Te Whare o Te Reo
He kēmu ā-ipurangi hei ako i te reo

Kāhui: Te Reo Tukutuku

Te Mātāwai

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 Te Reo Tukutuku. Cam Swainson sat down with us to kōrero about his kaupapa, and tell us a little bit about what he's been up to.

HE AHA TE KAUPAPA WHAKARAUORA REO?

Cam and his team developed 'Te Whare o Te Reo', an online te reo learning resource for beginners, that revolves around the "gamification of learning te reo." The game focuses on reo acquisition areas such as pronunciation, vowels, basic vocabulary, common phrases, conversation practice, modes of address, and pātai. It is targeted for anyone, of any age, to begin their reo journey. Te Whare o Te Reo is designed as a web-based game, involving videos, quizzes, and assessments in supporting users to develop their reo ability, and progress from level to level. Users are awarded 'pounamu' or other taonga, as they progress.

The app uses voice recognition and augmented reality "…to use some of the latest technology to support learning." The voice recognition supports whānau in correctly pronouncing kupu Māori, and the augmented reality function allows whānau to see three-dimensional objects from the app in the real world. This encourages "a more visual approach to learning." The development and design of the app is done "in house… We've been training up Māori in this space, as we need culturally aware and appropriate designs." Cam and his team "most definitely" want to continue with their kaupapa in future, and Te Whare o Te Reo has been online since December 2019. It can be accessed and played at www.afedsquad.co.nz.

WHAT ARE THE LESSONS YOU'VE LEARNED?

When we asked Cam, "He aha ngā hua e puta mai ana?", he said "more kids are learning te reo because teachers have chosen to use Te Whare o Te Reo in the classroom." The ease of the app means teachers don't need to be specialists in te reo, and can instead use it to offer guidance and instruction in learning Māori. The app "…exploded during lockdown because teachers needed online resources", and as it stands, there are about 7000 users of Te Whare o te Reo. As he explained "when one teacher loves it, 28 kids start learning te reo."

WHAT CHALLENGES DID YOU FACE?

Cam found the online forms through Te Mātāwai "really good, with good explanations." However, one of the main challenges concerned administrative processing delays, which then delayed aspects of Cam's kaupapa reo. This is why, when we asked what advice he would give to potential kaitono, he said:

"Have a backup plan. Don't rely on the milestone coming through for payment – have a financial buffer to help see you through."

He also emphasised giving reo experts plenty of lead-in time if you want their support on your kaupapa whakarauora reo.

"The timeframe you think you need when dealing with te reo experts is probably going to be long. There is such demand on their time. Yes, you need the best in your project, but the best are highly sought after. Allow an extended timeframe for the experts."

Te Mātāwai

WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE ASPIRATIONS FOR TE REO MĀORI?

Looking to the future, Cam sees te reo flourishing across Aotearoa, where technology is used to support this goal.

"I see every Māori baby speaking te reo in the home. And not just Māori – but for all New Zealanders, for us to become a truly bicultural and bilingual country. And I know it can happen! And technology can help with that. We can get there. The role of technology can help with whakarauora reo."