

# E kore e pau te ika unahi nui — Restoring the holistic wellbeing of Māori boys through connection and innovation

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In 2018 I attended a uLearn workshop based on research mentioned in the blog “E kore e pau te ika unahi nui — Restoring the holistic wellbeing of Māori boys through connection and innovation”. Although the research was at an early stage I could see that positive outcomes would result from this teaching and learning strategy, not only for Māori boys but the wider school and community.

Local people and learning environments such as the marae and surrounds contain a wealth of narratives and from different perspectives you may not find in books or online.

They can engage students through ‘Ako’ in contexts relevant to them.

I often think of my whare tūpuna as a living marautanga. The carvings depict our ancestors and their deeds – our whakapapa, our origins, our history, our relationships to ourselves and others. The heke/rafters adorned with kōwhaiwhai represent values and principles we can aspire to live by either as individuals or as a collective. Our tukutuku represent landmarks of significance, the uniqueness of our area, our kaitiaki, and the importance of higher learning.

This is merely one aspect of the wealth of knowledge contained in te ao Māori.

Accessibility to this form of mātauranga Māori may be a problem in some cases, however developing sustainable relationships with whānau, hapū and iwi would be a recommended first step.

I believe if a school doesn’t take into consideration the language, culture and identity of our Māori students then those learners are deprived and deemed – or made to feel – unimportant. This knowledge should be available to them as a right and as a taonga under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Hopefully reading this blog by Ānaru White and pondering what is mentioned here will spark ideas for planning what you could incorporate into a future focussed marau that is tūpuna driven.

– [Patariki Grace](#), Content Editor, March 2021



E kore e pau, he ika unahi nui

It will not be consumed for it is a fish covered with large scales

Here Taranaki compares its tribe to a heavily armoured and therefore unconquerable fish... (Mead, S. M., & Grove, N. (2001). Ngā pēpeha a ngā tīpuna)

As part of CORE's commitment to supporting innovative practices, [Jason Ruakere](#) and I have been awarded CORE's Pro-bono research grant, which we are undertaking during 2018.



Puniho Pā, Taranaki

The brief for the research is:

“E kore e pau te ika unahi nui” is a collaboratively-based research project with Puniho Pā, whānau, schools and a group of Māori boys living in coastal Taranaki. This is an exploratory study, this kaupapa is investigating and trialing how Ako is applied within ancestral spaces (marae, awa, moana, and maunga), and enhanced through digital interaction (e.g., coding, Google Maps and virtual reality).

Our research is steadily providing knowledge about how marae environments can improve Māori learning outcomes (Te Kupenga Mātauranga o Taranaki, 2011). While kaupapa Māori studies into the effects of marae learning are scant, what is available suggests that these settings provide powerful localised educational content and pedagogy, which can contribute to the following learning outcomes for Māori (Lee, 2012; George, 2010, Doherty, 2009; Hond, 2013):

- Pragmatic expression and commitment to education solutions for Māori students by Māori.
- Enhanced cultural belonging, control and innovation, encouraging leadership, collective participation and community action, and improvements in intergenerational learning.

We will endeavour to extend these earlier studies. The project focuses specifically on critically describing processes of ako when framed by ancestral spaces and future-oriented pedagogy and content. The trial team are exploring our own theories about how ancestral spaces can improve and strengthen the holistic wellbeing of Māori boys. Through the generation of pūrākau, this study is exploring effective practices of Ako in marae and hapū environments (Lee, 2009). Pūrākau are described as:

*“...a traditional form of Māori narrative, contains philosophical thought, epistemological constructs, cultural codes, and worldviews that are fundamental to our identity as Māori” (Lee, 2009, p. 1).*



Laying hīnaki, Matenehunehu River.

Current inequities between Māori and non-Māori learning outcomes pose challenges to our present education system. New and innovative approaches to supporting Māori boys is needed.

We hope that this project will meet this challenge, and add value to:

- discussions about the theory and practice of hapū-driven and 21st-century practices of Ako
- the different ways marae and hapū support learning through pedagogy and programme design, which mirror the knowledge and practices of the local whānau, hapū, and iwi and future-focused learning principles.



Making a hīnaki.

The overarching research question for this project is:

How does Ako in ancestral spaces enhance the holistic wellbeing of Māori boys?

To date we have:

- Held a wānanga for the boys and their whānau to strengthen relationships and connections with each other and the hapū.
- Spent a weekend camping and exploring and learning about local areas of significance for the hapū.
- Established weekly wānanga to support the boys with their schooling and build on the previous knowledge learnt about the local area. We use digital technologies to retell stories about the local area.

We hope that our findings will provide us with key learnings about the elements that encourage and hinder practices of Ako in marae and hapū contexts, and solutions to create mutually beneficial school, kura, and marae/hapū relationships.

We look forward to sharing the learning and outcomes through future blogs and presentations.

Useful links:

[CORE Education's Arareo Māori](#) team provides several products and services to cater for kura, schools and private and public organisations. This includes professional development, te reo Māori consultancy, publications, research and events. Ki te hiahia whakapā mai, tuku īmēra ki [arareomaori@core-ed.org](mailto:arareomaori@core-ed.org).

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Puniho Pā – Jason Ruakere

Laying hīnaki — Ānaru White

Making a hīnaki — Anaru White



## Ānaru White

Ānaru White (Te Atiawa) was an Advisor with Te Ara Whītiki | Connected Learning Advisory an accredited facilitator and CoP lead for Kia Takatū ā-Matihiko. He worked alongside Kāhui Ako, kura and schools to enhance outcomes through the effective use of digital technologies. Since writing this post, Ānaru has left CORE for new opportunities.