

Key findings from engagement with Te Ohu Reo Manawataki o Ngāti Toa Rangatira

*Identifying the wellbeing and oranga that kapa haka brings to
whānau in Ngāti Toa*

2024



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WHAKAPŪPŪTIA MAI Ō MĀNUKA, KIA KORE AI E
WHATI.

Cluster the branches of the mānuka so they will not break.

Acknowledgements

Our very special thanks to Te Ohu Reo Manawataki o Ngāti Toa Rangatira who shared their stories with us, and to Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira who opened their doors to us and allowed their kaimahi to speak with us. We hope we have done your stories justice.

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MIHIMIHI

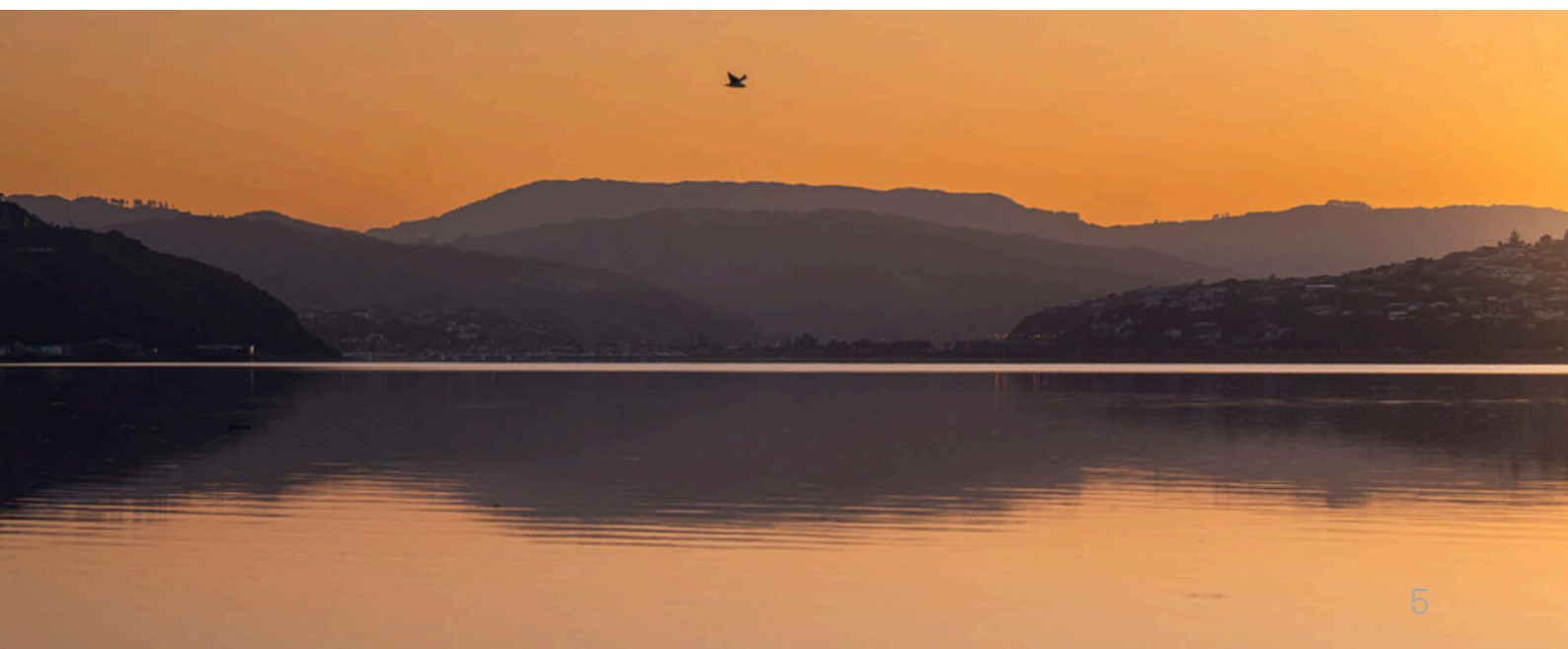
Tēnā koutou e ngā ringa raupā, e ngā reo kōrero, e ngā māngai mō Ngā Toa. Ka nui te mihi ki a koutou mō tō koutou kaha ki te whakapuaki i ō koutou whakaaro, i ō koutou wheako, hei āwhina i a mātou ki te mārama ake ki te oranga ka puta mai i te kapa haka. Nā tō koutou kaha, kua whakanikonikohia te māramatanga mō ngā hua nui o tēnei taonga tuku iho. Tēnei te mihi atu ki a koutou katoa i wahapū i tō koutou reo mō te oranga o ngā whānau, ngā hāpori, me te iwi whānui.

E kore e mutu ngā mihi ki a koutou i whakapuāwai ai tēnei kaupapa. Mā te kapa haka e whakakaha, e whakaohoho, e whakarangatira i a tātou katoa. Ka titiro whakamua ki te whakapakari tonu i ēnei kōrero, kia whaihua ai, kia hau ai te mana o tēnei taonga i ngā whakatipuranga o āpōpō.

Tēnei ka tuku i ngā mihi maioha, i ngā mihi aroha ki a koutou katoa. Mā te wā, ka kite anō tātou i ngā hua e puāwai mai ana i ā tātou mahi tahi mō te oranga o te whānau.

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

– Nā Āti Awa Toa Hauora Partnership Board



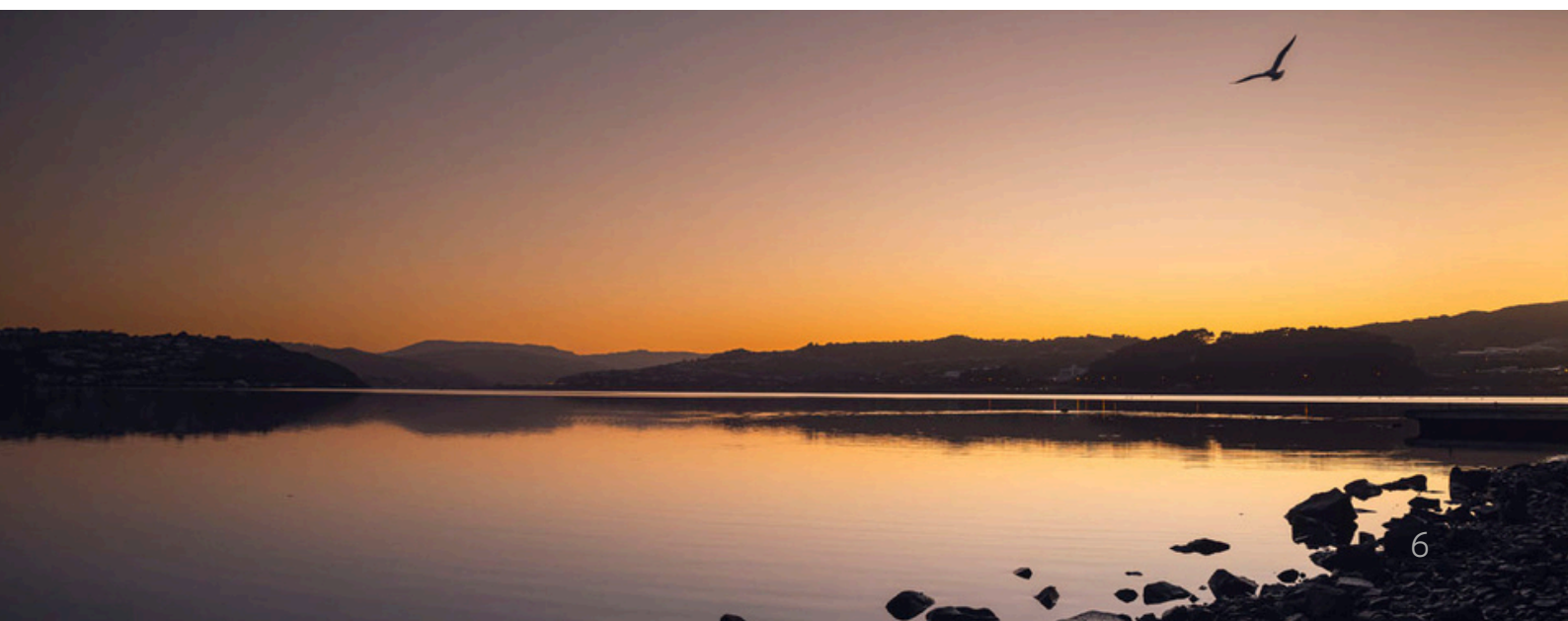
FOREWORD

This report provides a summary of the key engagement findings between Āti Awa Toa Hauora Partnership Board & Te Ohu Reo Manawataki o Ngāti Toa Rangatira. Kaikōrero in this report have committed their lives to the revitalisation of te reo Māori within Ngāti Toa uri. Their insights provide valuable information into the oranga and healing that cultural practices such as kapa haka can bring to whānau.

Whānau voice serves as the driving force for a whānau-centred approach that empowers whānau to exercise mana motuhake and tino rangatiratanga over their health and wellbeing. It is crucial for understanding the views, needs, lived experience and aspirations of whānau in relation to their oranga.

ĀATHPB held a hui with Te Ohu Reo Manawataki o Ngāti Toa Rangatira, in December 2024. This was an opportunity for ĀATHPB to wānanga with reo and tikanga experts about the intricates of waiata, reo-ā-tinana, haka, poi, wairuatanga both marae-based and competition-based and how this influences the oranga of Ngāti Toa iwi and hapori.

The kōrero kanohi ki te kanohi from within our communities is helping to enrich our understanding of why many health inequities persist as well as pointing to what can be done – their insights into the things that would make a difference.



BACKGROUND

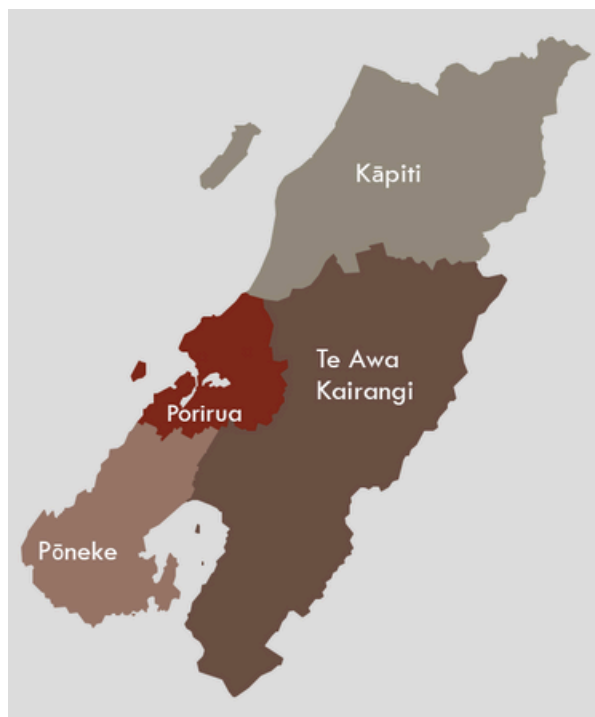
The mission of Āti Awa Toa Hauora Partnership Board (ĀATHPB) is to create an oranga ecosystem where our mokopuna can thrive. The stories of our people are helping to shape our priorities and our efforts to address the unmet needs of whānau Māori within the current health system and achieve their aspirations for change. Their experiences and insights are supported by health data and other indicators, which reveal significant and compounding inequities for Māori in our rohe.

Aligned with our moemoeā of Oranga Whenua, Oranga Wai, Oranga Whānau, our ĀATHPB champions a broad, kaupapa Māori view of health that protects and empowers Mana Motuhake, is compassionate, and ensures fairness for all. While our focus is on oranga for whānau Māori, as mana whenua, we are committed to uplifting the wellbeing of all Māori who reside in our rohe.

We represent the interests and aspirations of two iwi: Te Āti Awa and Ngāti Toa Rangatira, and three rūnanga: Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai, Te Rūnanganui o Te Āti Awa ki te Upoko o te Ika a Maui and Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira.

Our rohe broadly covers:

- Kapiti,
- Porirua,
- Te Awa Kairangi, and
- Pōneke.



INTRODUCTION

The most important components of kapa haka are its intrinsic link to culture and Māori identity, and the essential element of whanaungatanga. Kapa haka has a dynamic role as a vehicle for the revitalisation and retention of te reo, tikanga, cultural processes and histories. It enhances positive wellbeing by encouraging a sense of belonging, providing a safe environment to practice te reo me ōna tikanga, strengthening existing relationships and allowing whānau opportunities to make new social connections.



The practice of kapa haka in Ngāti Toa has been predominately Marae, community and home-based. However, the recent establishment (2023) of Te Kairangi o Poutama - Te Kapa Haka o Ngāti Toa Rangitira ki ngā whakataetae ā-rohe has opened the door to competitive kapa haka for Ngāti Toa whānau. This creates opportunities for Ngāti Toa to grow their waiata, share their history and pūrākau, especially those stories that haven't been shared or are less often heard.

Understanding and reflecting on the kapa haka journey of Ngāti Toa is a unique approach to capturing whānau voice and will provide invaluable insights into Oranga.

PURPOSE & RATIONALE

Purpose of this engagement

- Identify general hauora aspirations, priorities and needs of whānau Māori living in Ngāti Toa.
- Identify the various aspects of wellbeing that kapa haka brings to whānau by exploring their lived experiences.
- Use the insights from this engagement to help inform the health priorities of Māori in our rohe and to help shape our community health plan.



Rationale for this engagement

Whānau voice is the heart and soul of our function. It will allow us to monitor health sector performance, and advocate for the design and delivery of health services and public health interventions that relate and respond to whānau aspirations, priorities and needs. Whānau voice can be expressed and reflected through a range of channels and ĀATHPB seeks to explore this opportunity.

Method and Approach

Kaupapa Māori methodologies and action research underpin our approach to whānau voice collection.[1] Although Kaupapa Māori methodology continue to evolve, it includes activity that:

- literally envelopes “a Māori way”,
- connects to Māori philosophy and principles,
- validates and legitimises Māori systems of knowledge,
- values the importance of Māori language and culture and,
- assumes tino rangatiratanga over our own cultural well-being.

This activity acknowledges and values Māori ways of knowing such as the absolute entrenchment of te reo Māori me ōna tikanga and aims to create positive results that progress Māori aspirations.[2] The notion of whānau voice is part of our methodology, encompassing the traditional Māori values of “storytelling” as a wayfinding mechanism. There are no limitations to how whānau can express their ideas, beliefs, experiences and dreams.

[1] Smith, G. H. (1997). The development of Kaupapa Maori: Theory and praxis (Doctoral dissertation, ResearchSpace@ Auckland).

[1] Pihama, L., Cram, F., & Walker, S. (2002). Creating methodological space: A literature review of Kaupapa Maori research. Canadian Journal of Native Education, 26(1).



Capturing Kōrero

Collecting a wide range of voices of whānau from across our four whaitua will be undertaken using various collection methodologies. Here we have used a wānanga approach to unpack the role of reo, haka and tikanga from the perspective and lived experiences of kaimahi of Te Ohu Reo Manawataki o Ngāti Toa Rangatira. The focus of this wānanga was around kapa haka and the oranga that it brings to whānau.

We hope this engagement will be longitudinal to support rich insights and track changes for participants over time. Moreover, a longitudinal study will enable us to continue to nurture a long and trusted relationship with Ngāti Toa.

To help capture kōrero during wānanga we had a facilitator, audiographer, note takers and an illustrator, each with defined roles:

Facilitator

Guided and led discussions and prompted the group with questions that enable deeper whakaaro to be shared.

Audiographer

Audio recorded whānau voice and captured important quotes shared during wananga.

Note taker

Noted down and recorded the conversations and expressions during hui in written form.

Live Illustrator

Visually interpreted the kōrero, provided a way to reflect in real-time the kōrero captured.



EMERGING THEMES

The insights and themes from this wānanga highlighted kapa haka as a fundamental aspect of Māori cultural practice that promotes individual and whānau growth. It contributes to oranga through physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions, aligning with Te Whare Tapa Whā model of health. Whānau that participate in kapa haka gain confidence, connection to whakapapa, and a stronger sense of identity through the reo, waiata, and the physicality of kapa haka. It promotes health through rigorous training, healthy kai practices, and building deep connections within and between whānau.



Kapa haka serves as a powerful tool for connecting individuals to their taha Māori and cultural identity, allowing whānau a pathway to express their tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake. While competitive kapa haka and marae-based kapa haka differ in purpose and tikanga, both require mastery of intricacies like reo and pronunciation.

5 KEY THEMES

01 Individual and whānau development

Kapa haka fosters confidence, cultural connection, showcases and nurtures talent, particularly when whānau master challenging elements of haka such as mōteatea. It serves as a foundation for learning te reo Māori through waiata and haka, creating opportunities for self-expression and personal development. It doesn't just involve the individual or a competing team, it involves the whole whānau, from the supporting rōpū to tamariki learning by osmosis. Practicing kapa haka at the marae to prepare for competition or at home with whānau teaches valuable skills like collaboration, active listening and leadership, which are transferable to many other areas of life.

"It is the tool that brings everybody over to their āo Māori (Māori world)."

"You see the lights switch on, you know there is nothing more buzzy then when they learn a mōteatea, and you see them now, they come in "aww I know that", chest is puffed out because, what does that mean when you learn "Kāore te Tukituki" cause it's quite an advanced mōteatea. It means you actually have gotten to a stage where now you're feeling a lot more confident."



Holistic health and physical wellbeing

Te whare tapa whā describes the cornerstones of Māori health; taha Hinengaro, taha wairua, taha tinana and taha whānau. Kapa haka is an activation of these cornerstones. The physical demand of kapa haka has increased over the years, and good physical stamina is required to execute performances at a competitive level. In preparation for kapa haka performances whānau undertake rigorous training and nutritional changes to enable them to perform to the best of their abilities. These positive health behaviours promote oranga.

“Kai changes, everything. Walking up Rangituhi every day, gym, P.T. for the whole group as well though they had girl’s clubs and men’s clubs and they would go to the gym together. We had a few rangatahi (youth) at colleges so the older boys would pick them up and they would go to the gym together in the morning which was really cool. Then same for the wāhine (women) they would do poi practices out over in Elsdon and Onepoto, noho marae (marae stays), all healthy kai (food), prepped by Uncle George and them which was so cool. Every kai was hauora (healthy), no fizzies, no nothing, we cut down on everything, and they looked pretty good.”



“Need to have the framework based on Te Whare Tapa Whā (Wellbeing Model) because that would touch your taha hinengaro (mental wellbeing), your taha wairua (spiritual wellbeing), your taha tinana (physical wellbeing), and your taha whānau (family wellbeing), and those are probably your four indicators. That gives a holistic view to one person’s health. If their whānau (family) is well, their spirit is well, their hinengaro mental health is well, and physicality is well, then you’re functioning what they call a whare tauawhiawhi (support network) or as a whole holistic person.”

Connection to whakapapa and taiao

03

Kapa haka strengthens ties to whakapapa and the taiao. Themes of kaitiakitanga of whenua and awareness around the changes to whenua are reflected in waiata compositions, which educate and inspire action. Connection to the taiao, such as through dawn chorus and whenua-based practices, reinforces cultural and spiritual identity.

“haere tahi te ora me te mate (the living and dead walk together), but no one’s ever thought that before, giving them a voice, while their voice is in those waiata.”

“Uhm in there, there’s some waiata with epidemics, poropeihana (prohibition) is a great one when the iwi got together because of the alcohol thing, that’s hauora, because of the hauora, the effects.”

“Kapa haka...is like the kauwaka (vehicle) for some people to learn about who they are...to learn about who they are as Māori, the kōrero tuku iho (ancestral knowledge) from their iwi (tribe)...they learn about that in the waiata...mōteatea, the haka.”

‘The taiao is so important for our compositions in kapa haka because we should be reinforcing our connection to our tuākana and our whakapapa. But also, we should be political, especially now with globalisation, we’re moving into a world of corporations.’

“Bridging whānau (family) back to whānau”

“If the taiao is sustainable and living, then people will be. And if people are living it’s because the taiao is safe, and the environment.”



Cultural identity and connection

04

Kapa haka plays a crucial role in fostering health and healing within whānau Māori by strengthening cultural identity and connection. Kapa haka is a powerful tool for revitalising te reo Māori and other cultural practices. It creates a sense of belonging and purpose, which positively impacts emotional, mental, and spiritual wellbeing.

For Ngāti Toa, initiatives like “Waiata Wednesday” provide safe and supportive spaces for learning waiata, allowing whānau to engage with te reo Māori without fear of making mistakes. This approach helps reduce anxiety and builds confidence, encouraging both tamariki and rangatahi to embrace their cultural identity. By removing barriers to participation, such as the fear of judgment, these initiatives foster a positive learning environment where creativity and self-expression can flourish.

“It was this similar mentality of coming together, being able to practice your culture in a safe space but in a positive and healthy way and not necessarily down the route the gangs were going in at the time too. So yeah, I mean that’s oranga (health) right there.”

“Ngā mea noho tāone (those who moved to the city), they weren’t close to their marae, they weren’t able to go back to their marae, so that became their whānau you know, that was their iwi.”

“Space to share whakaaro, having the ability to be able to let them have expressions.”

“Coming together to practice your culture in a positive and healthy way.”



Economic growth and social development

05

Kapa haka offers career pathways, funded opportunities, and a chance to give back to iwi through teaching and performance. It also builds social networks, offering roles like reo and tikanga, counselling, and a mutually supportive environment. Ngāti Toa's kapa haka, reo and tikanga initiatives highlight the potential for cultural practices to support sustainable livelihoods and strengthen iwi development.

"We've just started implementing Waiata Wednesdays with our staff over here at Whitireia now that we've moved over here. It was really positive you know we had people coming up to us afterwards and saying that was awesome. You know they're a bit reluctant cause there, like aw 'I'm unco', 'I can't do the actions and sing at the same time.' But you know, it's a safe space I think we've created that safe space."

"There's a career path for me in this mahi and it's not just something that I can just do on the weekend or do on stage, there's actually career opportunities for me in this mahi."

"We're in paid positions, you know we get to do this for our iwi, do things, do this because we love it, but also, do it in paid positions."



CONCLUSION

Kapa haka is more than just performance; it is a powerful force for individual and whānau development, holistic wellbeing, and cultural revitalisation. Through its intensive discipline and enduring traditions, kapa haka nurtures confidence, leadership, and inter-generational learning while strengthening connections to whakapapa and te taiao (the environment).

It serves as a vehicle for maintaining and revitalising te reo Māori, encouraging a strong sense of identity and belonging within communities. By engaging in kapa haka, whānau embrace their whakapapa, develop valuable life skills, and cultivate a collective sense of honor and belonging.



Beyond its cultural and personal benefits, kapa haka also contributes to economic growth and social development. It provides career pathways, supports iwi initiatives, and promotes strong social networks that empower individuals and communities. Kapa haka is becoming more inclusive and accessible for all, breaking down barriers to participation and opening up doors for whānau to learning and express themselves. Through its ability to unify, educate, and inspire, kapa haka continues to be a cornerstone of Māori identity, resilience, and progress, ensuring that cultural traditions thrive for future generations.

APPENDIX

Table 1: Note taker findings

The table below captures the written kōrero taken by our note takers during wananga.

1. What does kapa haka do for oranga?

- “It is a tool that carries everyone to their te ao Māori.”
- Freedom of expression.
- “Kapa haka is how one learns about who they are.”
- Marae kapa haka vs Competition kapa haka??
- Freedom of expression through the wairua.
- Variations per iwi.
- Taranaki are the opposite of us – very inclusive of their wahine.
- Knowing the intricacies.
- Kau-waka.
- Pronunciation.
- Kapa haka (competition and performance) it is a tool that can bring people into their ao Māori but can also put people off. Kapa haka competition – vs – kapa haka tikanga/marae two different things? You are representing your iwi.

2. How does it enrich their lives (how does it contribute to your sense of oranga)?

- You see the light switch on – nothing buzzer than seeing them learn a Moteateā.
- Leads to confidence.

3. How do you construct a bracket in Kapa haka? How the compositions evolve over the lifetime of this rōpū – how did the compositions embody/communicate/honour oranga? What role does whakapapa play?

- Goes as far back as when I first learnt the language.
- Haka taught me my reo – for me it was through waiata.
- Kapa haka was the foundation to my reo.
- Waiata provides a mnemonic method.
- Limited in terms of input.
- Construction was ?? – notice a void in the waiata – took 9 years to create.
- It's not just wairua and hinengaro, it's physical wellbeing.
- Definitely a whare tapa whā thing, when you are training yourself to be an instrument.
- It's like doing a full-on workout – top drop.
- Off season and on-season body.

4. What does kapa haka do for your physicality?

- We have a product to deliver – need Hauora, during campaigning time never get so healthy. – the physical side
- Whare tapa whā – is reflected in the training.
- Full on workouts.
- I'm very lapse. During the off season.
- We dropped weight when we committed to kapa haka.
- Te whare tapa whā.
- Kai changes.
- Gym, PE walking up Rangituhi everyday.

- The whole group had a wahine club and tane club.
- Noho marae all health kai every kai was Hauora, no meat no fizzy drinks.
- Babysitters, ringa wera, drivers, therapist.
- People that you can sound board off, people that you trust.
- People that look after your kids.
- There is more to kapa haka than competitive though right – Manawaroa.
- Positive response to (& from) gangs – right we are getting together to learn kapa haka.

5. Curious to hear your reflection – when you presented it to the iwi – what were their reflections?

- Coming together to practice your culture in a positive and healthy way.
- Need people to sound board off.
- Everyone was proud. We didn't know what went into a campaign, most had never gone into hakas before. That was our kōrero that's the first time we saw it on stage.
- We are away in Wairua we were crying.
- Everyone was in their gears in the MFC it was so cool.
- For most iwi Kaupapa we don't get that much of us come together and to see us happy and proud.

6. What would you do better/what are the learnings?

- We learned that we needed a kapa haka lead – needed an expert 18 months.
- Waiata Wednesday – safe space for people to come and give things a go – whether that wananga reo – kapaha haka is part of the wider strategy – to revitalize – opening opportunities.
- Using all the senses to learn.
- We hope the tamariki will share the desire and passion and mindset for kapa haka.
- Business case together – made sure kapa haka was included.
- Requires a lot of work to shift the mindset, when learning another language – a mind shift – a change of your mindset – te reo should be a priority.
- Taking the fear of making mistakes out of them – the anxiety can be encumbering to learning – engages everyone – full spectrum of thought – giving the rangatahi the ability to have their expression – will be met with issue?

7. What are the opportunities?

- There are mahi and money opportunities – there is a career path for me in this mahi, there are career opportunities in kapa haka. – lets us do things for our iwi because we love – privilege to be in these positions.
- No one we know gets paid by the rūnanga to teach kapa haka.
- Only activity group paid out of treaty money? – made sure every day that I made a good job by doing the function of what is required by the team.
- On a reo level, the whenua provides great korero – ki waha, inspired by the interview our kaumatua – seeing something visual – we are the best advocates to talk about the wai – taiao is an important aspect of everything.
- You know we had our koro like Koro Kahu who was doing this for nothing, but now we can get paid to do our passion. Our iwi support it, it was a priority for our reo team (NT runanga).
- Ma te hapa a koe wai? – Kahu – world is your oyster if you aren't scared to make mistakes.
- We are creating a safe space make mistakes.
- Space to share whakairo, having the ability to be able to let them have expressions.

8. Oranga whenua, Oranga wai, Oranga whānau

- These issues are real and mamae – going back to who you are, your atua, your whakapapa – Ngāti Toa whakaaro to reach our people – it's education – it touches on the where tapa whā.
- Our reo Māori come from the bird – they are our tuakana.
- If the taiao are sustainable the people are living – composition to say how wonderful our taiao is or don't hurt our taiao.
- Need to be in tune with your taiao – being on the whenua and how important it is – my body clock has changed with the birds.
- Dawn chorus – starting to connect with your taiao – deep connection to our taiao.
- Reinforcing our connection to the taiao – political because we move into a world of corporation – we will be going into conflict – need to be vigilant, know who we are in order to survive the onslaught – against the capitalist system.
- Taiao is an intrinsic aspect.
- On a reo level provides a kōrero.
- Kiwaha.
- Te awarua: 7 years inspired by interviews of our kaumatua.
- Matariki last year – reo depicted visually.
- We are the best advocates to talk about our wai, we have the hāhākis from it.
- We made a waiata out there the other day about picking up your rubbish – Manawaroa.
- Composition in waiata that being a universal language.
- Composition around certain themes and sharing those messages through waiata.
- There's mamae you can transfer through kapa haka – the impacts but also how it can get better.
- We are all connected to the Taiao not just for us it's for everyone.
- It's education too right, especially when it comes to mental health.

9. what is unique about Ngāti Toa?

- Every iwi has their own specific Maui stories – one of the few iwi that have kōrerero in Hawaiiki. – Ngāti Toa specific narrative.
- Bringing whānau back to whānau.
- Reconnecting with whānau.
- We are not a kapa haka iwi everyone knows that.
- It's not happening anywhere else – I'd go as far to say we are only the ones, we are paid out of our treaty claims. We must do a good job because its blood money, going home thinking yes, I've done a good job. Ngāti Whatua have a reo team. (they are small and had the city come to them – like us, small iwi but amongst a big city).

10. Interested to hear your views on our people that have passed?

- I don't think it needs to be a question. It's the Māori way.
- Can come through several ways: part of the healing.
- Whaiwhaia on the cancer.
- Matakite.
- Ati awa – Kura.
- Eruptions Te Arawa, pandemics, Parihaka.
- Groundbreaking, breaking new ground.

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