



HUI-TANGURU | FEBRUARY 2025

Kua tau te waewae o Ruhi kai whenua.

The foot of Ruhi (a summer star) now rests upon the earth.

CONTENTS

Te Pūrongo Nō Ngā Pou Matarua

Kaupapa Matua: Runanga research saves harbour ecosystem

Rangahau: Declining fertility rates

NPM Researcher: Professor Melinda Webber

Kanapu: News & updates

Ngā Manaakitanga | Opportunities

News | Events

TE PŪRONGO NŌ NGĀ POU MATARUA  
CO-DIRECTORS UPDATE

NPM is excited to begin 2025 by welcoming on board a new Pou Matarua, Professor Melinda Webber (Te Paatu, Ngāti Hau, Ngāti Hine, Ngāti Whakauae). A long-time NPM researcher, Melinda brings a wealth of experience as a Professor and Deputy Dean in the Faculty of Education and Social Work at Waipapa Taumata Rau, The University of Auckland. Melinda will work alongside outgoing Pou Matarua Professor Linda Waimarie Nikora, before taking over the role fully in July. You can read more about Melinda and her mahi later in our e-pānui.

During their holiday break, many in our NPM network opened their laptops to prepare submissions for the Principles of the Treaty of Waitangi Bill and Regulatory Standards Bill. Several of our NPM researchers provided oral submissions on the Treaty Principles Bill. The intellectual depth and powerful delivery of submissions from our own mātanga and Tangata Tiriti was simply outstanding. We are grateful to our researchers and communities for their ongoing commitment to upholding the mana of our nation's founding document and the mana of our tūpuna.

Tihē mauri ora!

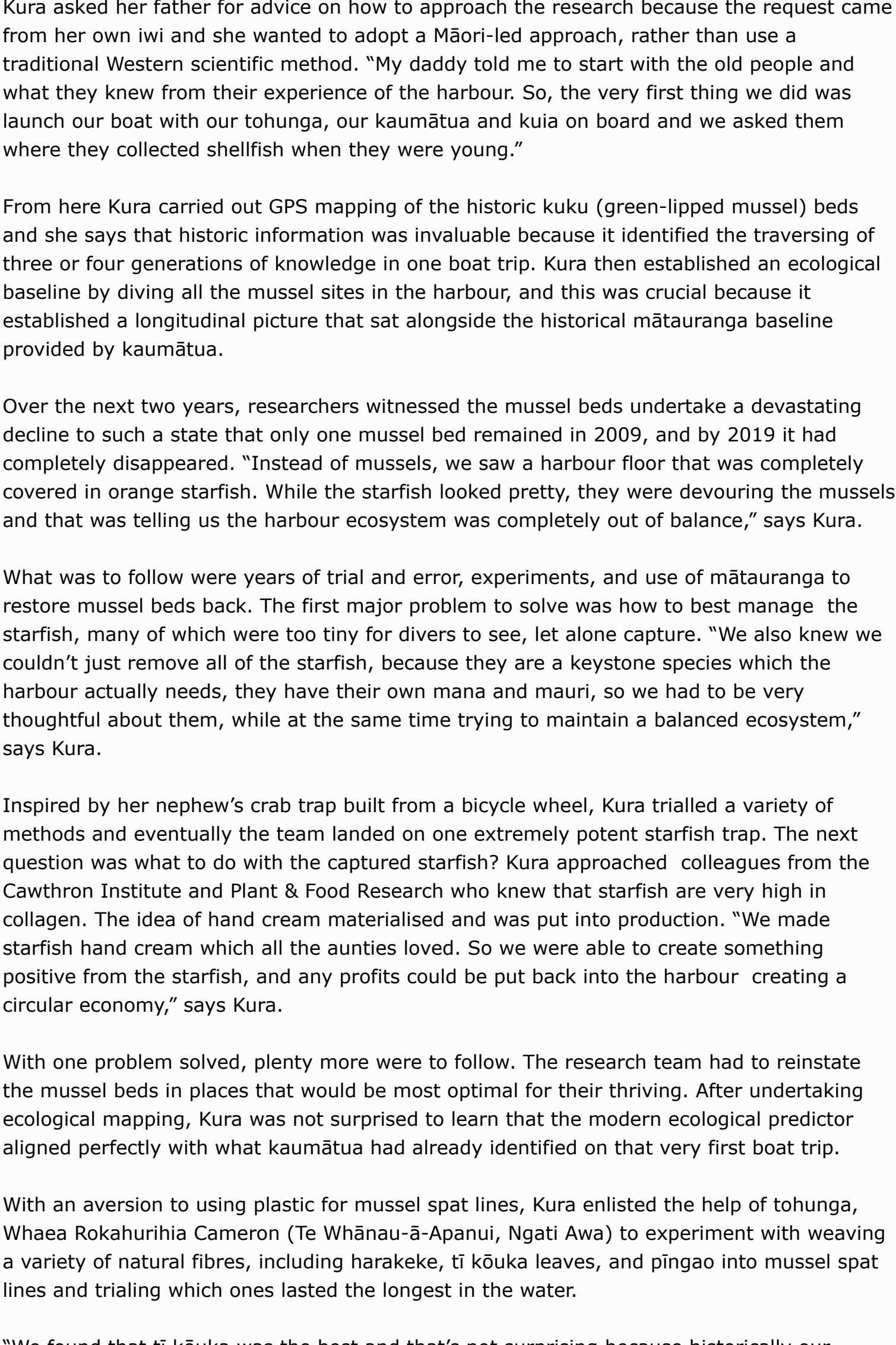
Ngā Pou Matarua | Co-Directors

- Professor Tahu Kukutai
- Professor Linda Waimarie Nikora

KAUPAPA MATUA

RŪNANGA RESEARCH REVIVES MUSSEL ECOSYSTEM

2



Professor Kura Paul-Burke mentors the next generation of marine scientists to care for the Ōhiwa Harbour.

By Cindy Simpkins-McQuade

A research mission led by Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Awa has led to a significant turnaround in the population of mussel beds in the Ōhiwa Harbour over the past decade. In 2007 the rūnanga approached Professor Kura Paul-Burke (Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Whakahemo, Ngāti Māhino, Irish) because they suspected the mussel population was declining and it needed more information.

Kura asked her father for advice on how to approach the research because the request came from her own iwi and she wanted to adopt a Māori-led approach, rather than use a traditional Western scientific method. "My daddy told me to start with the old people and what they knew from their experience of the harbour. So, the very first thing we did was launch our boat wirotuhanga, our kaumātua and kula on board and we asked them where they collected shellfish when they were young."

From here Kura carried out GPS mapping of the historic kauri (green-lipped mussel) beds and she says that historic information was invaluable because it identified the traversing of three or four generations of knowledge in one boat trip. Kura then established an ecological baseline by diving all the mussel sites in the harbour, and this was crucial because it established a longitudinal picture that sat alongside the historical mātauranga baseline provided by kaumātua.

Over the next two years, researchers witnessed the mussel beds undertake a devastating decline to such a state that only one mussel bed remained in 2009, and by 2019 it had completely disappeared. "Instead of mussels, we saw a harbour floor that was completely covered in orange starfish. While the starfish looked pretty, they were devouring the mussels and that was telling us the harbour ecosystem was completely out of balance," says Kura.

What was to follow were years of trial and error, experiments, and use of mātauranga to restore mussel beds back. The first major problem to solve was how to best manage the starfish, many of which were too tiny for divers to see, let alone capture. "We also knew we couldn't just remove all of the starfish, because they are a keystone species which the harbour actually needs, they have their own mana and mauri, so we had to be very thoughtful about them, while at the same time trying to maintain a balanced ecosystem," says Kura.

Inspired by her nephew's crab trap built from a bicycle wheel, Kura trialled a variety of methods and eventually the team landed on one extremely potent starfish trap. The next question was what to do with the captured starfish? Kura approached colleagues from the Cawthron Institute and Plant & Food Research who knew that starfish are very high in collagen. The idea of hand cream materialised and was put into production. "We made starfish hand cream which all the aunties loved. So we were able to create something positive from the starfish, and any profits could be put back into the harbour creating a circular economy," says Kura.

With one problem solved, plenty more were to follow. The research team had to reinstate the mussel beds in places that would be most optimal for their thriving. After undertaking ecological mapping, Kura was not surprised to learn that the modern ecological predictor aligned perfectly with what kaumātua had already identified on that very first boat trip.

With an aversion to using plastic for mussel spat lines, Kura enlisted the help of tohunga, Whaea Rokahurihia Cameron (Te Whānau-ā-Apanui, Ngāti Awa) to experiment with weaving a variety of natural fibres, including hānakeke, tī-kōkū leaves, and pingao into mussel spat lines and trialling which ones lasted the longest in the water.

"We found that tī kōkū was the best and that's not surprising because historically our tipuna used it for kai, for raincoats, fire starters, and roof materials. That's how neat our tipuna were. They knew some stuff!"

It's been nearly two decades since that first boat ride to survey the Ōhiwa Harbour with her old people, and since then, most of the kaumātua on that original trip have passed away, including Kura's dad. Over a decade of research, experimentation and hard work, the mussel beds in the Ōhiwa Harbour are now bouncing back with over 16 million mussels now thriving on the seafloor. No other mussel restoration project in the country has been able to achieve these exciting results.

Another positive outcome has been the capacity building of young people. Today, Kura leads a team of young, determined wāhine Māori PhD marine science students, all who whakapapa to Ōhiwa Harbour. One PhD student is a NPM scholarship recipient, Kiri Reihana, who is trying to understand the reasons for the declining cockle population in the harbour. Kura has also been responsible for inspiring and teaching Ngāti Awa taiohi to free dive and to care for their harbour using mātauranga Māori techniques.

"They are passionate, energetic, clever and funny. Being involved in the project has inspired some of the taiohi to go on to learn to reo Māori and continue their education. Some of them have also taken up marine studies as a result," she says.

"Succession is everything. I love working with passionate young people who care about their harbour and their ocean. Exploring innovative ways to prioritise mātauranga Māori into pragmatic restoration effort across generations is amazing mahi. I see my role as smoothing the pathway for the future marine leaders of tomorrow," says Kura.

See more about Kura's amazing research and why she is the 2024 Local Hero Winner Blue Marine Foundation Award:

<https://www.mz.co.nz/programmes/turning-the-tide/story/2018942671/turning-the-tide-episode-2-matauranga-led-restoration>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ok8QcS9m3Dk>

RANGAHAU | RESEARCH

MĀORI FERTILITY KEY TO OUR PEOPLE THRIVING



By Cindy Simpkins-McQuade

A fertility crisis is occurring over the world with over half of all countries having below replacement fertility. In 2024, the Total Fertility Rate for Aotearoa was just 1.53 births per woman, well below the replacement level of 2.1. Māori fertility, however, is still around replacement and demographer Moana Rarere's PhD research sought to understand the reasons for this. In particular, she was interested in whether cultural factors influenced Māori fertility patterns.

While Māori fertility has declined dramatically since the 1960s, it is still relatively high by comparison with Pākehā fertility levels. A youthful Māori population means there are still large cohorts moving into the childbearing ages. Māori women also have children significantly earlier than Pākehā, with age-specific fertility rates peaking in the late 20s. Many Pākehā women, by contrast, delay having their first child well into their 30s and thus end up having fewer children.

"When you are in your 30s your chances of giving birth are lower than when you are in your 20's. You have got wāhine who have a smaller window in time to have their families when they leave it too late," says Moana.

She says that understanding cultural attitudes is important if governments want to address very low fertility rates. "I noticed that when analysts talked about fertility, they have an economic focus, and I noticed there was a lack of Māori voice in trying to understand why Māori fertility is different from that of our Pākehā counterparts. I wondered if there is some sort of cultural difference which could explain the difference other than purely economic reasons," she says.

"My research reaffirmed what we have always known generally. Fertility is not just about the number of children, or family size. It is about the continuance of whakapapa and about the survival of those lines. Whakapapa is central to our culture and ensuring it continues and endures is why we have the fertility rates we have," she says.

"One interviewee emphasised that having children was natural and normal and that it was encouraged by her wāhine. Participants also said that while wāhine were supportive, they were sometimes the biggest hōhā because of the pressure they exerted for wāhine to have babies. However, the wāhine also knew they would have support from wāhānu to help raise the child regardless of their age or education at the time of having their babies," she says.

Moana says having children young is often framed by others as a negative thing to do, especially if you are young and Māori. "For many Māori, it is seen as natural and you just do your best to support them because they are your uni."

Moana says her research changes the narrative of how young wāhine Māori are viewed. "The dominant narrative out there is that it will ruin your life, and you are a burden to society to be supported to be a mother, but many Māori see having children as a good thing. That's how our people survive. Our population has recovered remarkably since the early 1900s because our cultural ways have enabled wāhine Māori to have babies and not be assimilated by Pākehā values. Our long-term survival depends on our being able to maintain replacement fertility."

She says her research is important because policy makers need to understand the story behind the statistics. "In order for your population to survive and thrive you need to have the ability to reproduce, if you leave it too late or make it difficult for women to have children, your people will not survive," says Moana.

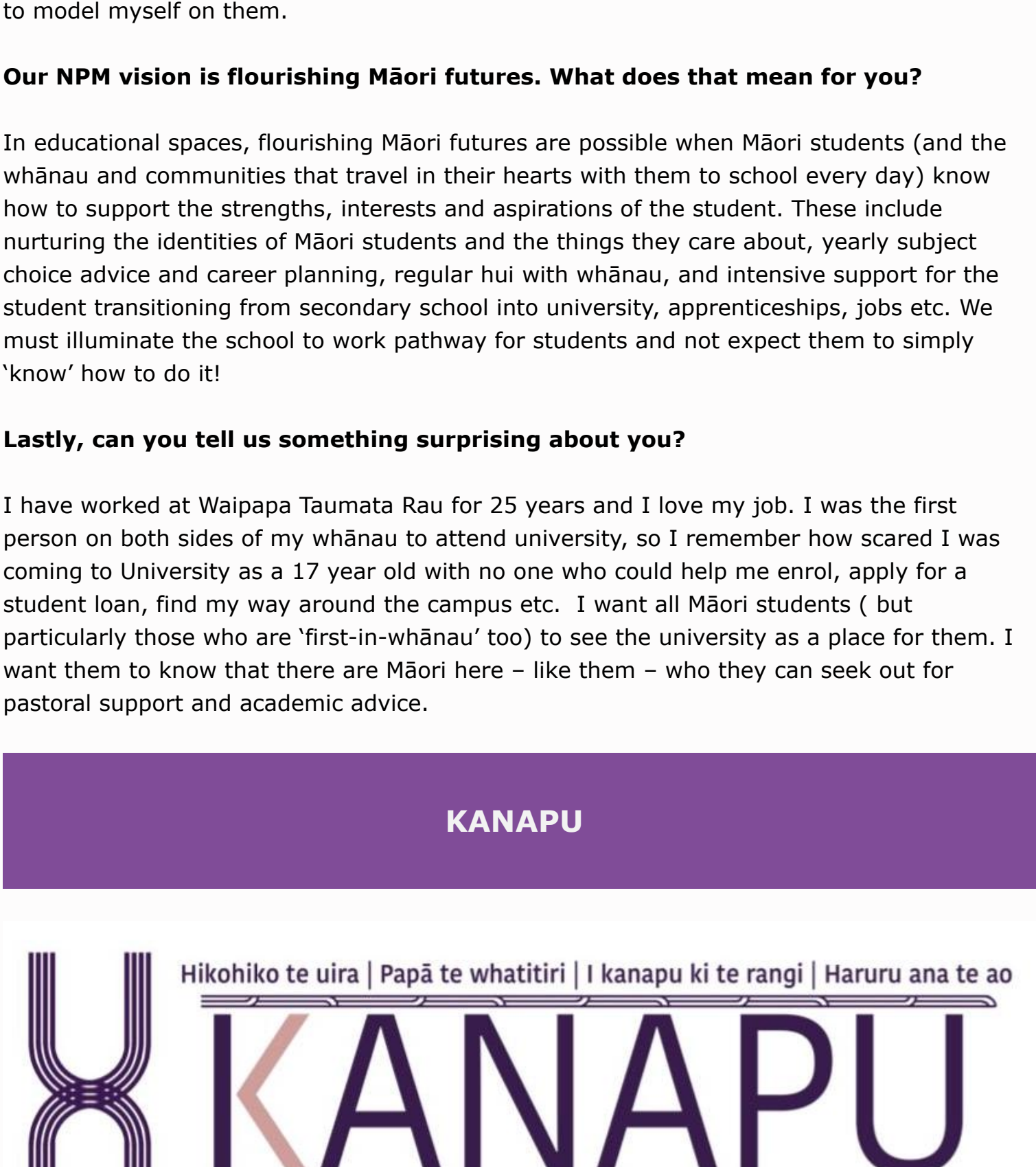
Women are under pressure to be educated, to have careers, and then they have the pressure to have children before it's too late. This society needs to work with nature and support women to have babies younger and perhaps get their education later, she says.

"Societies need to look at how they can support women of all cultures to have children when they are young. They might do this by continuing to invest in supporting wāhānu, enabling women to stay home and be mothers if they choose, as well as enabling women to acquire their education or support for all mothers in the workforce."

Moana's research means she is frequently approached to provide insights on the impacts of falling fertility for Aotearoa. She believes governments need to be more creative in supporting all women to be mothers if they chose, but the issue is complex. "Many governments in developed countries have implemented a range of policies to help boost fertility levels but with little success. The cost of living has been a major deterrent for young people to start a family. Also, we're seeing increases in the number of women remaining childless for various reasons including infertility issues or never finding the right partner to settle down with. It's not an easy problem to solve but having the right policy settings and support structures will help to ease some of the pressures, and assist wāhine and wāhānu with their fertility intentions."

KŌRERO WITH NPM RESEARCHERS

Each month we feature one of our NPM lead researchers. This month our kōrero is with Professor Melinda Webber who joins NPM as a new Pou Matarua.



Melinda and Mia soaking up the sun.

Ko wai tō ingoa, nō whea koe?

Ko Melinda Webber taku ingoa. Nō Te Tai Tokerau, nō Rotorua hoki ahau. Ko Te Paatu, Ngāti Hau, Ngāti Hine, Ngāti Whakauae nōki ōku iwi. I am a daughter of Te Tai Tokerau and Te Koutu, Rotorua.

What are your areas of research?

I work in teacher education and research in the fields of social psychology, Mātauranga Māori, Māori student motivation and school improvement. I have been a school teacher so I have a deep commitment to the work of teachers and schools – and the ways they might better meet the needs of Māori students and their wāhānu. My research is strengths-based which means that I am always looking for "what works?" and "why?" in educational contexts. This doesn't mean that I ignore the political, historical, and contextual barriers to educational thriving – but my focus is always on the ways that Māori communities respond to, and successfully navigate, these ongoing challenges. More recently, I've been engaged in a lot of community research in Te Tai Tokerau that looks at how exceptional our tūpuna were. I also do research that evidences the ways wānanga Māori exemplify excellent teaching pedagogy. This research fills my cup – because it takes me home to my mother's people in the north.

What excites you about your work?

Working alongside Māori communities and schools who are committed to positive social change, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and the revitalisation, inclusion and practice of Mātauranga Māori. I am also lucky because I have been mentored and guided by more experienced Māori scholars who have been consistently generous of spirit and encouraging. I try my best to model myself on them.

Our NPM vision is flourishing Māori futures. What does that mean for you?

In educational spaces, Māori futures are possible when Māori students (and the wāhānu and communities that travel in their hearts with them to school every day) know how to support the strengths, interests and aspirations of the student. These include nurturing the identities of Māori students and the things they care about, yearly subject choice advice and career planning, regular hui with wāhānu, and intensive support for the student transitioning from secondary school into university, apprenticeships, jobs etc. We must illuminate the school to work pathway for students and not expect them to simply 'know' how to do it!

Lastly, can you tell us something surprising about you?

I have worked at Waipapa Taumata Rau for 25 years and I love my job. I was the first person on both sides of my wāhānu to attend university, so I remember how scared I was coming to University as a 17 year old with no one who could help me enrol, apply for a student loan, find my way around the campus etc. I want all Māori students (but particularly those who are 'first-in-wāhānu' too) to see the university as a place for them. I want them to know that there are Māori here – like them – who they can seek out for pastoral support and academic advice.

KANAPU

Hikihiko te uira | Papā te whatitiri | I kanapu ki te rangi | Haruru ana te ao

KANAPU

Connections | Retention | Acceleration | Reverberation

Funded by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), Kanapu is a NPM initiative to support Māori talent and leadership across te ao Māori in research, science and innovation spaces.

TŪHONO RAU TANGATA | MĀTANGA TALKS

Tūhono Rau Tangata | Mātanga talks are online kōrero with mātanga Māori from diverse RRSIT fields (rangahau, research, science, innovation and technology) sharing insights on their life and career journeys. Some sessions are in te reo Māori, others in English. All are welcome!

We have many outstanding mātanga already confirmed for both our reo Māori and general sessions:

- 19 February 2025 - Wini Geddes
- 5 March 2025 – Dr. Awanui Te Hula (Reo Māori session)
- 4 June 2025 – Peter-Lucas Jones

All sessions are held on Wednesdays, 12:00 - 1:00 pm. Registration is essential. Come along and be inspired.

<https://kanapu.maori.nz/matanga-talks/>

KANAPU TŪHONO RAU TANGATA | MASTERCLASSES

These 2.5 hour classes (primarily in English) allow more time to explore important kaupapa for undertaking RRSIT-related mahi, whether that mahi is for wāhānu, hapi or iwi, academic studies or professional work. Here's what's in store:

30 April 2025: Where Is Your Data? with Vanessa Clark

2 July 2025: He Kura Nō Te Ao Atua with AATEA with Whare Kupenga-Keeffe and Hinerangi Edwards

All Masterclasses are held on Wednesdays, 12:00-2:30 pm. Registration is essential. Nau mai, hāere mai!

Masterclass Registration: <https://kanapu.maori.nz/masterclass/>

HUI HIHIRI

Our first in person Hui Hihiri will be hosted at The Pā, University of Waikato in Kirikiriroa. The theme is RangaKura - intergenerational approaches to mana motuhake.

Registrations are now open: <https://kanapu.maori.nz/huihiri/>

Full programme and speakers to be announced early February 2025.

Where: The Pā, University of Waikato

When: 20 March, 8.30-4.30pm,

Follow Kanapu [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) or [LinkedIn](#)

NGĀ MANAAKITANGA | OPPORTUNITIES

MEDIA SAVVY - IMPROVE YOUR SKILLS!

Applications are open for the Science Media SAVVY workshops. These workshops give valuable tips and tricks for those wanting to develop and improve their interactions with the media.

When: 3-4 July

Where: Tāmaki Makaurau

Register now: <https://www.sciencemediacentre.co.nz/media-savvy-maori/>

JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY - SPECIAL ISSUE

The Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand (JRSNZ) is calling for Expressions of Interest (EOI) for a Special Issue planned for release in early-2026, entitled "Māori Data Sovereignty: Research, Practice, and Policy".

To celebrate a decade of Te Mana Rauanga, the development of the Māori data sovereignty principles, and associated action in research and policy, this special issue seeks to document progress in Māori data sovereignty, positive contributions to both science and Te Ao Māori, and the coming challenges of the next decade.

Please send a preliminary title, indicative author list, affiliations and a short descriptive paragraph outlining the scope of your proposed manuscript to Associate Professor Lara Greaves via [lara.greaves@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:lara.greaves@vuw.ac.nz) by 1 March 2025.

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

BOOKS OF MANA

Professor Jacinta Ruru MNZM FRSNZ, Professor Angela Wanhalla FRSNZ, and Jeanette Wikaira have launched a new book to celebrate non-fiction written books by Māori authors.

Books of Mana celebrates the rich tradition of Māori authorship in Aotearoa. It reveals the central place of over 200 years of print literacy within te ao Māori and vividly conveys how books are understood as taonga tuku iho – treasured items handed down through generations.

In this beautifully illustrated collection of essays, some of Aotearoa's most renowned Māori thinkers join the editors in a wide-ranging kōrero about the influence and empowerment of Māori writing.

Books of Mana originated with a partnership between the Society and Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga in 2018 for Te Takarangi, a list of 150 important books by Māori authors.



Te Takarangi curators, from left, Angela Wanhalla, Jacinta Ruru and Jeanette Wikaira welcome people to celebrate the release of Books of Mana with them at a special event at the Hocken Library on 12 February. Photo: Dean Johnston

OPEN ACCESS BOOK ON INDIGENOUS STATISTICS

NPM Pou Matarua Professor Tahu Kukutai collaborated with Indigenous scholars Professor Chris Andersen (Métis), Distinguished Professor Maggie Walter (Palawa) and Professor Chelsea Gabel (Métis) to distinguish *Indigenous statistics: From data deficits to data sovereignty* (Routledge).

This second edition of the groundbreaking *Indigenous Statistics* "opens up a major new approach to research across the disciplines and applied fields. While qualitative methods have been rigorously critiqued and reformulated, the population statistics relied on by virtually all research on Indigenous Peoples continue to be taken for granted as straightforward, transparent numbers. Drawing on a diverse new author team, this book dismantles that persistent positivism with a forceful critique, then fills the void with a new paradigm for Indigenous quantitative methods using concrete examples of research projects from first world Indigenous Peoples in the United States, Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and Canada."

"Concise and accessible, it is an ideal supplementary text as well as a core component of the methodological toolkits for anyone conducting Indigenous research or using Indigenous population statistics."

*Indigenous statistics: From data deficits to data sovereignty* is open access and can be downloaded at the link below. It is also available in hardcover.

<https://tinyurl.com/IndigStats>

Kāti rā ngā kōrero mā tēnei wā,

Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga | New Zealand's Māori Centre of Research Excellence

Waipapa Marae Complex | Private Bag 92019 | Auckland | New Zealand

[www.maramatanga.ac.nz](http://www.maramatanga.ac.nz)

Tel: +64 9 923 4220



Like us on Facebook & Twitter

If you no longer wish to receive emails from Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga, please unsubscribe below

Copyright © 2022 Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga, All rights reserved.  
This is an email sent from Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga - New Zealand's Māori Centre of Research Excellence

Our mailing address is:  
Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga  
Waipapa Marae Complex  
Private Bag 92019  
Auckland, Akl, 1142  
New Zealand

[unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)