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NPM
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WHIRINGA-Ā-NUKU | OCTOBER 2025

Kua raumati, kua kaha te rā.

It has now become summer, and the sun has acquired strength.

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TE PŪRONGO NŌ NGĀ POU MATARUA
CO-DIRECTORS UPDATE

The NPN team is preparing for a jam packed November with researchers across our network attending four major events.

The first is the World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education (WIPCE), hosted by AUT from 16-20 November. Now in its 38th year, WIPCE is a highlight in the Indigenous events calendar, with hundreds of attendees expected from all of the world's regions.

Around the corner at Waipapa Tauata Rau, NPM senior researcher Dr Daniel Wilson and his team will host Indigidata Aotearoa from November 23 to 28. Based on the successful Indigidata data science education workshop in the US, Indigidata Aotearoa is dedicated to growing Māori data scientists and data kaitiaki.

The third hui, Taikura Aotearoa Tri-Academy Indigenous Summit, will take place at AUT from 24-26 November. Hosted by the Royal Society Te Apārangi as part of its partnership with Royal Society Canada and the Australian Academy of Science, Taikura will focus on establishing an international, Indigenous-led research agenda. Several NPM Fellows are speaking and facilitating workshops.

The final hui in Ōtepoti will gather up to 150 doctoral students from Te Kupenga o MAI, our national doctoral scholars network. Hosted by Dr Rachel Sizemore and the mighty MAI ki Ōtākou team, the hui-ā-tau brings together MAI sites from around the motu as well as Indigenous PhDs from Australia and Hawai'i. The annual hui is an opportunity for the next gen of Indigenous research leaders to share their research, make connections and enjoy each others' company. We look forward to sharing some of the highlights and photos in future e-pānui.

Ngā Pou Matarua | Co-Directors

- Professor Tahu Kukutai
- Professor Melinda Webber

KAUPAPA MATUA

Te Kura
Rau Mahara

From left, neuroscientist Mitchell Head (Tainui; Ngāti Mahuta, Ngāti Naho) and engineer Mahonri Owen (Ngāti Hine, Ngāti Tūwharetoa) are part of the team at Te Kura Rau Mahara working to better connect the brain with prosthetic limbs.

HARAKEKE 3D-PRINTED PROSTHETICS

Harakeke fibre could be used to create 3D-printed prosthetic limbs, helping them become more wearable, according to engineer and NPM researcher, Dr Mahonri Owen.

Mahonri is supported by a NPM Matakitenga grant with the hope that the research will help solve the issue of why so many people reject their prosthetics.

Mahonri says more than a third of people suffering limb loss end up rejecting their artificial replacement. Given that artificial hands can cost between US$40,000 to $100,000 to create, this is a situation he wants to remedy.

Mahonri says Māori have a high number of people who are missing limbs due to higher rates of Type 2 diabetes, as well as a higher proportion working in dangerous jobs. People reject artificial limbs for a variety of reasons and one is due to a lack of connection with the substitute limb. "People have reported that they don't like wearing prosthetic limbs because they feel no sense of belonging to the limb," he says. Other reasons for not using limbs include a lack of functionality and comfort which are also aspects he will explore.

"My research is delving deeper into understanding people's attitudes and why Māori may feel a sense of alienation from these devices. We know everything has a whakapapa and a mauri and so I wondered if we could create a prosthetic limb with materials that had been grown on our own whenua, such as harakeke. Perhaps then the limb might become more meaningful, and these devices would be more readily accepted."

Before the 3D-printing process starts, Mahonri and the research team are holding wānanga with people who use assisted technology on their bodies to understand what their perspectives are. The wānanga will include people who use artificial limbs, those with cochlear implants, and those with glasses.

Raranga practitioners will also be invited to provide guidance on the appropriateness of creating prosthetics out of harakeke. Mahonri says the process of preparing harakeke for 3D-printing is much like harvesting for raranga. After the muka is removed, it is chopped into small fibres and then mixed with a corn starch 3D-printing filament. Between 10 – 30% of the final filament mix used for 3D-printing will be harakeke.

Infusing harakeke with the polymer has the added benefit of increasing tensile strength which will improve functionality, he says. Mahonri hopes this research will be helpful for all people who suffer limb loss - not just Māori. "It also has potential for other Indigenous peoples who might want to use their own plants to make 3D-printed limbs, or it could be used in war torn countries with have high rates of limb loss," he says.

Mahonri says 3D printing technology is particularly beneficial because it can create individualized solutions from a relatively inexpensive and small machine. "People can now have 3D printers sitting on their desks at work," he says.

Mahonri and the team at Te Kura Rau Mahara, based at the University of Waikato, will be looking at all aspects of improving prosthetic functionality. Their research will include the creation of a brain-controlled prosthetic hand. "Neural prosthetics - the hands that our students make - will be controlled by a headset or muscles, and eventually it is hoped harakeke will be part of the eventual printing process."

This research has seen the team combine the use of mātauranga with Western approaches to innovate and find new neural solutions. "Using pūrākau, such as the origin story of Hineahuone, guides us to understand a different way of thinking about interactions within the brain that might be helpful neurologically," he says.

"In some ways Māori frameworks align with current neuroscience, which is cool, even though they both come from very different places. Using Māori frameworks doesn't take away from neuroscience, it gives another perspective of how we might want to look at the brain and come up with possible solutions to problems," says Mahonri.

He believes there is a lot of scope and potential for engineers to take a more holistic approach that is inclusive of Indigenous knowledges. "We engineers are supposed to get as many perspectives as we can to deliver better outcomes. Personally, I have deliberately worked across different fields of science including robotics, biomechanics, health and neuroscience because I believe we can be more innovative when we collaborate."

"It has been hugely advantageous to me to use all knowledge systems to solve problems, including that of the hard sciences, across to the social sciences, as well as Indigenous perspectives," says Mahonri.

RANGAHAU | RESEARCH

IMAGE MAKING TO CONNECT PEOPLE WITH TE TAIAO

Ngā Pūrākau Nō Ngā Rākau (2023) 4-channel moving image by Nova Paul shown at the City Gallery Wellington. Image by Cheska Brown.

Artist Nova Paul connects people with te taiao through her image making.

When the new oncology centre at Whangārei Hospital opens in 2026, over 40 metres of photographic panels will grace its walls. The panels depict the rongoā of Tāne-mahuta and are created using the trees, light, and manu of Pukenui Forest—a ngahere that wraps around the western hills of Whangārei, situated close to the hospital. The images come from the tūpuna whenua of artist Nova Paul (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Hine), who drew on te taiao to guide and create her significant commission.

"When you are vulnerable, you need to draw on the rongoā of Tāne-mahuta—the wairua and mauri of the ngahere. My intention was for people who are māuiui to feel they had a direct connection to the rākau that are on their doorstep, to support them through the cancer treatment journey," says Nova.

The installation is the culmination of many years of work, including PhD research supported by NPM, exploring the healing power of trees through image-making. Nova is an established filmmaker and artist whose work has been shown both locally and internationally. In 2023, her short film 'Hawaiki' was chosen from 10,000 global submissions for the prestigious Sundance Film Festival in the USA.

"For me, making work that supports our people's healing can be rongoā for them—that is truly what my work is all about. That is mana motuhake and it is essential to my art practice," she says.

Capturing the mauri — the aura of light radiating from ngā rākau — is central to her image-making. Her research and mātauranga are gathered from years of deep observation of the ngahere, experimenting with light, and in wānanga with pūkenga (experts) as well as her whānau. For this project, Nova was guided by Te Tai Tokerau tohunga, Tohe Ashby, who led a group of rongoā kaimahi [healing practitioners] into Pukenui. They all contributed to elevating the mauri and harnessing the wairua in this kaupapa, she says.

Nova's filmmaking practice is anchored in early-cinema, 19th-century film making techniques, which often have a material quality due to the analog handmade processes used. Her experimental film practice led her to create a developing emulsion from rākau wai [tree water], sourced from the very trees she filmed. In the darkroom, Nova crafted a consistent methodology to hand-process the film, achieving high-quality outcomes. It was labour intensive research, with film often taking 4–8 hours of developing time for an image to appear in the plant-based developer.

Not only is the plant-based method more environmentally sound, Nova believes it establishes a unique relationship between the viewer and the tree. "We live in a very image-saturated world, but images of trees are not ordinary things. Trees are our tūpuna and our rangatira," she says.

Nova says that using tree leaves as a developer is an aesthetic way to convey our whanaungatanga connections with the rākau. She hopes her images reflect the tapu [sacredness] of the relationship between people and nature. The ngahere has always had a potent influence in Nova's life, and she has first-hand experience of its restorative powers in times of anxiety.

"I was encouraged to take te reo total immersion to support my studies and deepen my te ao Māori knowledge, but I really struggled to make headway with pronunciation throughout the entire year-long course. Sometimes I felt like a fraud because I was a teacher in a Māori space. It was humiliating—it felt like I was knocking at a glass door, but I couldn't walk through," she says.

After seven months with little headway, Nova sought solace in the bush, where she was able to reach a breakthrough. "I realised my language isn't verbal. I communicate using images, and that was my strength. Once the penny dropped, it reinforced what I already had — a deep understanding of te taiao and a filmmaking practice. I also understood that Tāne-mahuta has his own language and ways of communicating with us," she says.

This new awareness lifted the pressure, allowing Nova to embrace learning te reo in a more heart-centred than head-centered way. As a result, her reo learning began to flourish. For Nova, this experience epitomises the power of te taiao.

"Art is a powerful practice that creates a pathway to experience and know the world in new ways. In my creative practice, I uplift the whenua and ngā tāngata Māori enabling us to see ourselves whole and well, and celebrating our connections to our tūpuna whenua, tūpuna tāngata and people."

KŌRERO WITH NPM RESEARCHERS

Each month we feature one of our NPM lead researchers. This month our kōrero is with Dr Moana Rarere who is a demographer at Te Ngira Institute for Population Research.

Moana playing the piano with furry fan in the audience.

Ko wai tō ingoa, nō whea koe?

He uri au nō Rongomaiwahine, Ngāti Kahungunu, Tūhoe, Whakatōhea, me Ngāti Whare hoki. Kō Moana Rarere tōku ingoa. I tipu ake au ki Kawerau, ā, e noho ana au ki Kirikiriroa inaianei.

What are your areas of research?

I'm a demographer at Te Ngira Institute for Population Research, Waikato University. My research brings together mātauranga and disciplinary knowledge from population science to generate culturally grounded insights that respond to lived realities, aspirations, and the wellbeing of hapori Māori as they face population change. My expertise is in Indigenous/Māori/iwi demographic research, and family formation and fertility (birth trends).

What excites you about your work?

What excites me about my mahi is its potential to tell our stories – not just through numbers, but also through lived experiences. Population research helps us understand how whānau grow, move, and adapt across generations and places. It's a space where I can bring together analytical tools with kaupapa Māori values, ensuring our data reflects who we are, not just how we're counted. I like to use demographic insights to support Māori aspirations – whether that's in health, education, housing, or rangatahi development. It is also mahi that allows me to challenge the dominant narratives and advocate for approaches that centre mana motuhake and collective wellbeing.

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

I immediately think of my whānau and the moana, whenua, and taiao. If I could sum it up with a childhood memory – laughing and having fun with my whānau – as we float back down the Ōhiwa harbour with one tube, and maybe the odd snorkel and flipper between us all, and a couple of buckets of pipi and mussels. I guess that's what flourishing Māori futures means to me.

Lastly, can you tell us something surprising about you?

I think most people in my professional circles, and probably even some of my whānau, don't know that I own and play the piano. I took lessons when I was about 10 years old and learnt mostly sight-reading for a couple of years. My teacher didn't focus on theory or exams, so I didn't really get to hone my skills. Since then, I've just learnt a few things along the way, and these days I just play for joy or relaxation. I do get the odd nudge to play the piano in church services if no one else is available, and it's ok to play a bad note…only because no one else in the congregation will pick it up unless they're musos. Here's a pic of me jamming with Beethoven's Minuet in G.

KANAPU

Kanapu executive director, Dr Poia Rewi, pictured at the Māori Research Symposium, Ngā Hua a Tane-te-wānanga, hosted by AUT in September 2025. PHOTO: AUT

Kanapu is stepping up in its mission to ignite RSIT talent and leadership across te ao Māori. Pouhere | Executive Director Dr Poia Rewi says the past three years has seen an array of achievements aimed at building and developing the capability and capacity of Māori researchers, scientists, innovators and knowledge holders.

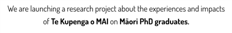
The Kanapu team has embraced the opportunity to develop innovative approaches for engagement across te ao Māori and to reduce entry barriers to the RSIT sector, particularly for hapori Māori, says Poia. Despite its short period of existence, impacts in these areas are already visible. "Kanapu will further refine its focus so that we are strategically aligned with sector reform outcomes with impacts that are sustainable. "To address this, the focus of Year 4 of our six-year contract has been refined to increase depth of connectivity with higher concentration across RSIT from which we expect to see even greater impacts in the future."

Among other activities to accelerate Māori success in RSIT, Kanapu will host its fourth Hui Hihiri in April 2026. Watch this space for more details.
To access the Kanapu catalogue of videos – including keynote speeches and panel discussions from previous Hui Hihiri – visit the Vimeo page: vimeo.com/kanapu.
For more information, email kiaora@kanapu.maori.nz or visit the new-look Kanapu website at kanapu.maori.nz

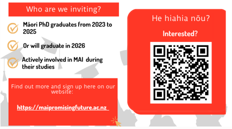
NGĀ MANAAKITANGA | OPPORTUNITIES

CALLING TE KUPENGA O MAI GRADUATES

If you have supervised or know of a Māori PhD student involved in NPM's Te Kupenga o MAI network, and who has either recently graduated/or is due to graduate (2023 to 2026), please let them know about this study.
https://www.maipromisingfuture.ac.nz/



We are launching a research project about the experiences and impacts of **Te Kupenga o MAI** on **Māori PhD graduates**.



Who are we inviting?

- ✓ Māori PhD graduates from 2023 to 2025
- ✓ Or will graduate in 2026
- ✓ Actively involved in MAI during their studies

Find out more and sign up here on our website:

https://maipromisingfuture.ac.nz

He hiahia nōu?

Interested?

HUI, CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS, WEBINARS, EXHIBITIONS, EVENTS

TAIKURA AOTEAROA TRI-ACADEMY INDIGENOUS SUMMIT

Taikura Summit is the second of three gatherings held under the auspices of the tri-academy partnership between the Royal Society Te Apārangi, the Royal Society of Canada, and the Australian Academy of Sciences. The goal of the partnership is to amplify the importance and contribution of Indigenous knowledges and researchers, and to support an international, Indigenous-led research agenda.

Held at AUT, Taikura will bring together Indigenous Fellows, thought leaders, and knowledge holders from Aotearoa, Canada, and Australia. Māori Fellows involved in the initiative include NPM senior researchers and Co-directors, past and present.

When: 24- 26 November 2025
Where: AUT, 55 Wellesley Street East, Auckland
For programme highlights:
chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.royalsociety.org.nz/assets/Taikura_flyer_20250903_v7.pdf
For more information and details on registration:
Academy@royalsociety.org.nz

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Congratulations!!

Royal Society Te Apārangi Awards

WINNER
DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR
JACINTA RURU FRSNZ (Raukawa, Ngāti Ranginui)
ŌTĀKOU WHAKAIHU WAKA | UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO
Te Pae
Christchurch Convention Centre

Distinguished Professor Jacinta Ruru MNZM FRSNZ (Raukawa, Ngāti Ranginui), of Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka – the University of Otago, has been awarded the Humanities Aronui Medal for internationally acclaimed research on how colonial legal systems ought to recognise Indigenous peoples' interests in land and water.
https://www.royalsociety.org.nz/what-we-do/medals-and-awards/research-honours/2025-rha/2025-humanities-aronui-medal/

Te Kāhui-a-Te-Rū-Rangahau, of the School of Teacher Education at Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha – the University of Canterbury, has won the Te Rangaunua Hiranga Māori Medal for co-creating guides to enable culturally responsive teaching in Aotearoa New Zealand. This work was inspired by 'The Hikairo Rationale' framework, originally created in the late 1990s by the late Professor Angus Hikairo Macfarlane FRSNZ (Ngāti Rangiwewehi, Ngāti Whakaue). Te Kāhui-a-Te-Rū-Rangahau team members: Ms Jennifer Smith (Ngāti Whātua, Te Roroa, Ngāpuhi); Associate Professor Sonja Macfarlane FRSNZ (Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Waewae); Associate Professor Te Hurinui Renata Karaka-Clarke MRSNZ (Te Arawa and Ngāi Tahu); Dr Matiu Rātima (Whakatōhea, Ngāti Pūkeko)
https://www.royalsociety.org.nz/what-we-do/medals-and-awards/research-honours/2025-rha/2025-te-rangaunua-hiranga-maori-medal/

MĀORI RESEARCHERS HITTING THE HEADLINES

Craig Renney Substack
October 2
Open Letter to Prime Minister & Minister of Finance
NPM researchers Prof. Matt Roskruge, Prof. Jarred Haar joined others signing an open letter expressing concerns with the Government's fiscal approach.
https://craigrenney.substack.com/p/open-letter-to-prime-minister-and

E-Tangata
October 5
Fifty years of the Waitangai Tribunal - Comment and analysis
Dr Carwyn Jones looks at the tribunal's history and remit at a time when it is under 'sustained attack.'
https://e-tangata.co.nz/history/fifty-years-of-the-waitangi-tribunal/

Waatea News
October 13
Dr Poia Rewi kōrero with Dale Husband about Kanapu
Professor Poia Rewi speaks with Dale Husband about his role in Kanapu
https://waateanews.com/2025/10/10/professor-poia-rewi-deputy-director-of-nga-pae-o-te-maramatanga/

RNZ
October 11
History & archaeology 'chose me'.
Professor Atholl Anderson talks about his career including the release of a revised edition of The Welcome of Strangers, A History of Southern Māori.
https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/mapuna/audio/2019008001/professor-atholl-anderson-history-and-archaeology-chose-me

Waatea News
October 15
Dr Bev Lawton | Te Tātai Hauora o Hine Founder
This week marks 20 years of Te Tātai Hauora o Hine, the National Centre for Women's Health Research Aotearoa, founded by Professor Bev Lawton.
https://waateanews.com/2025/10/16/dr-bev-lawton-te-tatai-hauora-o-hine-founder/

Waatea News
October 17
Dr Robin Quigg comments on the need for law reform governing parks and reserves
Dr Quigg argues that our laws reflect colonial priorities rather than honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
https://waateanews.com/2025/10/17/dr-robin-quigg/

Te Ao with Moana
October 27
Pretendians: When non-Indigenous people claim to be Indigenous
Aprof Te Kawehau Hoskins, Professors Papaarangi Reid and Tahu Kukutai speak to Moana Maniapoto about 'Pretendians' in Aotearoa and overseas.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwAGTBEoIVk

RNZ
October 21
Researchers say NZ parks still carry colonial scars
After finding gaps in legislation, researchers Dr Robin Quigg and Els Russell examined Indigenous rights on managed public land.
https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/te-manu-korihi/576557/researchers-say-nz-parks-still-carry-colonial-scars

Waatea News
October 28
Andrew Erueti | on The Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Amendment Bill
Associate Professor Andrew Erueti challenges plans to impose stricter requirements on Māori seeking customary rights.
https://waateanews.com/2025/10/28/andrew-erueti-associate-dean-maori-of-law-at-the-university-of-auckland/

RNZ
October 29
'Absolutely breaches of Te Tiriti o Waitangi': UN-bound report warns racial discrimination is worsening in NZ
Professor Claire Charters critiques the Government’s policies which are negatively impacting on Māori.
https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/577223/absolutely-breaches-of-te-tiriti-o-waitangi-un-bound-report-warns-racial-discrimination-is-worsening-in-nz

RNZ
October 31
‘Better late than never’: Māori economist says capital gains ‘weak’ but ‘overdue.’
Professor Matthew Roskruge says tax on second homes and some commercial properties makes sense in principle.
https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/te-manu-korihi/577412/better-late-than-never-maori-economist-says-capital-gains-weak-but-overdue

Te Ao Māori News
October 31
Waitangi Tribunal finds citizenship law breaches Treaty principles, calls for reform.
Expert evidence from Professors Claire Charters and Tahu Kukutai features in Waitangi Tribunal report urging reform of citizenship law.
https://www.teaonews.co.nz/2025/10/31/waitangi-tribunal-finds-citizenship-law-breaches-treaty-principles-calls-for-reform/?fbclid=IwY2xjawN7g4JleHRuA2FlbQIxMQBzcnRjBmFwcF9pZBAyMjIwMzkxNzg4MjAwODkyAAEeF7zXUI7UiY_bC0hGJB_8mhezMck6gBHm8jofvb48Qeytn4t6Xb-gcw_BxXA_aem_C65Yu5FgOevTDYnE4VyZZA

Kāti rā ngā kōrero mō tēnei wā,

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