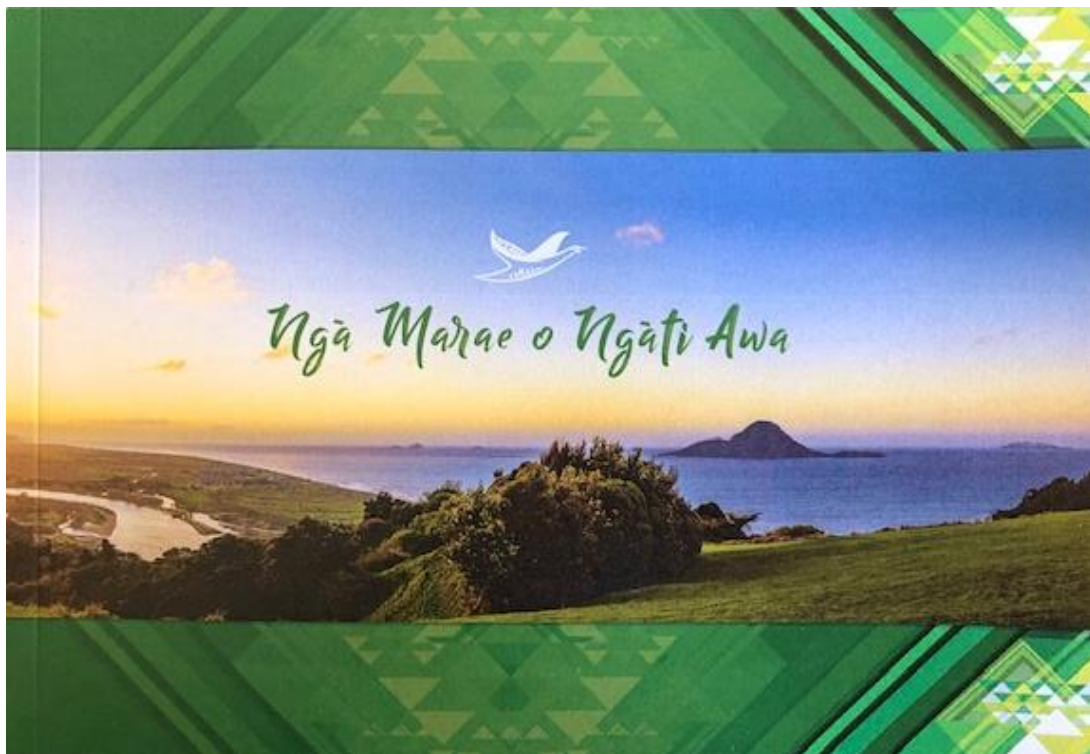


Ngā Marae o Ngāti Awa

He pukapuka pepehā
mō te iwi whānui o
Ngāti Awa

Kāhui: Mātaatua





INTRODUCTION

As part of Te Mātāwai’s support in revitalising te reo throughout Aotearoa, we are showcasing some of the kaupapa kaitono have been doing in Mātaatua. Whaea Noti Belshaw sat down with us to kōrero about Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Awa’s kaupapa reo, ‘Ngā Marae o Ngāti Awa.’

HE AHA TE KAUPAPA WHAKARAUORA REO?

Whaea Noti led the development of Ngā Marae o Ngāti Awa, a photographic booklet of Ngāti Awa marae. Marae were professionally photographed for inclusion in the booklet. Importantly, pepehā was included for each marae. “It’s not standard pepehā [that’s in there]”, she explained, “we tried to make it as rich as possible, adding in wāhi tapu and kōrero from each particular hapū.” The genesis of the kaupapa began about five years ago, and the Te Mātāwai funding helped bring it to fruition. The funding offered a “great opportunity for Ngāti Awa”, which was the primary reason that motivated putting in a tono. Whaea Noti previously worked in the historical unit at Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Awa, and with those networks, approached kaumātua and pūkenga from various hapū to confirm kōrero and information to put in the booklet.

“We reached out to them with a draft, and then [afterwards] asked if there were any concerns. There was a process of ‘mimiriri i te kōrero’, until we had something that satisfied everybody.”

The booklet was designed to be “...small enough to put in your bag, but enough to help remind people of their wāhi.” 2000 copies were initially printed, and the publication was launched at Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Awa’s Annual General Meeting in 2018. Copies were distributed from mid-2019 to hapū, schools, and kōhanga in and around Whakatāne, and also given to the Kāhui kaumātua. An online version was also created and made available through the Rūnanga’s website.



WHAT ARE THE LESSONS YOU'VE LEARNED?

When we asked, “He aha ngā hua e puta mai ana?”, Whaea Noti explained that the booklet has had very positive feedback, with “the biggest hit rate on our website.” She emphasised that “keeping it simple is the main thing” to encourage whānau to read it. The booklet’s reo was deliberately kept simple to “make it easy enough for learners to follow but rich enough to satisfy the more advanced.” More copies of Ngā Marae o Ngāti Awa have been requested, and another 500 were printed to satisfy demand – “there are hardly any copies left!” Putting the booklet online is particularly important, she said, in “looking at ways to connect to young Ngāti Awa.”

WHAT CHALLENGES DID YOU FACE?

Like any kaupapa Māori project, research and consultation is a long process, and ample time always needs to be made to allow whānau space to contribute. “So you allow for this”, Whaea Noti explained, especially if you don’t have established relationships with kaumātua and pūkenga that you need to engage with. “A year would be the ideal timeframe for this particular kaupapa”, should other iwi or hapū wish to undertake a similar kaupapa. This is why, when asked what advice she would give to potential kaitono, Whaea Noti said: “give yourself plenty of time!” She also emphasised the critical importance of whakawhanaungatanga:

“Having credible people and pūkenga behind you involved in the process [for a kaupapa like this] will certainly help. It’s important to invest in this whanaungatanga. If you haven’t lived at home, for example, and you’re trying to do something where home is – you need to tap into those networks. Good relationships and established networks with the home people are very important!”



WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE ASPIRATIONS FOR TE REO MĀORI?

Looking to the future, Whaea Noti said, “I want te reo to be the norm!”:

“I’d like it to be the norm with English along with other languages. We want it to be the normal language – like in Europe, how their language is the norm. And then English becomes an ‘extra.’”

She also reflected on the importance of ‘reo rua.’ “What I have come to learn”, she explained, “is that you have to provide some parts of [your kaupapa] in reo rua at times.” This is important to accommodate for whānau that are still early in their reo journey. “If it’s rūmaki reo, you can scare away some people, so a bit of reo rua is important.”