

Ahomai

He rauemi reo
Māori mō te kāika

Kāhui: Te Waipounamu





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 Waipounamu. Ariana Stevens sat down with us to kōrero about the kaupapa reo that she is delivering in collaboration with Kirsty Bedi, and tell us a little bit about what they’ve been up to.

HE AHA TE KAUPAPA WHAKARAUORA REO?

Ariana and Kirsty together developed ‘Ahomai’, a series of reo Māori rauemi for the home. The rauemi are targeted for “...people who want to have more te reo in their daily life in a way that’s beautiful, and with a whānau focus.” The first rauemi is a set of re-applicable decals featuring manu and whakataukī, that can be applied to walls in the home or office. Each pack of decals comes with kōrero about the collaboration between Ariana and Kirsty, and an explanation of the whakataukī. Te Mātāwai funding was used to subsidise the production costs and make them more affordable for whānau. The funding, received in 2019, “wasn’t the catalyst, but was the impetus to increase the speed and focus.” Making it more affordable and accessible for whānau through the funding was a big motivating factor for putting a tono in to the Te Waipounamu kāhui. “My kaupapa is accessibility”, Ariana explains, emphasising that rauemi need to be financially viable for whānau, and ngāwari in their use of reo to support whānau who are just beginning on their reo journeys.



“Safety and being comfortable is important for this kaupapa – which is why this is non-invasive learning (through the decals). You can learn when you want to.”

Ahomai also includes a set of ‘mini mihi’ cards, each featuring a different whakataukī, which can be used for small birthday cards and so forth. “So there’s a level of reo in it, in a way that’s natural and integrated”, she explained. The last set of rauemi are vouchers that whānau can use for tasks around the home, such as “doing the dishes”, and are presented in both reo Māori and reo rua.

“All of the current and future products [of Ahomai] will be produced in New Zealand.” The decals were printed in Christchurch over lockdown, and “...it was cool to support a local company during Covid.” A Ngāi Tahu-owned company in Ōtepōti prints the mihi cards. There are plans for further iterations of the rauemi in future, with variations in boardgames, karakia, language plans, and more varied whakataukī decals. Ahomai products can be purchased at <https://ahocreative.com/collections/ahomai>.



WHAT ARE THE LESSONS YOU'VE LEARNED?

When we asked, “He aha ngā hua e puta mai ana?” Ariana said:

“I’m seeing excitement and people being proud of having the content and kōrero held within these [rauemi], and within their daily lives. Just seeing a really positive reception; having shared it through social media, we’re getting a 100% positive reception. A big outcome is that people hungry for more!”

WHAT CHALLENGES DID YOU FACE?

The impact of Covid-19 has been a big challenge for Ariana and Kirsty. “It’s difficult to collaborate on a creative project [such as Ahomai], all via video chatting. Production facilities were also closed because of Covid, which impacted us hugely. Covid... added a lot of mental and emotional stress.” However, their friendship and collective belief in Ahomai continued to push them through despite these significant challenges, as well as the “...positive feedback we’ve had in the last while – it’s been great.” Other challenges have included administrative and communication delays with Te Mātāwai. “But there’s a market for meaningful content”, and even during lockdown this demand was present.

A suggestion Ariana had for improving the application system for kaitono would be for Te Mātāwai to pair successful kaitono with a ‘navigator.’ The navigator would “...help you through the reporting processes [and the like], and support you throughout your kaupapa. This model could be very beneficial in this space”, especially for whānau unfamiliar with putting together a tono, and undertaking a kaupapa whakarauora reo.



WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE ASPIRATIONS FOR TE REO MĀORI?

Looking to the future, Ariana emphasised the importance of decolonisation in whakarauora reo:

“My hope [for the future] is that we have healed the intergenerational trauma that stops Māori accessing and using their reo... The decolonisation kōrero needs to go hand in hand with te reo, [to reiterate] for whānau Māori that it’s not their fault that they can’t speak te reo or find it hard to learn”

