curriculum

Responses relating to wellbeing and broader flourishing were predominantly positive. Around three-quarters of respondents (73%, 88 of 121) agreed or strongly agreed that ākonga Māori were thriving socially, in wellbeing, and academically, including one-third (32%, 39 of 121) who strongly agreed (Figure 22).

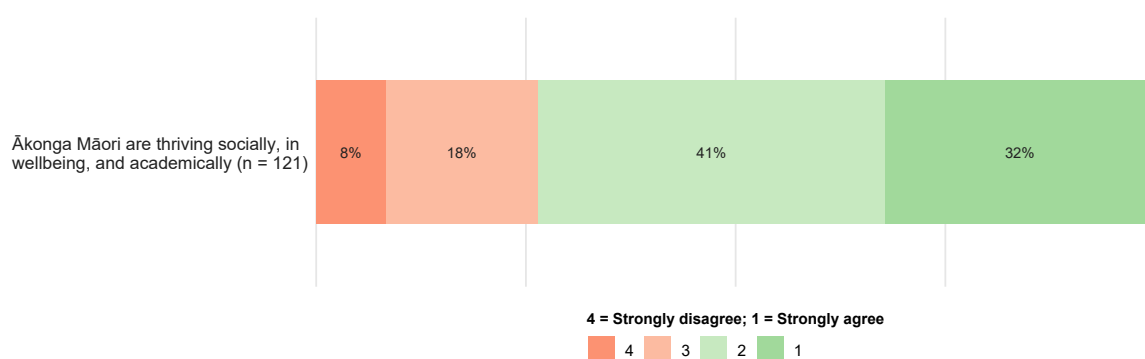


FIGURE 22: Views of ākonga Māori success—Ākonga Māori are thriving socially, in wellbeing, and academically

Similarly, 77% (93 of 121) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had observed improvements in ākonga Māori engagement, confidence, and participation as a result of MAC involvement, including one-third (31%, 38 of 121) who strongly agreed (Figure 23).

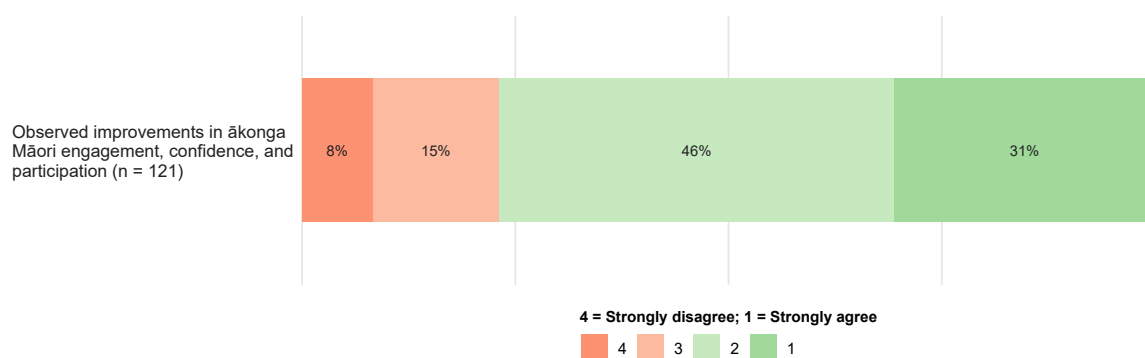


FIGURE 23: Views of ākonga Māori success—Observed improvements in ākonga Māori engagement, confidence, and participation

The quantitative findings broadly reinforce the patterns identified in qualitative accounts reporting changes related to strengthened identity, belonging, engagement, and confidence among ākonga Māori, alongside perceived improvements in wellbeing, participation, and educational success. However, the presence of a smaller proportion of negative responses across survey items suggests that these shifts remain uneven across contexts and that, for some schools, this work is ongoing.

6.2 Students (non-Māori)

Most participants reported positive outcomes for non-Māori students. The most visible changes related to increased understanding of te ao Māori and more active participation in cultural practices.

Some participants shared examples of non-Māori students actively participating in te ao Māori in everyday practice. This included the use of te reo Māori in classroom and informal settings, participation in kapa haka, and engagement in tikanga-based practices such as karakia, mihi, and pepeha. These practices were increasingly part of everyday school life, with students engaging confidently and, in some instances, taking on leadership roles in cultural practices.

It has also given confidence of students to be the leads in some of our classrooms where we know kaiaiko are not as strong, or not as confident, and that certainly has been amazing. (Principal)

A few participants noted that non-Māori students were developing greater cultural awareness and a stronger understanding of te ao Māori, including increased awareness of language and tikanga. At times, this was associated with reflection on identity and place, particularly where engagement with te ao Māori prompted students to consider their own cultural positioning.

For non-Māori, that enlightenment or awareness of a cultural worldview ... 'What does that mean for me in my culture?' ... And [it] open[s] the door. (Kim Nikora, Kaihoe Mātauranga, MAC)

We have ... kids who say, 'I want to be Māori', which is really sweet to see. (Natasha Luxford, Assistant Principal, St Joseph's Catholic School)

It just adds a richness, and it doesn't take anything away from celebrating te ao Māori. And I think that that's that cultural identity, because we pay so much attention to our ākonga Māori and now, as a[n] offshoot of that, all cultures, *all* of our [students' cultures are affirmed]. And one of our values is 'belonging', because we want everyone to bring their whole self to school and not have to put any of it away. (Jen Rodgers, Principal, St Clair School)

In these instances, the normalisation of te ao Māori shaped how students more broadly understood and engaged with the cultural context of Aotearoa.

6.3 Students (all)

In addition to the group-specific outcomes described above, participants identified outcomes evident for all students, regardless of ethnicity. These were most often expressed in terms of engagement, participation, and connection to learning—particularly where teaching and learning drew on local context and culturally-grounded approaches.

Most tumuaki highlighted increased student agency and cultural leadership, including students leading karakia, mihi, and pepeha within classrooms and school events, as well as taking increasing responsibility for the enactment of tikanga in everyday school life. Students were also seen initiating and shaping practices within their schools, including influencing routines, supporting peers, and contributing to wider school developments.

All of our year sixes—even our wahine toa—are involved in mihimihi and pepeha processing for all of our assemblies. And so that's just what they do, and they lead that kara. And I guess our celebration is that ... we have a school where ... this year, we're 12.5% Māori population. 65 of our kids out of a roll of 130 are involved in our school kapa haka—so slightly less than 50%—but in the last three years, all of the kaea at our local intermediate kapa haka have all been from our school. And so they go into that space, and they own it. (Tumuaki)

Most tumuaki also reported improved wellbeing and sense of belonging for students, suggesting that more relational and culturally grounded environments supported students to feel more connected within school.

One of the things the MAC group helped us drive was ... 'Pae Kōrero' ... We've implemented that this year, so yeah, it starts [the day] in a tikanga[-based] way. Karakia, waiata. Every student will do their pepeha over the year, and they mihi to each other. There's a structure that we've kind of developed alongside the other MAC schools, and it's just a really powerful way to start the day. The kids are confident in their pepeha, and it's really ... Yeah, that confidence is beautiful to see flourish. (Nic Mason, Tumuaki, Winchester School)

Some tumuaki observed changes to student engagement and attendance, which they often linked to learning that reflected local stories, histories, and contexts.

The attendance has improved. Attendance is always better for Māori kids. It tends to be, in MAC schools, a little bit better ... [because] the kids like coming to school, because what they're learning about is about themselves, about the stories. And non-Māori kids too, because they're learning about the place where they are, and they're very open to that—kids—and excited and go home and share it. And mostly that's a positive. We're hearing positive feedback about that, not kickback so much. Like, 'Oh, I didn't know those stories! I didn't know that's why it's named [that].' (Anaru Morgan, Kaiurungi Mātauranga, MAC)

6.4 Ākonga perspectives

The 2025 survey of ākonga ($n = 886$) conducted by MAC included a set of open-ended questions that allowed ākonga to share their thoughts about identity, cultural connection, and learning within MAC kura.

A small selection of these responses is included in this report to provide some insights into ākonga perspectives. Not all respondents explicitly identified as ākonga Māori, and some responses do not contain sufficient contextual information to confirm identity. Accordingly, these responses are presented as student perspectives more generally, rather than as representative findings for any specific group.

Cultural identity, pride, and belonging

The responses from some of the ākonga surveyed expressed their deep connection to Māori identity, cultural pride, te reo Māori and tikanga.

I'm proud to be Māori and would love others to appreciate our language and our overall culture.

Te Reo Māori and its customs are important as they are the foundation of Aotearoa's unique culture and provide insight into our past through the stories passed down by our elders.

It's important for us to learn about it and embrace it because it's who we are and where we come from.

At the same time, many ākonga were critically aware of the every-day impacts that colonisation and racism have had on their generations of their whānau. The following responses from ākonga show this awareness. Importantly they show the hopefulness and pride in the positive changes that their generation are experiencing in MAC schools.

It's our country's culture. My aunties and uncles were hit at school for speaking te reo (they're still alive btw), and by God's grace giving people strength to change people's mindsets, we are able to appreciate how far our community has come.

Me and my Whānau have unfortunately lost a lot of our knowledge on our iwi and whakapapa, and we would really like to learn more. It would also allow us to reconnect with our past.

My dad wasn't allowed to speak te reo outside of the home growing up during the 70s/80s, so he forgot it, and my parents want me and my brother to learn te reo pass it on to our tamariki (since my parents never had the opportunity to do that for us).

Aspirations for te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, and mātauranga Māori

The following ākonga responses illustrate the influence of whānau aspirations for te reo Māori on how ākonga view their heritage language and their active role in transmitting the language.

My whānau heavily encourages me to learn and embrace my Māori heritage by speaking Te Reo and understanding more about Tikanga Māori.

I feel my whanau want me to learn Māori because it will be good for me and where I come from to learn that and to be able to relate and talk to my people and for my future children. I want them to be able to keep it alive.

My parents feel proud that I am learning Te Reo and Tikanga Māori because they want me to grow more with my culture.

Several ākonga emphasised the importance of supporting and maintaining te reo, tikanga, and mātauranga Māori for future generations.

We must keep our culture alive. if we stop, it will die out! which is not a good thing!

As a Māori you should feel safe and able to continue on the practises which your ancestors were able to do. but you don't feel safe as it has been stripped away which is why it is important to keep learning it and embracing it as our parents and grandparents weren't able too.

We as a culture are a minority in its own country. We as Māori people have had to adhere to British customs and fight for our land again and again. Our ancestors had their reo slapped and beaten out of them to the point where we almost lost our language. This trauma has affected many generations to come because now I have to learn my reo as a teenager and learn more about my whakapapa. One thing that I connected with the most was Kapa Haka. Whaea [name] would teach us songs and teach us the meanings behind them. I also got to go to koroneihana and perform in front of the Māori Kingii and be proud about my culture and not be so whakamā about it.

Learning experience and school context

Responses from ākonga about their experiences of learning about Aotearoa New Zealand's histories, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and mātauranga Māori within school settings highlight the importance of access to cultural learning. In some cases, the responses showed the emotional complexity and tensions that can accompany such learning.

Their comments illustrate how kura are both sites of cultural knowledge, and contexts where broader historical and contemporary realities are navigated.

We have learned about Te Tiriti, the relationships between Māori and Pākehā, and land confiscation.

Not all of us get this at home, some get some and others get none. So having a space/environment where we can experience this can be very comforting and also beneficial to our growth within te ao Māori.

I have learned how Papa & Ranginui and how Tawhirimatea ripped his eyes out and crushed them and threw them into the night sky and it formed matariki.

We learn about the Māori gods, about when the first English settlers came to NZ and meet the Māori of the land.

Ākonga provided examples of their engagement in leadership and cultural responsibility across school, whānau, and community contexts—for example, supporting others, leading cultural practices, and contributing within whānau and marae settings.

I've helped with the Noho Marae and was a group leader but I was trying my best to help all the groups. Probably just a role model for reo Māori and a helper for future kids.

Karanga for visitors, lead karakia for school, lead karakia kai. Lead karakia in class and lead waiata. Lead the roll and greet in Te Reo.

Looking after my family and the young ones, being a role model and setting the standards as the oldest.

6.5 Whānau and community

In the 2025 tumuaki survey, 79% (96 of 121) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their school was better able to engage parents, family, and whānau in supporting outcomes for ākonga Māori, including just under one-third (30%, 36 of 121) who strongly agreed (Figure 24).

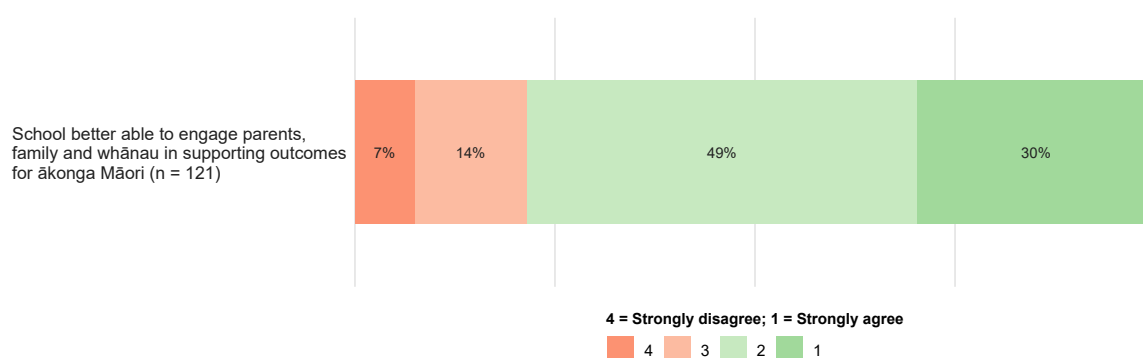


FIGURE 24: Impact of MAC on school's ability to better engage parents, family, and whānau in supporting outcomes for ākonga Māori

One of the things that ... has been really important for us is actually strengthening our whānau partnerships. And so that's one of our strategic goals, but also, actually, how do we do that ... for our Māori whānau? And how do we deepen that connection with kaiako, with ākonga, and whānau Māori? And really hearing their expectations—really hearing what they want for ... their children, and then providing what they saw as that success and celebration. (Tumuaki)

Most tumuaki noted that Māori culture was becoming more visible and valued within the school community, including among non-Māori families. One tumuaki shared a story about a parent whose positive attitude towards te reo Māori came as a welcome surprise.

I had one kid—an incident with a kid—he goes, 'What are we learning all this "Māori shit" for?' ... The same kid ... his old man turned up to a whānau hui, and I was like, 'Oh ... Here we go ...' And we were sharing some of the mahi that we were doing—we were having te reo lessons for our staff—and he puts his hand up. 'So ... When are you gonna do those te reo lessons for us?' ... And I was like, 'Woah ...' I wasn't expecting that. So, there was a big shift within some of our community. (Wayne Whitney, Tumuaki, Hikutaia School)

Some participants noted increased engagement between schools and hapū, iwi, and mana whenua, indicating that MAC is contributing to positive outcomes beyond the school itself. A few participants noted that kaumātua contributions were being more consistently recognised and resourced within school contexts.

The other aspect is ... the kaumātua, grandparents' day, whānau days, and all those things really targeting our hapū. They are always invited ... and everybody at the school knows, if Uncle John arrives, you drop *every single thing* you're doing. You cancel the meeting, hang up the phone, have a cup of tea, and a biscuit ... They're so revered in our community. (Rachael Coll, Tumuaki, Waihi Beach School)

A few participants referred to whānau expressing pride in their children's participation in te ao Māori, as well as ākonga sharing their learning with whānau at home.

I had a pāpā come up to me in the car park, and he said to me, ‘You know, I was up the bush the other day, riding the horses, and my girl was singing all these Māori waiata—she’d never done that before’ ... That same pāpā ... [also] said, ‘My youngest, her baby, did her pepeha for her first time in front of her koro, and he passed away a couple of weeks ago, but he was in tears’ ... Even when I tell it now, I’m [getting emotional,] because that’s how big it is ... It makes you keep doing what you’re doing. (Wayne Whitney, Tumuaki, Hikutaia School)

6.6 Summary: Outcomes across groups

Positive outcomes that can be linked to the influence that MAC has had on tumuaki and school environments were evident across a wide range of groups, including ākonga Māori, students more broadly, whānau, and the wider school community.

For ākonga Māori, the most prominent outcomes related to having a strong sense of identity, pride, and belonging. For other students, benefits were most visible in increased engagement and participation in te ao Māori, and a growing sense of connection to place and identity. For whānau and community, outcomes centred on strengthened relationships and connections with schools, increased involvement, and shared cultural pride.

While outcomes are most consistently and strongly reported for ākonga Māori, the data suggest positive ripple effects for non-Māori students as well—particularly in relation to engagement, cultural understanding, and belonging within schools.

7. He aromātai, he akoranga mō te anamata | An evaluative determination and implications for the future

7.1 Key evaluation questions

This section provides a summarised response to the key evaluation questions, based on the evidence synthesised in this report regarding the development of the MAC kaupapa, how it operates, and the positive impact MAC has had in changing leadership practice, school environments, and outcomes for ākonga and wider school communities. It offers an account of how change occurs through engagement with MAC, the pathways through which this change unfolds, and the implications of these findings for leadership development and system-level change.

KEQ 1: How has the Māori Achievement Collaborative developed over time?

The MAC kaupapa has evolved over time, supported by funding from the Ministry of Education, to meet the urgent and ongoing demand from schools for leadership development support to assist leaders to better meet the needs of ākonga Māori. The findings presented in this report describe a culturally grounded huarahi—pathway of change—through which MAC has contributed to shifts in leadership practice, school environments, and outcomes for ākonga Māori, all students, whānau, and wider school communities.

The reach of MAC has grown exponentially over time as more tumuaki and schools joined the kaupapa. This continued demand suggests that the MAC kaupapa has remained current and useful as it has scaled up, which is an indication of the value of the kaupapa.

KEQ 2: What are the critical success factors underpinning the Māori Achievement Collaborative?

The critical success factors underpinning the MAC kaupapa that have enabled it to “change the hearts and minds of tumuaki and school communities” have included: a strong focus on relationships (between facilitators and tumuaki, staff and whānau, tumuaki and peers), supportive and transformational learning environments, relational and skilled facilitation practice that creates space for challenge and reflection, and experiential learning, so school leaders could become strong change agents.

KEQ 3: What changes have occurred in school leaders’ practice as a result of involvement in the Māori Achievement Collaborative?

Tumuaki and facilitators attributed the strengthening of the following leadership practices to their involvement in the MAC kaupapa:

- critically conscious and courageous leadership
- awareness of personal identity, power, and positionality
- culturally grounded, values-driven leadership
- valuing Māori identity and knowledge of te ao Māori
- collective responsibility and peer-support
- ability to support change/learning in others (the ripple effect).

These changes were enabled by the supportive environments created by MAC facilitators provided the conditions for these changes, enabling leaders to engage in critical reflection, constructive challenge, and learning with peers.

KEQ 4: What changes in schools, pedagogy, and teaching practice is the Māori Achievement Collaborative contributing to?

Through its focus on changing leadership practice, the Māori Achievement Collaborative has contributed to changing school environments, pedagogy, and teaching practice. Positive shifts were most evident in:

- school culture and values
- sense of collective responsibility
- use of te reo Māori and tikanga in everyday school life
- culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy
- relationships with whānau, hapū, iwi, and mana whenua
- curriculum content
- systems and structures.

Overall, participants commonly described schools as shifting from symbolic or superficial engagement with te ao Māori toward more embedded and locally grounded practice.

KEQ 5: What outcomes have been observed for ākonga Māori, other students, whānau, and the wider school community, in terms of engagement, achievement, wellbeing, and cultural identity?

The people interviewed for this evaluation identified a range of outcomes for ākonga Māori, other students, whānau, and the wider school community that MAC had contributed to in terms of engagement, achievement, wellbeing, and cultural identity.

Findings suggest that the changes identified in leadership practice and school environments influenced positive shifts in how ākonga and whānau experienced and engaged with schooling. Greater involvement in classroom activities was most evident where shifts in leadership and school practice were sustained over time. In some cases, these shifts contributed to reported improvements in attendance and achievement.

Students' sense of identity, belonging, and wellbeing appeared to be strengthened, particularly in schools where knowledge associated with te ao Māori was integrated into everyday school life. More broadly, changes in leadership practice were considered to contribute to more inclusive and culturally affirming environments for all learners and whānau.

KEQ 6: What lessons can be drawn from the development and implementation of the Māori Achievement Collaborative?

The findings from this evaluation signify several key lessons for leadership development and system-level change.

Skilled facilitation is an essential support for leaders' professional and personal development

The combination of credibility and constructive challenge provided by MAC facilitators enabled tumuaki to grapple with complex issues relating to equity, identity, and practice. Skilled facilitation and mentoring created a relational foundation that enabled facilitators to start with the needs of leaders and their schools, work at their pace, and support shifts in their thinking and practice rather than deliver a set programme.

Networks of relationships are critical to maintaining effective leadership practice

MAC has had a strong focus on whanaungatanga, trust, and non-judgemental environments that enable leaders to reflect on and challenge their assumptions and change deficit practices. The peer-networks created through MAC have supported tumuaki to continue this work. Participants in the evaluation noted the importance of ongoing support for leaders, particularly for those engaged with the kaupapa for longer periods.

The MAC kaupapa influences change at multiple levels—the ripple effect

The critical success criteria that the MAC kaupapa is built upon have enabled it to influence learning and change far beyond its initial target group of principals. The evaluation found that the MAC kaupapa has travelled throughout schools and communities. Principals who have moved to other schools have successfully taken and implemented their learnings from MAC in these new settings. There is evidence that MAC has contributed to systemic change. Arguably, MAC has the potential to have similar and widespread impact in other leadership contexts outside of schools.

Further research

This evaluation has provided insights into how tumuaki and facilitators experienced and described change attributed to involvement with MAC. Further research—particularly longitudinal or case study approaches—would be useful to more deeply examine how changes unfold in specific settings.

7.2 Evaluative rubric and determination

We have drawn on the framing of the progressions in *Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori* to create an evaluative rubric to determine the extent to which the MAC kaupapa has performed in relation to the key evaluation questions (Table 5). The rubric has been used to consider the strength, consistency, and depth of evidence across the evaluation as a whole.

The five progressions within the evaluative rubric are named for the five learning progressions used in *Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori*: *Ki te Wheiao*, *ki te Ao Mārama*. The progressions are based on a metaphor that describes the early stages of creation through to the germination of a seed beginning with Te Pū and progressing upwards towards Te Rea (Pearson, et al., 2022, p. 24).

The descriptions for each of the progressions within the rubric have been mapped to the short, intermediate, and long-term outcomes of the 2026 Theory of Change developed through the evaluation.

TABLE 5: Overall evaluative rubric mapped to the 2026 Theory of Change

Te Whakapapa Ako	Outcome progressions for MAC schools in earlier cohorts	Changes for communities, structures, and systems at each stage of progression
<i>Ki te wheiao, ki te ao marama – a critical mass of school leaders, staff, ākonga and communities who champion strategies that result in equitable education outcomes</i>		
Te Rea <i>The hair root</i>	Strong and consistent evidence of change across multiple intermediate and long-term outcomes. Changes are sustained and embedded in everyday practice in nearly all MAC schools. Evidence from different sources aligns and demonstrates clear, meaningful impact for tumuaki and staff (schools).	The MAC kaupapa is widely known, has spread to new schools and reaches regional, national and international forums. Nearly all schools have authentic partnerships with whānau, hapū and iwi.
<i>Ākonga Māori engage in relevant authentic and culturally affirming contexts and enjoy and achieve educational and cultural success as Māori</i>		
Te Aka <i>The rhizome</i>	Strong and consistent evidence of change across some intermediate and long-term outcomes. Changes are becoming embedded across many MAC schools. Evidence from multiple sources is broadly consistent and demonstrates meaningful impacts.	Evidence of some spread to new schools and leaders and organisations (outside of MAC schools). Many schools have authentic partnerships with whānau, hapū and iwi.
Te More <i>The laterals</i>	Some evidence of change across some short and intermediate-term outcomes. Changes are not consistent or fully embedded across MAC schools. Evidence is emerging or uneven, and demonstrates meaningful impacts in some instances.	Evidence of some spread to new schools and leaders.
<i>A change in the hearts and minds of principals</i>		
Te Weu <i>The taproot</i>	Emerging evidence of change to short-term outcomes. Good progress but not yet further spread or embedded.	Schools value relationships with and are starting to develop authentic partnerships with whānau, hapū and iwi.
Te Pū <i>The shoot</i>	Limited evidence of change to short-term outcomes. Changes are not yet established or sustained.	

The progressions in the left column describe the extent to which the MAC kaupapa has contributed to outcomes for MAC schools. Given it takes several years to create change in school culture as the Theory of Change illustrates, we focused on data from earlier cohorts involved with the MAC kaupapa to make an evaluative determination. We would expect schools from newer cohorts to be at an earlier stage, which is the general pattern we observed. The way the cohorts appeared to go through similar patterns of change provides additional evidence the MAC kaupapa is contributing to the changes observed.

The progressions in the right column describe the extent to which the MAC kaupapa has contributed to broader changes for communities, structures, and systems.

The evaluative determinations have been made through discussions between the evaluators and the MAC team, drawing on evidence from the qualitative and quantitative data presented in this report.

- Overall, we would place the contribution of MAC towards outcomes for MAC schools at Te Rea.
- Overall, we would place the contribution of MAC towards changes in communities, structures, and systems at Te Aka.

7.3 Theory of Change for the Māori Achievement Collaborative

The MAC Theory of Change provides an iterative framework for understanding how the MAC kaupapa intends to support and influence change over time.

The 2026 Theory of Change developed through this evaluation has been informed by MAC documentation, a narrative Theory of Change that was developed in the first 3 years of MAC's operation (Webber, 2017), and insights generated through engagement with MAC leadership, facilitators, and tumuaki during this evaluation. Creating the 2026 Theory of Change increased our understanding of the journey and the stages of learning and change for school leaders and others.

A comparison of the Theories of Change from 2017 and 2026 highlighted significant shifts over time in the focus of MAC as early outcomes were achieved and new outcomes became possible. This is an indication of the effectiveness of the MAC kaupapa and its ability to evolve and adapt as new needs and opportunities arose to influence school environments.

2026 Theory of Change highlights in a narrative form

MAC emerged as a collective response to the education system's failure to meet its obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi to provide equitable access and opportunities to support ākonga Māori to achieve success on their own terms. It began in 2013 with a group of passionate principals who recognised the need for schools to do better for ākonga Māori. They mentored peers who came to them for help while continuing in their own roles as principals. They knew that "Māori educational success as Māori" would only become a reality when every school principal truly understood in their heart and in their mind, what that meant. Over time this initial work, supported by the Ministry of Education, solidified into a kaupapa with clear driving values and practices and a shared vision to create personal, institutional and system change.

MAC facilitators have walked alongside tumuaki, providing mentorship and supporting experiential learning within school contexts. These facilitators have created environments in which tumuaki can engage openly and honestly without fear of judgement. This is particularly important given the nature of the learning involved which often includes having difficult conversations and critically reflecting on practice. For tumuaki, MAC has raised critical awareness and inspired a heightened passion for equity. MAC has helped tumuaki to grow in confidence and courage, to become leaders who recognise and disrupt deficit narratives about ākonga Māori.

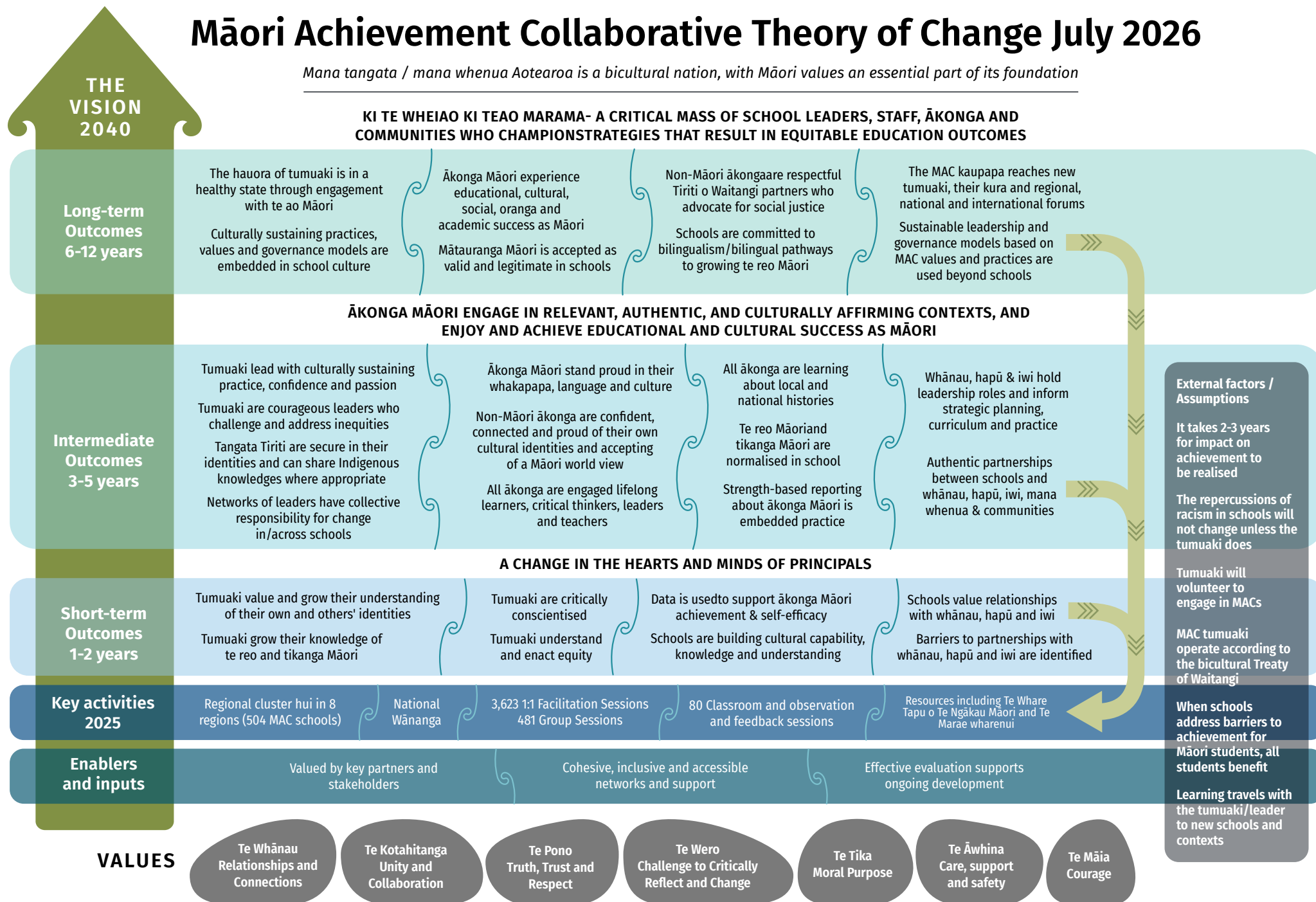
Over time MAC extended its reach to more schools and expanded to deliver group facilitation via regional and cluster-based hui and sustained one-to-one work with tumuaki. By 2025, MAC was working with over 500 schools across Aotearoa New Zealand, including many kura that remained connected to the kaupapa for significant amounts of time.

The process of change associated with the influence of MAC has occurred in ripples. The term “ripple” suggests that change can happen in uneven and non-linear ways in an organic process that relies on relationships and shared values for continued momentum and reach. From changing the hearts and minds of tumuaki and their leadership practice, the ripples have spread outward to create a stronger sense of collective responsibility in staff, whānau, ākonga and communities. The kaupapa has positively influenced school culture and values, pedagogy, curriculum, systems and structures, and supported the normalisation of te reo Māori and tikanga in schools. It has strengthened relationships with whānau, hapū, iwi and mana whenua. These changes have supported ākonga Māori, other students, whānau, and the wider school community to experience positive outcomes in terms of engagement, achievement, wellbeing, and cultural identity.

The ripples have now spread beyond MAC schools to other schools and organisations indicating that MAC has contributed to systemic shifts in education. Although MAC is no longer funded by the Ministry of Education the kaupapa is continuing in a new form, staying true to its vision to change hearts and minds.

Māori Achievement Collaborative Theory of Change July 2026

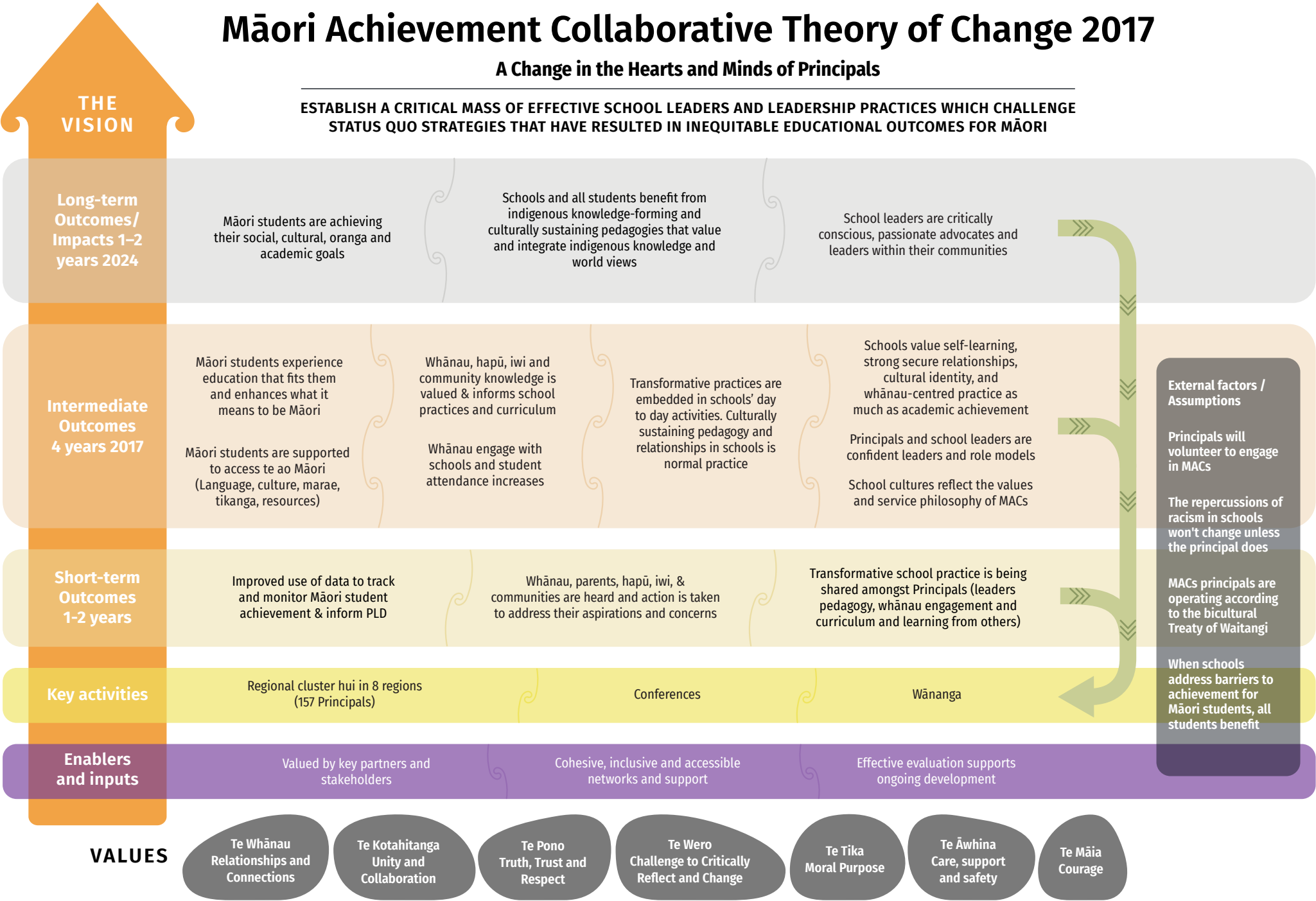
Mana tangata / mana whenua Aotearoa is a bicultural nation, with Māori values an essential part of its foundation



Māori Achievement Collaborative Theory of Change 2017

A Change in the Hearts and Minds of Principals

ESTABLISH A CRITICAL MASS OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LEADERS AND LEADERSHIP PRACTICES WHICH CHALLENGE STATUS QUO STRATEGIES THAT HAVE RESULTED IN INEQUITABLE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR MĀORI



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APPENDIX A

Te kōhi raraunga | Evaluation data collection methods

Data collection methods

The qualitative and quantitative data collection methods used in this evaluation are outlined below (Table A1 and Table A3).

Data collection and analysis were undertaken in 2025 and therefore reflect the kaupapa as it was operating during that period. As MAC has continued to evolve, the report was further refined in 2026 through feedback and sense-making hui with MAC leadership.

Qualitative methods

TABLE A1: Summary of qualitative data collection methods and participants

Method	Description	Participants (n)
Initial workshop with MAC team	Workshop to further develop the Theory of Change and identify potential participants.-	19
Wānanga with MAC facilitators	Group wānanga to explore experiences of facilitation and programme delivery.	8
Wānanga with tumuaki	Group wānanga with tumuaki across three cohorts based on time since initial involvement (see Table A2), enabling exploration of both more recent and longer-term experiences and impacts. Six wānanga were conducted (three kanohi ki te kanohi and three additional online), with additional online wānanga held to address low initial participation and ensure sufficient representation.	15
Key informant interviews	Interviews with MAC programme leaders and individuals involved in the development of the kaupapa.	3
Hui ā-tau observations	Participation in MAC hui ā-tau to observe proceedings, listen to speakers, presenters, and participants, and gain contextual insights to inform the evaluation.	N/A
Document review	Review of internal MAC materials and relevant publications.	N/A
Sense-making hui	Hui with MAC leadership to test and refine findings.	8

TABLE A2: Tumuaki wānanga cohorts

Cohort (time since initial involvement with MAC)	Participants (n)
Approximately 10 years	4
Approximately 5 years	5
Approximately 1–2 years	6
Total	15

Pūrākau hihiko

To support the collection and analysis of narrative data, the evaluation team developed a data collection activity called *Pūrākau hihiko* | Inspiring story-telling about change. This activity was designed to elicit rich, experience-based accounts of change, enabling participants to reflect on and share key moments, shifts, and impacts associated with their involvement in MAC.

The activity was initially used during the workshop with the MAC team to inform the development of the Theory of Change and identify early patterns of change. It was subsequently used in wānanga and other data collection settings to support participants to articulate their experiences of change in a structured yet flexible way.

At the request of MAC facilitators, the activity was later refined and documented for ongoing use in mentoring conversations with tumuaki. The full activity is provided in Appendix C.

Quantitative methods

TABLE A3: Summary of quantitative data collection methods

Method	Description
Analysis of MAC tumuaki survey data	Analysis of survey data to identify patterns in participant experiences, outcomes, and perceived impacts. Survey findings reflect participant perceptions rather than independently verified outcome measures; however, consistency across domains and alignment with qualitative accounts strengthened confidence in the overall patterns identified.
Review of MAC reporting and administrative data	Review of supplementary quantitative and reporting data from the Māori Achievement Collaborative Final Contract Variation Report to the Ministry of Education (MAC, 2026), including programme reach, attendance, and system-level information used to contextualise and triangulate evaluation findings. Open-ended survey responses for 2025 MAC ākonga survey—provided by MAC. As this material was not independently collected as part of the evaluation, it was treated as supplementary to the primary qualitative and quantitative evidence.

Sampling strategy

A whanaungatanga based purposeful sampling approach was used to identify potential participants using the collective knowledge of MAC team. The sample was not designed to be representative of all tumuaki who have participated in MAC—rather, it targeted a range of in-depth experiences that highlight the impacts of the kaupapa.

The MAC team supported recruitment, enabling the evaluation team to engage with tumuaki attending the MAC hui ā-tau, and facilitating introductions via email.

Data analysis and sense-making

Qualitative data analysis

Qualitative data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2019; 2021), supported by qualitative data management software Nvivo14.24.3. Analysis involved:

- coding and categorising data into key themes
- identifying patterns across participant groups and contexts
- linking findings to the evaluation questions and Theory of Change.

Quantitative data analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using R. Survey responses were imported from the source workbook, text fields were standardised, and duplicate submissions were identified using email and school pairs; where duplicates occurred, the most complete response was retained, leaving 121 cleaned responses from 125 raw submissions.

Closed-response items were summarised using counts and percentages, including frequency distributions for single-response items, check-all-that-apply summaries for multiple-response items, and response distributions for Likert-scale questions. For conditional follow-up questions, percentages were calculated using the relevant subgroup as the base, and free-text estimates of MAC contact hours were grouped into reporting bands to support consistent analysis and presentation in tables and figures.

Sense-making

Sense-making hui were undertaken with members of the MAC team following the initial analysis of interview and survey data. These hui formed an important part of the analytic process, enabling participants to collectively reflect on emerging findings, clarify meanings within the kōrero, and provide additional contextual insights relating to the development and enactment of the kaupapa.

This collaborative process also supported the refinement of interpretations and the identification of areas where further explanation, contextualisation, or emphasis would strengthen the report. The involvement of the MAC team in sense-making therefore contributed not only to the validation and deepening of findings, but also to ensuring that interpretations remained grounded in the relational, cultural, and contextual realities of the kaupapa.

Ethics, privacy, and mana raraunga

Ethical approval for the evaluation was obtained through NZCER's internal ethics process. The evaluation was guided by Te Mana Raraunga principles (Te Mana Raraunga, 2018), ensuring that:

- participants retained authority over their data (rangatiratanga)
- data were used in ways that upheld dignity and collective benefit (manaakitanga, kotahitanga)
- relationships and context were respected (whakapapa, whanaungatanga).

Participants were informed about the purpose of the evaluation and provided consent for their contributions. Care was taken to ensure that reporting protected participant confidentiality, unless explicit permission to be identified was given.

APPENDIX B

Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori

SECTION 1

TE WHARE TAPU O TE NGĀKAU MĀORI

Tukua ki te ao kia rere,
kia tīna (tīna) haumi e, hui e, tāiki e!

*Send it to the world, let it fly,
hold fast, hold firm!*

The kaupapa for Te Arahou o Aotearoa – the Māori Achievement Collaborative (MAC) is that ākonga Māori will follow in the footsteps of their tūpuna to become steeped in mātauranga Māori. They will move along a huarahi ako (learning path) that will grow their competence and confidence in their reo, kawa, and tikanga (their language, cultural practices, and principles) so that they can stand tall, strong, and resilient in te ao Māori (the Māori world). Ākonga will face the future with confidence, knowing that they have choices and are able to contribute positively to all the worlds to which they belong: te ao Māori, te ao Pākehā, and te ao whānui (the global world).

On marae, the spiritual and physical worlds unite, and we can truly exercise rangatiratanga (self-determination). The marae is the living embodiment of te ao Māori. For this reason, ākonga Māori need to be on the marae and in the whare tūpuna (ancestral house). Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori connects elements of the marae and whare tūpuna with sets of progressions describing outcomes that are valued within te ao Māori.

Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori integrates seven ngākau (deep-seated affections of the heart and mind). Ngākau are present in every aspect of the marae: within the whare tūpuna, in the kāuta (kitchen), and in te reo Māori me ōna tikanga. Just as each element of the whare tūpuna is integral to its physical and spiritual existence, each ngākau is a central, and integrated component of who we are as Māori. Such components are taonga tuku iho – treasured parts of the heritage that has been passed down to us by our tūpuna.

HE NGĀKAU



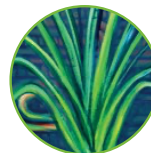
Ngākau Kaitiaki
(custodianship)



Ngākau Ora
(life, health, vitality)



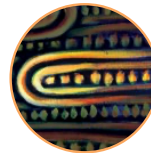
Ngākau Manaaki
(nurturing)



Ngākau Whānau
(kinship)



Ngākau Aroha
(unconditional love, empathy)

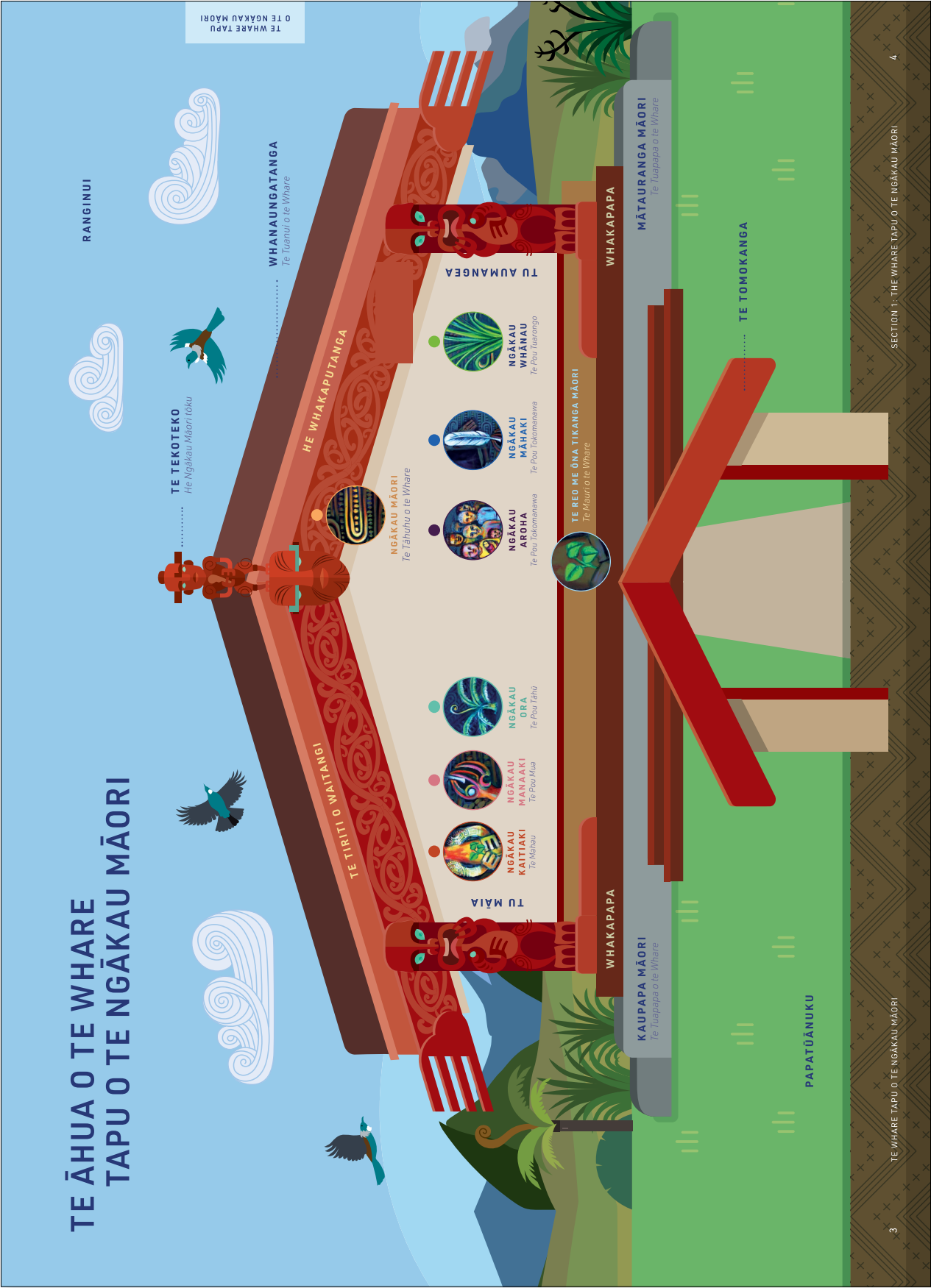


Ngākau Māori
(Māori)



Ngākau Māhaki
(humility, compassion, generosity,
service, sacrifice)





TE REO ME ŌNA TIKANGA

Tōku reo, tōku ohooho,
Tōku reo, tōku māpihi maurea,
Tōku whakakai mārihi.

*My language is my cherished possession,
My language is the object of my affection,
My precious adornment.*

In te ao Māori, nothing is lifeless. Every form has a spiritual dimension and possesses mauri (life force).⁹ A physical object may be used to symbolise this life spark, so we may bury an object – such as a stone – to hold the mauri of a whare prior to construction.

Te reo Māori me ōna tikanga is the mauri that flows through all parts of Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori. It is the vehicle that carries our message to the ākonga – a message they will carry with them throughout their lives.

TE ĀHUA O TE WHARE TAPU O TE NGĀKAU MĀORI

Te Āhua o Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori (see page 24) is a visual depiction of the concepts underpinning Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori. It highlights the holistic and deeply spiritual nature of the learning that takes place as ākonga move into the marae, across the marae ātea, and through the whare tūpuna.

ENDNOTES

⁹ Gulf Innovation Fund Together: A Foundation North Initiative. (2015). *What is Mauri?* Retrieved from www.giftofthegulf.org.nz/mauri

TŌKU NGĀKAU MĀORI

Ka tau aku tapuāe ki te papa
 nekeneke o te marae e pae nei,
 ki te tūahu wairua,
 e makere nei i ōku take,
 he tuku whakahere ki tōku ihotanga.
 Ka hūpeke atu taku titiro i te ātea
 o te ako, whakawhiti ki te pae o uta,
 ki te pae o waho o tōku whare.
 Ka huri aku kamo ki te mahau
 o te pou Ngākau Kaitiaki.
 Mai i te mahau o te pou Ngākau Kaitiaki
 ki te pou mua ko Ngākau Manaaki.
 Mai i te pou mua ko Ngākau Manaaki
 ki te pou tāhū ko Ngākau Ora.
 Mai i te pou tāhū ko Ngākau Ora
 e kite ana ahau ko ngā pou tokomanawa
 ko Ngākau Aroha, ko Ngākau Māhaki.
 Mai i te pou tokomanawa Ngākau Māhaki
 ka huri aku kamo ki te pou, tuarongo ko
 Ngākau Whānau.
 Mai i te pou tuarongo ko Ngākau Whānau,
 ka eke au ki te tāhuhu, ko Ngākau Māori.
 Ka heke taku titiro ki tōku ukuinga,
 ka horoia ki te wai o nuku,
 ki te wai o rangi, he roimata e turuturu nei.
 Kia tae aku kanakana ki te whakaruruhau
 ā noa ki te puku o te kai.
 Kua rānea ahau
 tōku titiro i tōku huarahi ako.
 Ka puta ki te wheiao
 ki te ao mārama.

Nā Te Ringakaha Tia-Ward (Ngāti Toki, Ngāpuhi)

MY MĀORI HEART

My footsteps descend upon
 the foreground laid before me,
 an altar of clarity and rebirth,
 a space of sacrifice to my own unique being.
 My eyes transcend the courtyard,
 my feet crossing to the steps of my house.
 The eyes of my heart turn to
 the Welcome Porch of Custodianship.
 From the Porch of Custodianship
 to the Pillar of Nurturing.
 From the Pillar of Nurturing
 to the Pillar of Life.
 From the Pillar of Life, I see
 the Pillar of Compassion.
 From the Pillar of Compassion,
 I see the Pillar of Humility.
 From the Pillar of Humility,
 the eyes of my heart turn to the
 Pillar of Sight Beyond, to
 the Pillar of my People.
 From the Pillar of my People, I ascend
 to the Ridge of my Māori Heart.
 I am the remnant treasure of old,
 my heart of many strands laid before you.
 I am Māori.
 I am adorned with the heavens.
 Genealogy is my foundation,
 my Māori heart is my shelter.
 I am cleansed with the
 waters of my ancestors,
 satisfied in my newfound knowledge.
 I am complete.



TE HUARAHİ AKO

We use the term Te Huarahi Ako (the pathway to learning) to describe the journey ākonga take across the marae complex and through the whare tupuna, as depicted in the artwork. The tauparapara (incantation), Tōku Ngākau Māori, tells the story of this journey. It was created by Te Ringakaha Tia-Ward, a member of Te Arahou o Aotearoa. Te Ringakaha explains that a tauparapara is a type of karakia (incantation, ritual chant, prayer) that is recited by a male before a mihi. We believe that all ākonga should be able to identify where they are on their journey towards he ngākau Māori, and we believe that every step of their journey should be celebrated.

Te Huarahi Ako as a Process of Transformation

Te Huarahi Ako is intended to be intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally transformative. Beginning this journey requires the acceptance of disruption as a necessary part of deeper learning and change. By working through this disruption, ākonga will clear away anxiety and open themselves to te āo Māori.

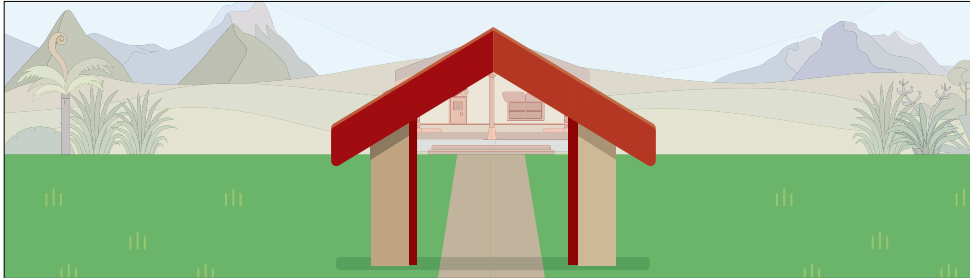
The nature of the disruption will differ for Māori and non-Māori. Ākonga Māori will need to confront the impact of colonisation, racism, inequity, and trauma on themselves and their whānau. Examining such an impact is likely to include addressing assumptions and beliefs that impede their ability to fully realise their potential as Māori. Non-Māori will also need to examine the impact of colonisation upon themselves and others, as well as the notion of privilege. They will need to address the internalised biases, racism, assumptions, perceptions, myths, values, and beliefs that they and their communities may hold.

There can be pain in finding dissonance between what a person thinks they believe, how they act, and what is revealed in their actions. However, there can be growth in this pain as ākonga learn to process their discoveries, manage the uncomfortable feelings that will arise, and respond respectfully and productively to challenges.

NGĀ WHAKARITENGA AND NGĀKAU

Te Huarahi Ako begins with Ngā Whakaritenga and ends with the full realisation of He Ngākau Māori. It's important that achievement and success are celebrated throughout the journey. The journey proceeds in two phases:

- **Ngā Whakaritenga:** This phase begins prior to arrival at Te Tomokanga and concludes when ākonga reach the mahau (shelter, porch), ready to transition into Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori. It is a time for planning, preparation, and frontloading new learning. Through these activities, ākonga will develop the dispositions, characteristics, attributes, knowledge, values, tikanga, kawa, and skills necessary to successfully engage with the ngākau Māori. This phase includes a process of conscientisation,¹⁰ as ākonga begin to open their hearts and minds to the learning opportunities presented by the whare.
- **Ngākau:** Ākonga engage with the seven ngākau Māori through participation in learning experiences that are steeped in mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge and ways of understanding) and infused with te reo. The process of conscientisation continues, now under the shelter of Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori and with a growing focus on critical action.¹¹



Te Tomokanga

Te Tomokanga is the portal of the marae. It is the place where manuhiri (visitors) assemble prior to entering the marae ātea (courtyard). In the context of Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori, the tomokanga represents a portal through which ākonga must pass to gain access to te ao Māori.

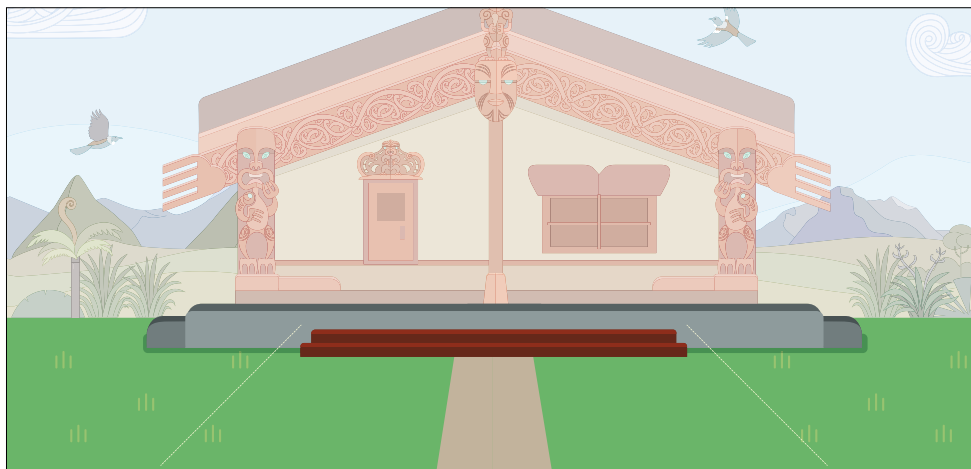
Te ao Māori is an ancient worldview that recognises the interconnectedness of all things. When ākonga Māori understand and embrace this worldview, they are empowered to thrive within all the worlds to which they belong.

The marae ātea is a tapu (sacred, forbidden, restricted) space. To cross it safely, it is necessary to engage in pōwhiri. Participation in pōwhiri will remove the tapu between the haukāinga (home people) and manuhiri, making the space between them noa (ordinary, unrestricted, free from tapu).

Like manuhiri preparing for a pōwhiri, ākonga need to begin preparation for Te Huarahi Ako before it commences and must make the conscious decision to commence this journey. As they assemble at Te Tomokanga, they must sharpen their purpose and develop the basic knowledge and competencies they need for their journey to be successful.

To engage in pōwhiri, manuhiri need to know both their own pepeha and those of the haukāinga. Pepeha set out the whakapapa connections to people and place that form the basis of identity, establishing tūrangawaewae, and forming connections with others. Manuhiri must also organise their kaikaranga (caller/s) and kaikōrero (speakers), prepare their waiata tautoko (a song to support their kaikōrero), and gather their koha. Te ao Māori is diverse, and so an important part of planning and preparation is to learn the tikanga and kawa for the marae they are entering.

When the ope (contingent) is ready to move onto the marae, each person moves into their place, as determined by tikanga for this marae. They await the karanga (spiritual call of greeting) that will welcome them onto the marae ātea.

TE WHARE TAPU
O TE NGĀKAU MĀORITe Marae Ātea

[N]ō mua iho anō te mana o te reo
o te wahine ... mā te wahine e pōwhiri
te manuhiri, ka maru.

*The mana of woman's voice is ancient ...
the woman welcomes visitors and protects.*

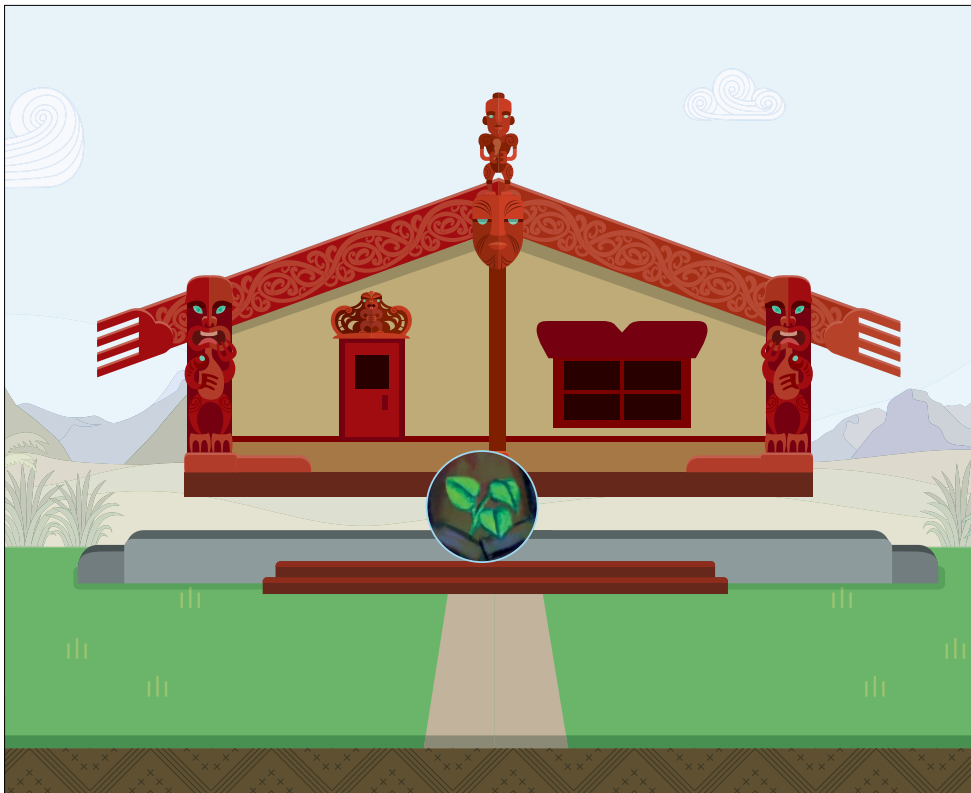
– Dr Tutere Wi Repa¹²

Manuhiri may not enter the marae ātea (courtyard) without first hearing the karanga from the haukāinga, signalling that the pōwhiri has begun and the whakaeke (process of entering the marae ātea) can begin. The protection of karanga is vital as the marae ātea is tapu (sacred, forbidden, restricted); it is the realm of Tūmatauenga, the atua (guardian) of war and people. A person who has never stepped upon a particular marae is known as waewae tapu (sacred feet). The pōwhiri provides a process for removing this tapu.

The karanga is a spiritual call that opens a passageway between the living and the dead – it is not only the living who greet each other, but also the tūpuna who they carry with them. Karanga conveys the mana (authority, spiritual power) of the marae and awakens the emotions of both manuhiri and haukāinga. When the kaikaranga from the visiting group returns the karanga, a kind of spiritual rope is created, pulling the manuhiri onto the marae. Together, they may exchange information about someone who has passed away, lineage, or the purpose of the visit.

The first ever karanga was uttered by Papatūānuku as she expressed her grief at parting from Ranginui. Consequently, karanga are performed almost exclusively by women. The kaikaranga represents the power of women within the marae and the deep connection between mana whenua (people with customary authority to and for the land) and mana wahine (the mana of women). She has an honoured role that comes with responsibilities to manaaki manuhiri and ensuring their safety. Much time is needed to grow into this role, and it requires commitment to being on the marae listening and learning from older, experienced women.

For ākonga commencing their huarahi ako through Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori, te marae ātea is the place where the process of critical thinking and conscientisation begins. Here, they are challenged to reveal their true intentions and address hard questions. As noted earlier, these questions may uncover unconscious bias, colonised views, racism, intergenerational trauma, and other difficult issues. If ākonga are to safely transition through this period of inner conflict and confusion, they need the manaaki (respectful support and care) of those guiding them on their journey.



Te Mauri o te Whare

Having safely navigated the marae ātea, manuhiri stand before the whare tūpuna. Here, they will feel its life force – the mauri of the whare. In Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori, the mauri of the whare is te reo me ōna tikanga Māori. Te reo me ōna tikanga Māori will be intertwined within all the learning ākonga experience within the whare, nourishing them and becoming a natural and normalised part of their everyday lives.

Te Mahau

Ko te wahine he whare tangata,
he waka tangata.

*Within the female is the nurturing
home of humankind and the channel
from the spiritual to the physical.*

– Te Pareaute Moana Herangi-Panapa¹³

The mahau (shelter, porch) of a whare is another place of transition. This is where manuhiri pass from the realm of Tūmatauenga (guardian of war and human activities) to the realm of Rongomātāne (guardian of peace and cultivation). Here, there is balance between the elements of tapu and noa (ordinary, unrestricted, free from tapu) and between life and death. Manuhiri feel a sense of calm after the turbulence of the marae ātea.

The pare (carved lintel) above the doorway is one of the most important carvings in the whare – the pare represents a female ancestor or atua (guardian, ancestor with continuing influence). She stands with her legs apart, recalling both the death of Maui – crushed between the legs of Hine-nui-te-pō – and our common origin from te whare tangata (house of humanity, womb). When manuhiri enter the whare, they pass beneath the pare and their raru (troubles, difficulties) are squeezed out. People can debate within Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori, but no blood will be shed.

When ākonga arrive at the mahau of Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori, they come under the affection of Ngākau Kaitiaki (the Welcome Porch of Custodianship). They can leave their worries, bias, trauma, and internal struggles at the mahau and enter the whare tūpuna feeling calm and protected. Their hearts and minds have been opened and they are ready to understand and embrace te ao Māori.

Ngā Pou

Ākonga learning proceeds through a series of interactions, first with the mahau, and then with the five pou (pillars) that hold up the whare. The mahau and pou each represent one of the ngākau that are critical in enabling ākonga to realise their inherent potential: Ngākau Kaitiaki (mahau), Ngākau Manaaki (pou mua), Ngākau Ora (pou tāhū), Ngākau Aroha (the first pou tokomanawa), Ngākau Mahaki, (the second pou tokomanawa), and Ngākau Whānau (the pou tuarongo).

Te Tāhuhu

The six pou are connected to the tāhuhu (backbone, ridgepole) of the whare. In Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori, this represents Ngākau Māori, as it is the backbone of the structure and holds it all together. Just as relationships bind us as people, each aspect of Te Whare Tapu o Te Ngākau Māori is interconnected.



Te Tuanui

The tuanui (roof) of Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori represents whanaungatanga (kinship, close connection). Ākonga Māori live, learn, and grow within the context of their extended whānau. Likewise, learning and growth within Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori is a collective process. Those who learn and teach together will also care and attend to each other as if they were whānau.

Te Tūāpapa

The strength of a whare stems from the solidity of its tūāpapa (foundations); the whare cannot stand without its tūāpapa. The tūāpapa of Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori represents mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge and ways of understanding). If ākonga are to access mātauranga Māori, it is important that they experience transformational pedagogy informed by the teachings of kaupapa Māori researchers and practitioners. This enables the development of critical consciousness – the precursor to political efficacy and critical action.

TE WHARE TAPU
O TE NGĀKAU MĀORI





Ranginui rāua ko Papatūānuku

Ko au te whenua, ko te whenua ko au.

I am the land, and the land is me.

The tūāpapa of a whare sits upon Papatūānuku (Earth Mother). In te ao Māori, all things and all people are connected by whakapapa through Papatūānuku, Ranginui (Sky Father), and their tūpuna (ancestors). As tangata whenua (indigenous people, born of the land), Māori are inherently connected to and descend from the whenua (land, placenta). Learning and knowledge-building require an understanding of these relationships and connections, as well as being open to alternative perspectives. Thus, the body of knowledge encompassed within mātauranga Māori is continually evolving as new knowledge builds on, and is interwoven with, ancient knowledge through whakapapa.

Te Tekoteko

Without fluency in my whakapapa and identity, my existence has no depth.

– Year 8 graduate student from Thames South School, 2018

A whare may have either a tekoteko (carved ancestral figure) or a koruru (carved ancestral figurehead) on its gable, or it may have both. These figures represent founding tūpuna who stand sentinel over the marae. The tekoteko on Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori represents the ākonga who has completed their journey through the whare, realised their innate potential, and knows and believes in themselves as Māori. The position it holds above the koruru prompts us to recall the power and potential of ākonga Māori by virtue of their ancestral connections to Rangiātea (the ancient place of origin).

Graduating ākonga will leave the whare speaking te reo Māori, understanding tikanga and kawa and practising these as part of their daily routines. Ākonga Māori will be empowered to resist the negative impacts of harmful policies and practices, and capable of taking positive action, encouraging social change in line with Māori world views. Non-Māori will have the knowledge, understanding, and motivation necessary to act as powerful advocates for social justice. Graduating ākonga will remain connected to Te Whare Tapu o te Ngākau Māori throughout their lives. From time to time, they will return to be nourished by its mauri and attain further learning.



TE WHARE TAPU
O TE NGĀKAU MĀORI

ENDNOTES

¹⁰ 'Conscientisation' is the process of developing critical consciousness – examining and thinking critically about social problems. The pathway to transformation that it offers arose from the teachings of Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire. The process of conscientisation has been woven into Kaupapa Māori theory, research, and practice. See the references and recommended reading for some examples.

¹¹ 'Critical action' happens when we move from awareness of injustice to active resistance and enacting change.

¹² Tauroa, H., & Tauroa, P. (1987). *Te Marae: A Guide to Customs and Protocol*. Auckland: Reed Methven.

¹³ Herangi-Panapa, T. P. M. (1998). *Ko te Wahine he Whare Tangata, he Waka Tangata: A Study of Māori Women's Experiences of Violence as Depicted through the Definition of Whakarite*. The University of Auckland: Auckland.

APPENDIX C

Pūrākau hihiko | Inspiring storytelling about change

Pūrākau hihiko or Inspiring storytelling about change is a narrative outcomes focused evaluation activity we have developed that draws from pūrākau (Lee, 2009), Most Significant Change story-based techniques (Dart & Davies, 2003; Davies & Dart, 2005), and Outcomes Harvesting (Intrac, 2017; Wilson-Grau & Britt, 2012). This activity enables groups to work collectively to share and examine deep, experience-based insights about the changes and outcomes that are related to a particular initiative or kaupapa.

Who is this activity useful for?

This activity can work well for groups that are interested in identifying outcomes through storytelling and active listening. This activity supports collective sense-making and sharing of knowledge. The activity is tightly timed to encourage participants to focus on the main features of their story and the key changes which occurred. The telling of stories may also surface the mechanisms that have worked together to create change which can potentially inform the development of a Theory of Change for the initiative or kaupapa.

How does it work?

Materials

A3 paper, different coloured post-its, felt pens, regular pens.

Preparation

Draw a table on A3 sized paper. In the left column write the following labels: long-term outcomes, medium-term outcomes, short-term outcomes. It may be helpful here to include time frames that relate to the initiative or kaupapa.

From left to right in the top row write the names of the groups that have or are likely to experience positive changes or outcomes related to the initiative or kaupapa. Think about whether you are interested in all the different groups (or entities) that might be experiencing changes or if you want to focus on two to four key groups, e.g. ākonga, whānau, and kura.

If you want to identify changes for all the possible groups, you might decide to focus on one or two groups at a time, repeating the activity as needed.

Example of a table

	Ākonga	Whānau	Tumuaki / School Leaders	Kura / School	Other
Long-term outcomes (10+ years)					
Medium-term outcomes (3-5 years)					
Short-term outcomes (1-2 years)					

Instructions

- Before beginning this activity, ask one of the participants if they would be willing to help model the activity. Explain the process to them.
 - Give everyone involved in the activity post-its and pens.
 - Begin the activity by explaining that you are about to model storytelling to collectively identify changes or outcomes that have occurred for key stakeholder groups related to the initiative or kaupapa.
 - Show the group the A3 paper and read out the headings.
 - Give a couple of examples of the types of changes you might expect to see for one or two of the key stakeholder groups. Frame these changes as long, medium- or short-term outcomes. For example, *kaiako confidently lead karakia*, or *whānau aspirations are reflected in the local curriculum*.
1. Give the participant who is helping model the activity 3 minutes (timed) to tell a story about an interesting or significant change that happened within a kura/whānau/community relating to the initiative or kaupapa.
 2. Ask the rest of the group to “listen carefully for the ‘changes or outcomes’ within the story”. These changes can include shifts in knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours. Different changes or outcomes might be identified for each of the key stakeholder groups listed on the A3 paper. Ask participants to write down each outcome they hear on a post-it - one outcome per post-it. It is not necessary to identify outcomes for every stakeholder group within a single story.
 3. Participants now have 2 mins (timed) to tell the group which outcomes they heard and to place their post-its onto the A3 paper in the column and row they relate to.
Now break out into groups of 3 to 5 people. Each group should have their own A3 paper and a space where they can easily hear each other. Repeat the activity so that everyone gets the chance to tell a story and listen for changes and outcomes. At the end of the activity, the A3 paper should be covered in post-its with outcomes relating to the 3 to 5 stories told.
 4. Gather all the groups back together and ask each group to share 3 of the outcomes that really stood out for them.

5. After the activity is complete, consider the following questions:

- a) What short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes were identified for each of the key stakeholder groups?
- b) Are these outcomes what the rōpū expected? Are there unexpected outcomes? Are there outcomes that you expected to see but haven't?
- c) What assumptions underpinned the initiative or kaupapa?

Cite as: Bright, N. & Boyd, S. (July 2025). *Pūrākau hihiko, Inspiring story-telling about change, evaluation activity*, NZCER.

Notes

Pūrākau

Pūrākau is a traditional form of Māori narrative that “contains philosophical thought, epistemological constructs, cultural codes, and worldviews that are fundamental to our identity as Māori” (Lee, 2009, p. 1). Pūrākau can hold within them knowledge, values and lessons for the listener to consider in relation to their own context.

In developing pūrākau as methodology Lee-Morgan has been influenced by decolonizing methodologies, Kaupapa Māori theory and qualitative narrative inquiry methods - particularly life history and portraiture (Lee, 2009).

Most Significant Change (MSC)

Most Significant Change (MSC) (Dart & Davies, 2003; Davies & Dart, 2005) is a story-based technique for identifying the changes that are happening as part of an initiative. MSC is a form of continuous inquiry during which groups of stakeholders search for significant outcomes (stories of change) and then share and discuss the value of these outcomes in a systematic and transparent manner.

Outcomes Harvesting

Outcomes Harvesting is a process which aims to collect evidence of what has been achieved and then consider whether and how a kaupapa or initiative contributed to the noted changes. Outcomes Harvesting prioritises the input and perspectives of a range of stakeholders (Intrac, 2017; Wilson-Grau & Britt, 2012).

Outcomes Harvesting is designed for use in complex situations where the relationship between cause and effect is not fully understood or where many different approaches might be influencing change. As kura and school settings are complex systems in which many overlapping approaches are underway, this makes Outcomes Harvesting a useful approach to draw on.

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