Pīkau: 00: Intro: Why Digital Technologies?

Video Name: What have our students been missing out on?

Presenters: Hayley van Waas and Matu Ngaropo (Te Rarawa, Tuhoe, Ngāti Porou me Ngāti Kahungunu)

Matu: Tēnā koe, nau mai haere mai, welcome. Tell us who you are and what you do.

Hayley: Kia ora. I'm Hayley and I'm a software engineer.

Matu: Wow! Okay. Have you always wanted to be a software engineer?

Hayley: Since I was 16.

Matu: Wow. What about before then?

Hayley: Before then I wanted to be a nurse, every since I was about 6.

Matu: So once you decided okay, maybe nursing's not really for me, I'm going to be a software engineer, how did you get yourself into it?

Hayley: As soon as I realised that software engineering was a career path that's totally viable and I could be great at, I threw myself into it. One day my Dad was on Trade Me, of all places, and an advertisement came up for some internet conference, that's how he described it to me. He sent it to me and I had a look at it. It said "Scholarships for women in tech" so I thought, "I'm a woman, I'm in tech". So I filled in my details and the next day they said "Yeah sure, we'll buy you some flights and we'll pay for your tickets." I thought "Awesome!". I went along to this 'thing' when I was 16 and I had no idea what it was. It turned out to be awesome. There were heaps of really interesting people there and a lot of conversations about tech. My mind was wide open, I learned so much. One person gave a presentation about computer science and programming education in schools. I went up to her afterwards and said "that was a really cool presentation". She replied "Thanks". She asked me where I was from, we had a bit of a chat, and she said "I'm coming to your town next week, do you want to teach some courses with me?" Ever since then I started teaching programming. I met other people through that first contact I made and I've never escaped ever since!

Matu: Awesome. What is it about this kind of work that you enjoy?

Hayley: I love working with people and solving challenging problems. Software engineering puts those two things together.

Matu: Before you talked a little bit about being at high school, being 16 years of age. When you were at high school were there any other pathways for you to get into this work?

Hayley: There possibly were but I didn't see them. I didn't know that it existed until I stumbled across it myself. That was despite being in a computer science class at high school. It wasn't until I doing my own research for a speech I was preparing that I realised that this industry actually existed. So I kind of fell into it by accident rather than it being presented to me.

Matu: Far out. That's cool. Well you may or may not know the digital technologies part of the curriculum is really starting to kick in now in schools. What can you say to kids who are curious about it and also to teachers who are helping to guide their students in this area?

Hayley: To the kids the first thing I always say is "You are so lucky." I couldn't believe the scope of this whole subject and how interesting it is and how many different problems there are to solve out there. It wasn't until I was getting towards the end of high school that I really discovered that. I think all the kids going through this at primary school now: I'm so jealous. They have a really cool curriculum ahead of them. I would encourage them to take up every opportunity. Ask questions. Try and learn as much as they possibly can and be brave enough to just figure things out and be nosey and try and work out how this works. Be creative. It's a really cool subject to be a kid in I think.

Matu: There might be some teachers who are a little bit scared because it's a new part of their working life that they are having to get used to. What kind of words of encouragement could you give them?

Hayley: To the teachers I would say, have the courage to take on this new subject. I'm very aware that it would be quite daunting for all of a sudden there be this brand new subject in your area that you have to suddenly be an expert in. The thing with this subject is it's the only subject where it's okay for your student to know more about it than you. In fact that's encouraged. You want your kids to be curious and you want them to be asking the tough questions. It's okay to not know the answer because in this subject there's no such thing as failure.

Matu: Awesome. Thank you so much for coming and sharing with us your experience.

Hayley: You're welcome.