



KIA PUĀWAI WINTER STUDENTSHIPS: AROA EVALUATION

NĀ, EMA MATAHAU-HAATA

PREFACE

About the Author:

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Kia Puāwai is a programme of research that is dedicated to generating new Māori knowledge to find new solutions to improve the health and wellbeing of all whānau Māori.
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SUMMARY

The purpose of conducting this evaluation was to gain insight into the impact and effectiveness of the 2023 Kia Puāwai Election Winter Studentship initiative. This document outlines the findings from the evaluation, the methodology used, and recommendations for the future.

Between August and September of 2023, two interviews were conducted with each recipient of the Kia Puāwai Winter Studentship; one group interview with all members, and one individual interview.

The evaluation showed that the groupwork component of the studentship worked well for fostering whanaungatanga amongst members of the rōpū, that their first experience of kaupapa Māori research was perceived as fluid, exciting and aided in strengthening their own individual Māori identities, and that entering the "real world" now seems achievable.

Overall, this suggests that the Kia Puāwai Winter Studentship was successful in building the capacity, capability and confidence of these students within the Māori research workforce.

Looking ahead, the key opportunities include prefacing the studentship with Whakauae's intentions around aiming to build capacity and capability in the Māori research workforce, outside of a university context. Further, setting tikanga and kawa for the rōpū of tauira to abide by, increasing the amount of individual hui between tauira and supervisors to check-in, and gathering kanohi ki te kanohi as often as possible.



Image 1: Example of a summary of research themes from each tauira

INTRODUCTION

Kia Puāwai Ake Ngā Uri Whakatupu (KP) is a research programme headed by Whakauae Research Services (WRS), that aims to produce new Māori knowledge and methods of dissemination to enhance the health and well-being of all Māori. There are four projects under KP – Project 1: Rapua te ara Rangatira kia Hikitia ai te oranga tangata; Project 2: Tō mātou kāinga, tō mātou ūkaipō; Project 3: He waka eke noa; and Project 4: Translation, Uptake and Impact (TUI).

The KP Winter Studentship 2023 operated out of the TUI project, which aims to translate new research, facilitate the uptake of new research knowledge into policymaking, and design outcomes-centred dissemination methods and tools for impact. The TUI team currently consists of Dr Tanya Allport, Tom Johnson and Masters student Ema Matahau-Haata.

Context

While WRS is no stranger to studentships, 2023 was the first instance where there were four taura, as opposed to the usual one student per studentship. The four taura who were awarded the studentship came from the University of Auckland (UoA), Auckland University of Technology (AUT) and the University of Waikato (UoW). These taura worked closely with their Kia Puāwai supervisors Dr Tanya Allport (Te Ati Awa) and Tom Johnson (Ngāti Hauiti) from late May to early September 2023, through a mixture of kano ki te kano and online wānanga, to investigate how rangatahi Māori engage with or talk to each other about politics in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This kaupapa was inspired by the approaching election period at the time of the studentship, and the messages about Māori that were coming from politicians and the media. A media scan conducted by the four taura showed that these messages were often sensationalised, diminishing and misrepresentative of Māori.

Output

From their discussions, the taura decided to create an interactive card game that would inspire and initiate political kōrero amongst rangatahi Māori. Thus, 'Aroā' was born. Aroā is a card game that was designed to take players on a journey from Te Kore to Te Pō, and finally to Te Ao Mārama – the darkness, the infinite potential, and the world of light and enlightenment. The game ends with a reveal of your own personal 'Atua' type, where players get to find out what their political approach is, as revealed by their series of answers throughout the game.

Evaluation Methodology

The methods used in the evaluation included one group interview with all four taura involved in the project, as well as an individual interview with each taura. The option of a Zoom meeting or kano ki te kano was offered for the individual interviews – three out of four taura chose a Zoom meeting.

Due to the small size of the Māori research sphere, it is important to note that the evaluator, Ema, had pre-existing friendships with two Auckland University taura prior to the KP Winter Studentship, which means that any concerns were addressed with the project supervisors, Tanya and Tom, throughout the evaluation process.

RESULTS

Firstly, this evaluation intended to explore the processes and impacts of the 2023 KP Winter Studentship rōpū initiative. The questions asked in the interviews are as follows:

What were some of the highlights of this experience for you?

- The taura all agreed that they enjoyed the creative collaboration that came with working as a group – one taura stated that they would have never thought of creating a card game if they had completed the work on their own.
- The taura all appreciated the support and awhi provided by the supervisors, who they described as approachable and nurturing.
- Most of the taura enjoyed the whakawhanaungatanga and described the friendships they made with one another as genuine, lifelong friendships.
- The taura also described their experience with Whakauae as helpful in aiding their Māori identity journey, explicitly mentioning their appreciation for one of the supervisor's maramataka kōrero and karakia at each hui.

What are some lowlights of this experience for you?

- The most notable lowlight that was communicated by the taura was that there was a major breakdown in their group communication, where some taura had other mahi commitments or unavoidable life circumstances. This issue remained unresolved between the taura and was only addressed during the group interview.
- After this communication breakdown, there was a breakdown in the whanaungatanga/relationships between certain group members. The taura wished that the supervisors had intervened and resolved the issue with all of the taura.

In what ways, if any, has this learning experience been different from your student learning experiences in other contexts or settings?

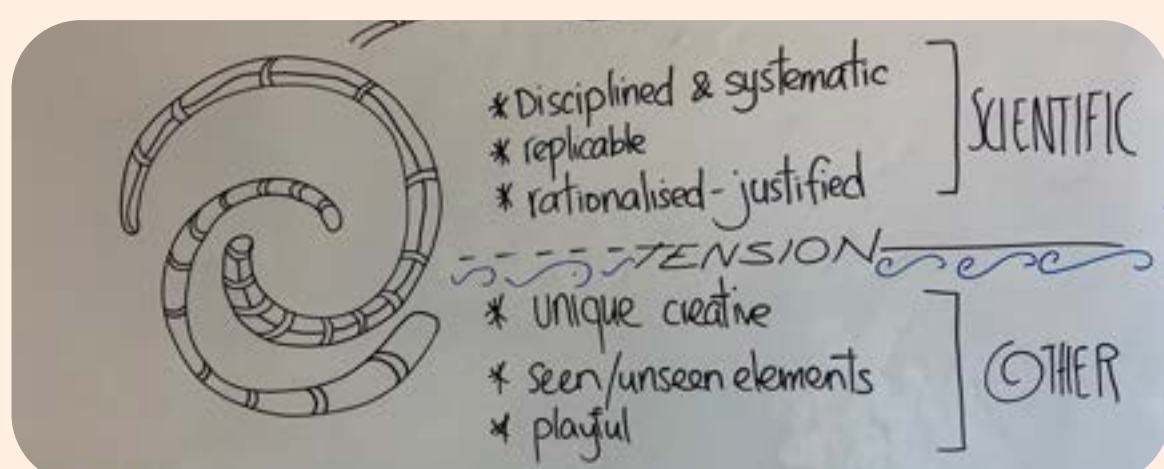
- Each taura agreed that working with Whakauae was creative, and fluid. Some taura struggled with the fluidity more than others and expressed that they wished that the intentions and expectations of Whakauae were more structured and concrete.
- The taura mentioned that it was nice to not be graded on their work in comparison to assignments at university.

What have you learned about research throughout this experience?

- The taura reported learning that the research workforce is not just one thing, but many different aspects are incorporated into the work required.
- They also reported learning that research can be messy, in terms of fluid deadlines and the constant evolution of ideas.

What have you learned about group work throughout this experience?

- Communication is key.



RESULTS

What have you learnt about yourself as a team member throughout this experience?

- The taura mentioned that from this experience, they know that if they are in a similar setting in the future, they will need to be more: open, honest, transparent and assertive.
- They need to get more comfortable “working in the grey”.

What has been the most valuable learning experience of this studentship for you?

- The taura now feel more skilled and confident.
- Being immersed in te ao Māori has positively impacted their sense of ethnic identity as rangatahi Māori.

What will you take away from this experience?

- The newfound confidence from this experience left the taura feeling excited for the future, they now know what to expect when working in Māori research spaces or when starting postgraduate studies.

Did you feel supported by your supervisors throughout this experience?

- Yes. They were supportive, approachable and nurturing.

How did your supervisors support you throughout this experience?

- Through the provision of mātauranga Māori, including karakia and Maramataka, as well as individual pastoral care.
- Through provision of individual guidance with their work.

Was this experience what you expected?

- All taura mentioned that they were unsure of what to expect from this experience, especially once it was announced that it would be a group project.

Did you gain what you had initially hoped for from this experience?

- The taura hoped to gain insight into the Māori research workforce, and that is exactly what they gained.

Would you want to work in a similar setting in the future?

- Yes, if there were clearer expectations.

Did you get along well with your group members?

- The majority of taura got along well with one another, however one taura felt left out.
- The taura also described at times not being on the same page with one another.

How did you navigate any issues that arose between you?

- The taura felt unable to address issues among their group, which means that their issues were left untreated and eventually boiled over.

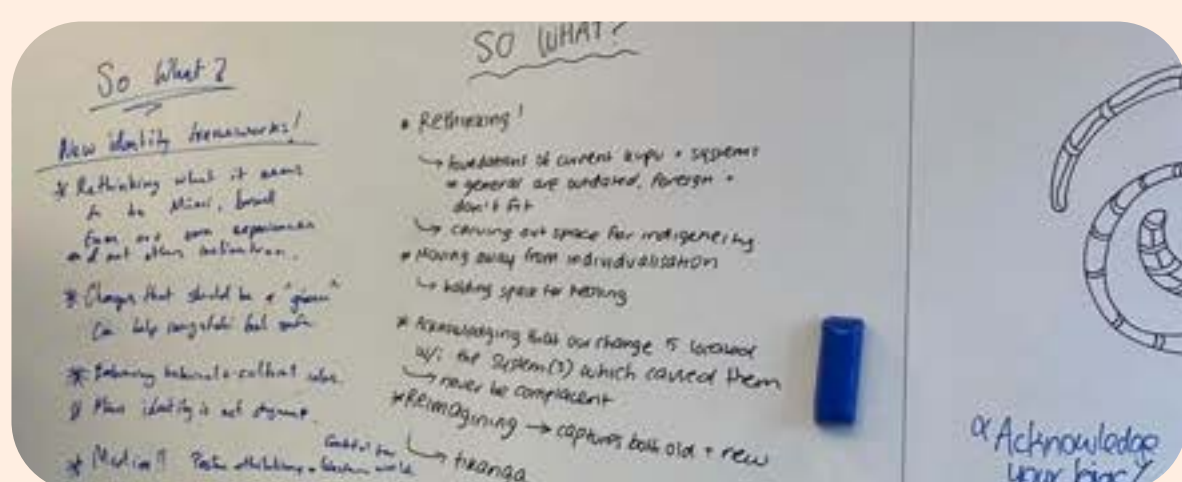




Image 2: The tuakana guest speakers who spoke with the taira at the fortnightly tuakana-teina wānanga. From left to right: Aneta Cram, Stacey Ruru, Kiri Parata, Tom Devine, Zarah Allport

ANALYSIS

Due to other commitments and life events, there was a major breakdown in the rōpū communication among the taira, which resulted in one taira feeling left out, and the rōpū often feeling as though they were not on the same page as one another. Issues that arose amongst the rōpū were left unresolved and these were only communicated during the group interview of the evaluation.

Despite this, each taira communicated to the evaluator their appreciation of the KP Winter Studentship. They felt that the supervisors and guest speakers were nurturing and inspiring, that their first experience in a “fully Māori” space as opposed to their previous experiences of Māori research that were confined to University spaces, was a nice, gentle exposure to the Māori research workforce. They also described newfound confidence and excitement – unplagued by imposter syndrome and strengthened by their Māori identities – that they will take with them into their future endeavours, whether that is in their mahi or postgraduate studies.

The taira also enjoyed the creative collaboration of this initiative, stating that previous experiences in research did not involve collaboration, and that they were inspired by one another. One taira mentioned that they never would have thought of a card game if they had completed this project on their own.

If KP were to conduct a Winter Studentship with a rōpū again in the future, the taira recommend that there be more kanohi ki te kanohi hui, clearer guidelines and expectations, and scheduled 1:1 hui with the supervisors.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this evaluation suggests that the new group aspect of the Kia Puāwai Winter Studentship was successful in building the capacity and capability of the Māori research workforce. This was reflected by the growth in confidence and the creative output of ‘Aroā’ that was designed by these four taira.

Future iterations of the studentship may include the KP supervisors setting tikanga and kawa for the taira to abide by. The few lowlights mentioned in this evaluation can certainly be avoided in the future by utilising this, while also securing a greater sense of whanaungatanga amongst taira. Hui and wānanga should be kanohi ki te kanohi as often as possible. Lastly, efforts could be made to disassociate the KP Winter Studentship from universities. It should be made clear that these studentships are not likened to an assignment that will be graded, but are real-life work experiences.

OUTPUT

Following the media scan conducted by Whakauae Winter students on the election project, it became evident that media messages often sensationalized, diminished, and misrepresented Māori, contributing to the division of Aotearoa along battle lines. Recognizing the invisibility and marginalization of Rangatahi engagement in this space, the Winter Students embarked on the development of Aroā, a card game aimed at addressing the challenge of initiating discussions about politics.

By using the Translation, Uptake and Impact (TUI) dissemination framework - which is a tool that guides the development of research dissemination at the beginning and throughout the lifespan of a project - the Election Winter students came up with the idea for the game 'Aroā':

Aroā guides players on a transformative journey, starting from Te Kore, the realm of 'darkness' or exploration, through Te Pō, where the 'restless movements of light' offer glimpses, and concluding in Te Ao Mārama, the realm of knowledge and enlightenment.

Consisting of a series of thought-provoking questions about self, values, and our place in Te Ao Māori, the game encourages interactive discussions and exploration among players. As participants articulate and possibly debate their views, the game culminates in the revelation of each player's personal 'Atua' type, unveiling their political character or approach based on their responses.

The initial concept of Aroā has evolved into a first prototype, with a limited print run of 50 games distributed across Aotearoa for testing purposes. The intention is to refine and iterate on the next version throughout 2024. The development of Aroā, from research to dissemination, has provided a valuable opportunity to explore how the translation component of TUI can be expressed through innovative Rangatahi mindsets.

Looking ahead, the goal for the next phase of the Aroā journey is to foster the adoption of this innovative approach to provoke whānau engagement in matters important to Rangatahi Māori.



Image 3: Iterations of the Aroā card game produced by the taura using the TUI Methodology.

HE MIHI

We extend our sincere gratitude to the five distinguished guest speakers who generously shared their valuable insights and experiences during our weekly Tuakana-teina hui. Special thanks to Whakauae Kia Puāwai PhD students Āneta Cram, Stacey Ruru, and Kiri Parata, as well as our esteemed friends Tom Devine (Te Aka Whaiora) and Dr. Zarah Allport (Te Whānau o Waipareira). Their inspiring kōrero imparting their on-the-ground insights into Kaupapa Māori centered health policy and delivery in Aotearoa enriched the discourse and understanding of real-life implications on wellbeing that Kaupapa Māori mahi can contribute to.

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