

Kura Reo Rakatahi

He kura reo, he wānaka
mō kā rakatahi

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 up and down the motu. Victoria Campbell sat down with us to kōrero about what's been happening in Te Waipounamu.

HE AHA TE KAUPAPA WHAKARAUORA REO?

In January 2020, Kotahi Mano Kāika, through Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, held a kura reo rakatahi at Takahanga marae in Kaikōura, “to build leadership in te reo”. The key objectives of the kura reo were for rakatahi to become more familiar with their tribal narratives and strengthen and develop their reo together. Gathering rakatahi from around Te Waipounamu, the kura reo included a mix of mana whenua and mātāwaka rakatahi. The kaupapa involved learning about Kāi Tahu-specific tribal narratives, and took rakatahi on various haerenga to ‘bring to life’ those kōrero and hītori. “We got mana whenua and the hau



kāika in to share that mātauraka with the rakatahi”, Victoria explains, and funding from Te Mātāwai helped to access this pūkeka. “We went to different pā sites relevant within our tribal kōrero, and followed the trails of emigrations of our tipuna.” Rakatahi also learned about local waterways and mahika kai, and “...for many of our rakatahi, this was the first time they'd learned about this... A huge amount of learning took place in a short amount of time.” There were also informal and formal lessons on te reo, such as learning how kīwaha of old can be used and applied in rakatahi's every lives. ‘Whakawaha te riri’, for



example, is a whakataukī about preparing for war, but could be used in sporting contexts. “This is about how the reo can be nurtured and developed in a kaupapa such as this.”



WHAT ARE THE LESSONS YOU’VE LEARNED?

When we asked, “He aha ngā hua e puta mai ana?”, Victoria said “there are so many! The pure talent of the rakatahi, and how sharp they are.” For example, during part of the kura reo, rakatahi composed waiata and skits to retell pakiwaitara and kōrero “with modern day twists”. That the kura reo was delivered entirely in te reo “is another big hua – there’s not a lot of immersion domains in Te Waipounamu, so this is very special.” The whakawhanaungatanga and relationship building between the rakatahi was another important point, as “these are our future leaders. We want them to have strong bonds and associations with each other, from Kaikōura, to Murihiku, to the West Coast.”



“The experience of staying together, working on the marae, cooking and doing the dishes together, are valuable skillsets and knowledge that are important for kaupapa Māori. This is a major bonus. And just seeing the leadership of the rakatahi. They all come with different strengths, and we try to make an environment where they can draw on these strengths and uplift everyone who attends.”

The “huge value of kaupapa such as these” was the primary motivation for applying for Te Waipounamu funding, and Victoria emphasised that “external funding means that we can deliver these kinds of kaupapa to rakatahi and whānau.” The intent is to continue with kura reo rakatahi, in nurturing the teina-tuakana cycle so that rakatahi “become role models for their whānau and hapū.”

WHAT CHALLENGES DID YOU FACE?

The logistics of getting rakatahi from across Te Waipounamu to Kaikōura were one of the challenges Victoria’s team faced, “...but [overall] there weren’t challenges we couldn’t overcome.” Her team is familiar with event management, so organising rental vans and drivers was “easy because we have the systems for this.” “We love doing these things!”, she explained, but pointed out how this could be challenging for communities that don’t have experience or systems in place for kaupapa on this scale.

There are numerous skills required to undertake a kaupapa like this, from logistics to the expert pūkeka involved. That’s why, when we asked Victoria what advice she would give to potential kaitono, she said:



“Try and identify where your shortcomings are, in terms of skills you need, and figure out how to fill those gaps. What things do you need help with? Build this into your tono. Most people just focus on the kaupapa, but not the variety of skills you need to deliver it.”

WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE ASPIRATIONS FOR TE REO MĀORI?

Looking towards the future of te reo within our communities, Victoria said she sees the reo “thriving”:

“I see our whānau continuing intergenerational language transmission... to have another generation speaking te reo would be amazing. I see our kura and kōhanga reo all living and thriving. But more than that: language is in the home. This would be a big language goal; that iwi are speaking reo in their home, and acknowledging that ‘home’ is not just the whare, but the beach, the marae, and the Four Square shop. I see our reo throughout Aotearoa, thriving intergenerationally.”

