



Toi Kai Rawa

NGĀ ĀHUATANGA O TE TIRITI TOHU

FINALIST



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VIDEO**

THE STORY

“By Māori, for Māori” is becoming a welcome catch cry throughout Aotearoa, signalling the increasing capability of communities and businesses to embrace their tino rangatiratanga. Māori are leading the planning and implementation of their own development, creating enduring solutions.

Nowhere exemplifies this philosophy better than Toi Kai Rawa, a Māori economic development agency based in Tauranga Moana that is committed to advancing the prosperity of Māori across Te Moana a Toi Bay of Plenty.

Initially piloted in 2021 in response to a commission from the Ministry for Primary Industries, it focuses on accelerating Māori into higher-paid careers within the primary industries through a kaupapa Māori-driven internship programme.

Toi Ki Tua Programme Lead Katie Hungerford says the aim is to increase the representation of Māori in the professional realms of the sector in a way that is culturally safe and mana-enhancing for the students involved.

“The programme consists of a 10-week placement, preparation wānanga, a launch event, pastoral and peer support, site tours, career one-on-ones, and a celebration hui, with whānau and Māori leaders involved wherever possible.

“Not only has it been developed through a kaupapa Maori lens, but the programme can now be utilised as a blueprint that is transportable across any industry. This is important as we collectively build the much-needed skilled workforce of the future.”

Objectives include increasing students' awareness of their cultural capital, confidence, skills for the workplace, and industry networks, through a framework of whanaungatanga (relationships), manaakitanga (caring and nurturing), and mahitahi (collaboration).

One participant, Julia Newman, described learning about plant tech as “mind blowing”.

“Seeing workplaces in person and going on tours really made me realise how many job options there are out there. I loved, after the in-person tours, having lunch and being able to have conversations with employers and sponsors.”

She adds that opportunities like Toi Ki Tua, where tikanga and whakaaro Māori are foundational, are a far cry from those given to her parents' generation.

“For my parent's generation growing up, it wasn't okay to be Māori, there was shame attached to it... Meeting the other interns who are on similar, but different journeys [in reconnecting] has given me confidence in my own Māori journey.”

Since its inception, Toi Ki Tua has successfully placed 20 students in professional positions across the kiwifruit value-chain and other roles. Employers have also recognised the value of having young Māori in their organisations. Edith Sykes, Zespri International's Chief People Officer, is emphatic in her endorsement of the programme.

“The students' presence has been delightful. They congregate, they socialise, they connect, and there is learning that is reciprocal. It is an amazing initiative. I think the first year has exceeded our expectations.”

Surveys with participants and employers have highlighted the significant benefits experienced by both.

“Students reported increased confidence in working in a professional environment, inspiration and support from Māori leaders, increased knowledge and networks across the kiwifruit industry, and increased cultural confidence and connection,” says Katie.

“Students leave the programme feeling proud to be Māori, wanting to know more, and understanding that their unique perspective is important.”

THE CHALLENGE

To support Māori tertiary students and increase participation of Māori in higher-skilled, higher-paid roles across the Bay of Plenty's primary industries.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- The programme consists of a 10-week placement, preparation wānanga, a launch event, pastoral and peer support, site tours, career one-on-ones, and a celebration hui, with whānau and Māori leaders involved wherever possible
- The pastoral care and support follows the model of Te Whare Tapa Whā; Hinengaro (mind and emotions), Tinana (physical needs), Whānau (family and connection), and Wairua (spiritual), and is interwoven into all aspects of the programme
- Employers are given a handbook that gives them practical tips on how to manage their interns from a programme, HR, and cultural perspective
- Professional development workshops provide a picture of the professional work

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environment, what's expected, and how to make the most of the opportunity

- Partner with Māori organisations where possible
- Hui and events incorporate mihimihi (introductions), karakia, whakawhanaungatanga (building relationships), and kai (food) to create a sense of community and connection
- Student wānanga commence with a reading of the maramataka Māori (Māori lunar calendar) and breathwork, showcasing Māori practices wherever possible
- Surveys of both participants and employers at the completion of the programme to measure progress toward the programme's objectives



RESULTS AND BENEFITS

- Students reported increased confidence in working in a professional environment, inspiration and support from Māori leaders, increased knowledge and networks across the kiwifruit industry, and increased cultural confidence and connection
- On average, students' comfort levels within a professional environment increased from 5.9 out of 10 to 7.5 out of 10, and they developed their career plans and upgraded their CVs
- Increased knowledge of the kiwifruit industry and opportunities available to interns as Māori
- Increased confidence in their identity as Māori and the unique value they bring to the workplace
- Employers felt that the programme benefited both the students and their organisations equally
- Of the 13 taura that made up the 2022-23 cohort, five were retained in the industry through either permanent or part-time work alongside their local university studies
- Since its inception, Toi Ki Tua has successfully placed 20 students in professional positions across the kiwifruit value-chain and other roles

KEY LEARNING

Māori capability-building programmes that utilise mana-enhancing, tikanga-focused practices, result in increased professional and cultural confidence for the participants, which also benefits their whānau and their employers.

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