

Waka Reo

He kaupapa
whakarauora reo Māori
mō te hapori waka ama

Kāhui: Te Tai Hau-ā-uru





INTRODUCTION

Te Mātāwai have invested in kaupapa to revitalise te reo Māori throughout Aotearoa. We are showcasing some of the initiatives supported by Te Whāiti, the body responsible for leadership of reo revitalisation efforts and determining funding priorities in Te Tai Hau-āuru. Roimata Baker (Ngāti Raukawa, Te Ātiawa, Ngāti Toarangatira, Ngāi Tahu), the Kaiwhakahaere, spoke with us about her kaupapa Waka Reo. You can also check out an online video (<https://youtu.be/aMjLuJxQ47M>) to hear directly from Roimata and others who are driving the initiative, and some of that kōrero is included here. Te Waka Reo supports local talent, the photographs we have included and the video resources referred to were created by 15-year-old student Te Ākauroa Jacob.



WHAT IS THE KAUPAPA?

Waka ama (outrigger canoeing) is well-known as a popular and fast growing sport among Māori. But for those involved in Waka Reo, it is much more than just a sport. Waka ama has a whakapapa that stretches back to the waka traditions of our tupuna on Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa (the Pacific Ocean). As Roimata puts it “Me maumahara i ngā pūrākau, me ngā whakapapa, me ngā kōrero tuku iho e hāngai ana ki tēnei mahi te hoe i te waka, te waka ama...i ahu mai i tētahi whakapapa roa.” While the technology has changed, waka ama remains a carrier of culture in an outdoor learning environment that reinforces Māori identity and nourishes the mind, body and spirit.





Roimata described the origins of the Waka Reo initiative. “I’m a mother, I’ve spent seven years on the side of the water, coaching and supporting all the activities associated with waka ama. As a kura kaupapa and wharekura teacher, only te reo is spoken, but when we were taking teams [from kura] to club competitions...the language coaches used, both on and off the water, wasn’t te reo. Many of the paddlers were reo speakers, but many of the coaches didn’t speak te reo. The parents I had alongside me, some of them are translators, [Māori] researchers, [kura kaupapa] teachers ... so naturally you start to think about what you can do.”

“We wanted to hear te reo Māori on the water, and we wanted to see that reo evolve, and be able to resource that and to support our paddlers ... we wanted our kids to have a deeper experience of waka ama and so we wanted to ... make a commitment to te reo Māori ... i ahu mai tēnei mahi te hoe waka i Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwi ... it’s come from the Pacific and with that a language ... we wanted to hear that on the water ... Kia tika.”



Roimata recalls, “Papa Shaun Ogden [who was a member of Te Whāiti] encouraged me to develop a 10-year [language revitalisation] strategy, to think about where we want to be in 10 years [i.e. seven years from now]. We want te reo Māori to be the preferred language on the water. The challenge was set to use te

reo Māori in waka ama activities, both on and off the water, and to encourage everyone in the local waka ama movement to embrace te reo. Our club, the Ōtaki Waka Hoe Charitable





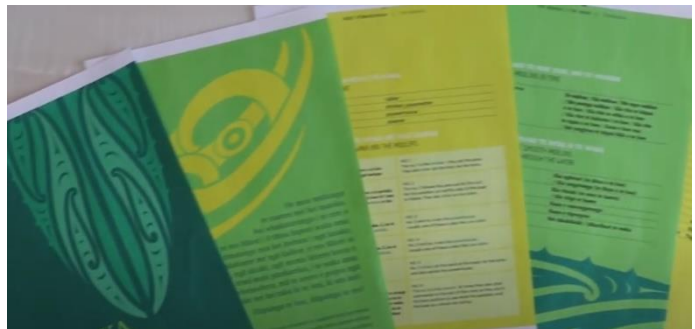
Trust, supported the idea. The Club has 200-250 members of all ages, so this was a project that would benefit multiple generations of speakers, from five year olds to those in their mid-60s. We also involved the whānau of the kaihoe.”

According to Roimata, “We came up with the idea to create [quality Māori language] resources that would encourage and nourish the desire and love to speak te reo Māori” and reinforce learnings on and by the water. The idea was the basis for the Waka Reo initiative that is now into its second year of support from Te Mātāwai. In the first year a districtwide online survey of those involved in waka ama was carried out, to find out what language is used in English on and off the water. The next step was to “... sit down with our Mātanga Reo”, Māori language consultant Hēni Jacobs and “... explain the meaning of the words and phrases from a waka ama perspective. Her role was to help to maintain the integrity of te reo.” Her research involved looking at a lot of traditional or old vocabulary sources (e.g. chants, haka, paddle charts, old Māori newspapers etc.). Existing words, including those that had fallen out of use, accounted for about half of the vocabulary needed, and for the remainder she created new words. This was necessary because today there are new waka ama strategies, actions and words that do not have a historical equivalent.

“He tokomaha tonu mātou i Ōtaki nei, e whai ana kia maha ake ngā whaitua e rere ai te reo Māori hei reo mātāmua. Ko te tikanga ko te waka ama tētahi whaitua e pērā ana. He hoe tonu hoki ngā tūpuna, i a rātou ā rātou kupu e rite ana...me hoki atu tātou ki tērā āhua.”

Hēni Jacobs, Mātanga Reo

“Then we brought in a team of no more than 15 paddlers from the club, all fairly fluent [in te reo], ranging in age from 15 to 50 years old.” The group included “... wharekura students who stood out with leadership skills on the





water and as speakers. We target those who have great coaching potential or are already coaching. They were employed as pou waka reo to learn this new collection of phrases, get out on the water with the Mātanga Reo, and test and refine the phrases. Because the Mātanga Reo didn't paddle herself, she needed to understand what language would be used. Long sentences [were pared down] to two or three words, while maintaining the integrity of the reo. [We] went through about three or four edits of the list until we all agreed – paddlers, coaches and [the] Mātanga Reo.”

The waka ama sprint race resource 'Hāpainga Te Hoe, Hāpainga Te Reo' was then produced, a booklet containing instructional language, phrases and strategies. Pou waka reo were filmed and a video with subtitles was produced to support the resource, enabling coaches to see how terms can be used on the water (see <https://vimeo.com/370276254/99e4aea980>). Resource kits for tutors were developed that could be used on the water and merchandise were created that doubled as te reo resources, such as t-shirts with words and kiwaha on the back that could be read by other paddlers during activities.





The group of pou waka reo "... taught the material to a wider group of coaches and paddlers from the Hoe Tonga region at three Waka Reo workshops held on the water from spring through to summer of 2020. On a W6 waka you will always have two pou waka reo, so paddlers rotate and each participant will practice calling. So you can have 30 people participating." The Mātanga Reo was present throughout the workshops to ensure the integrity of te reo was maintained. Four kura reo and kura po were also run to support language development.

Now in year two, "... we're focussed on the ocean race, because that's what we're going to do this year. The really long 50km, 60km races, some are broken up over two or three days. There's a whole other vocabulary around that. We're about to launch that resource, then we'll roll out workshops so paddlers can benefit." Year three will focus on continued delivery – practicing, refining and disseminating the resources. "We want to instil the expectation that every time you see Waka Reo flags, you know you can come down and kōrero [te reo]".

WHAT ARE THE LESSONS LEARNED?

Roimata emphasised the importance of flexibility. "Kia tau te mauri. Āta haere. Don't try to do everything in one year." She also noted the importance of looking after those involved in the kaupapa. "Respect the natural ebb and flow of your community, don't exhaust people and put too much pressure on them. Take it easy. I have to remember I'm dealing with mums and dads who might be juggling two jobs, six kids, coaching. Take it easy on them." To accommodate people's busy lives some wānanga were held online, learning times were kept short and wānanga were reasonably relaxed. For some kaihoe who didn't want to participate in wānanga, the kaupapa was taken to them.

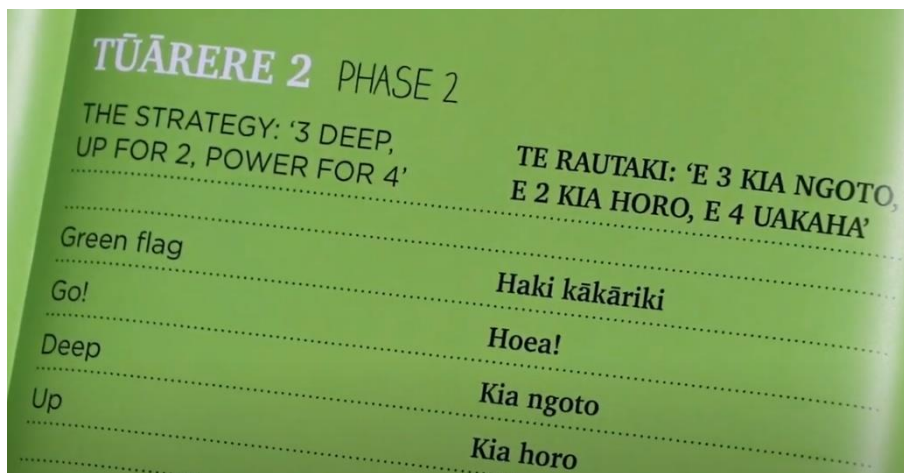
She also reflected that, "Covid taught me a lot, it taught that we have to have three ways to do something. We worked with international and national New Zealand champions the Hodges and the Henare-Taiapas ... asking them to compile many hours of GoPro footage of waka ama they did on the ocean. From that footage we begin to develop our vocabulary.





Normally we would be on the water to do that, but we couldn't." Roimata also found that a key lesson was to "... be open to opportunities that present themselves that are not in your plan. I met teachers who have a passion for waka ama who don't race at national or international events. Teachers who will take what they learned back to their wharekura and teach their students. So, it's not just paddlers in our workshops, but also influential teachers in wharekura, in that teaching space, as they'll have paddlers in their classes. We made them feel welcome to come although they [personally] don't do waka ama."

Roimata indicated that she would "... like to create a website to make resources more accessible."



There is much potential for the reo strategies and resources developed by the Waka Reo initiative to be adapted by other waka communities to meet their own reo development needs. "I

would reach out to other clubs to think about what role they might want to play in terms of committing to language revitalisation in our [waka ama] space." There has also been interest from other sport codes, such as basketball, in using the Waka Reo 'template'. She noted that instructing in te reo requires both an appropriate level of fluency and the confidence to use te reo.

"You start by addressing the reo of coaches and bringing their confidence up, and growing up new ones [coaches] who will be familiar with the terms ...What that means is that we take junior paddlers of five or six years old and the commands that we use to instruct and encourage them are in te reo."





WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE ASPIRATIONS FOR TE REO MĀORI?

Roimata shared aspirations for a self-sustaining waka reo movement. A kaupapa that combines outdoor learning environments on the water and shores, and the challenges of building hoe waka and reo skills, to nourish the mind, body and spirit of growing waka reo communities.

“The vision was that in 10 years te reo Māori would be the preferred language on the water. [One of the things we are already seeing is that] the children are being raised in the waka ama traditions and are building their fluency in te reo. The tamariki are being raised in this kaupapa.”

