



# HE TURE KIA TIKA

LET THE LAW BE RIGHT



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## THE FOUNDATIONS

The story of Hoani Waititi Marae starts with the words of its whakapapa and tikanga as inscribed on the walls of its reception, that state:

*"At a time when prisons were solely about punishment, he [Hoani Waititi] set up the first kapa haka group in a prison. His vision for inmates healing and rehabilitation acknowledged that without cultural support inmates would reoffend."*



These words provide the solid foundations for the mahi on the marae today. Named after Hoani Retimana Waititi of Te Whanau-a-Apanui (1926–1965), Hoani recognised the way assimilation policies of the government were working to strip Māori of their language, culture, and identity. He viewed education as the tool that would help Māori stand strong against this onslaught.

From the 1960s, the puawaitanga, or the blossoming of Hoani Waititi marae, emerged as a result of the conflict occurring in Te Atatu. The marae became the "bastion for those who were stuck in the cities". At the time, a

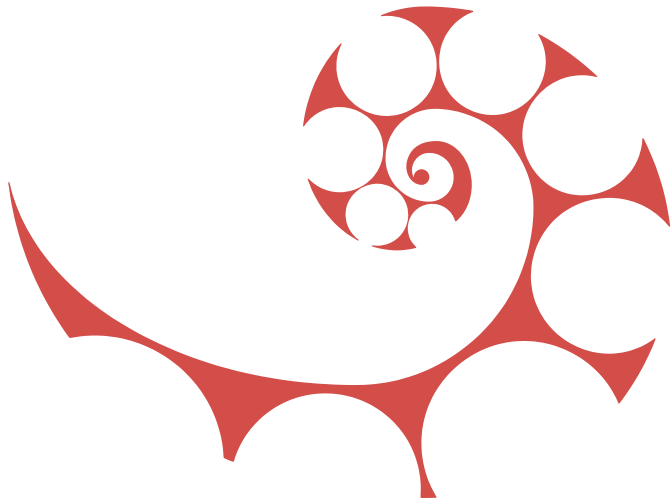
strong Māori community were living and engaged in many cultural activities in urban Te Atatu, including kapa haka, Te Waka Huia and Te Rōpū Manutaki. There was also a good community police officer who was actively engaged with the Te Atatu community. However, trouble was also arising with younger Māori in the community becoming entangled in police processes. The marae became involved in finding a solution:

*"What started happening is some of the rangatahi came to the attention of the police, being disruptive at school and getting into trouble with the police youth aid... Te Whānau Awhina grew organically at a period of time when the police wanted perceived Māori issues to be dealt with by Māori. Consequently, the principal police officer sought the assistance of the Māori community. A series of hui were held that included rangatahi, whānau and Māori community leaders such as Tā Pita Sharples and June Mariu. These hui became the genesis of Te Whānau Awhina, [where] rangatahi were encouraged to take responsibility for their actions to their community, school, whānau and parents. Through these hui reconciliation was made and whānau were weaved back together." (Rosie)*

After lengthy fundraising, planning and building, Hoani Waititi, a pan-tribal marae, was opened on April 19th 1980.

## A "CENTRIFUGAL PLACE FOR MĀORI"

The purpose of the marae has been described as providing "a centre for Māori, language, culture and practice" (see <https://hoaniwaititimarae.co.nz>). Rosie Abbott explained that Pāpā Dennis Hansen used to say Hoani Waititi marae was a "centrifugal place for Māori". It was the first urban



marae to be managed on non-tribal secular principles that include an elected committee and aim of unifying and providing a focal point for urban-based Māori (pg. 40, Waipareira Report).

Across all kaimahi of the marae today, there is a strong focus on creating cultural (re)connection for whānau and providing a supportive village for all people to feel they belong. The marae has a strong history of acceptance and supports are all open to Māori and non-Maori. When whānau arrive on the marae, it is made known to them it will be a Māori service they receive, to create positive impacts for the entire whānau. For example, Shane states of the mahi undertaken in the Kōti Rangatahi setting "he tikanga konei, there is a tikanga here, and nobody tries to break that. It's a wairua thing, it's a spiritual thing, and it's a thing that's set here." Kaimahi and the marae environment offers a neutral, equalising space for those to gather:

*"The thing about Hoani is, it is an equaliser, kia whakanoa i te tangata me te whānau. No one is more important than anyone. When I'm at the marae, I'm Rosie I'll do the dishes. I'm not Rosie the lawyer, who is that? You are only as good as the last meal you cooked. I love that about the marae because we can have gang whānau days and the very next day we'll have a pōwhiri for a new judge. That's what the marae is."*  
(Rosie)

## CULTURE AS A TRANSFORMATION ELEMENT

The marae has always had a strong focus on supporting incarcerated whānau. Hoani Waititi himself understood that cultural connection is transformational for men in prison:

*"He saw culture as a transformation element, that we have a right to access, it is not a privilege. You put the right things into the right people at the right time and good things happen."* (Shane)

Whānau benefits from being able to experience the village

of marae when they arrived from jail or off the streets in need of support, and this made them feel like they belonged.

Central to creating an environment characterised by acceptance on the marae is the simultaneous empowerment of the lived experience of kaimahi that connects positively with whānau:

*"[Whānau] look at me [and others who have experienced lengthy sentences] and think no judgement here.... Our mana is all at the same level. There is no judgment based by what is on the cover, which is prevalent in our justice and social system characterised by stigma and lack of acceptance. At the marae there is an acceptance by the staff and the kids, and that is a good start to come onto the marae and feel that. [We have a] history of acceptance on the marae."* (Shane)

The lived experience of kaimahi at the marae, also comes from personally supporting whānau members who have experiences of the systems that see them as mentally unwell and incarcerated. Willie shares:

*"I am living in that world, in terms of experiences of incarceration and mental health. It is sitting right in front of my eyes, as whānau and my perspective differs to that I have as a kaimahi... They say that the first signs of being unwell, is when they talk to themselves. From my perspective, that's Māori, we are an open book and so am I in terms of the shame that we carry. Life changed when our whānau member went to prison. To allow a system and a group of people to predict your future and where you stand for crimes you have or have not done. In terms of my mahi, sitting on that side of the table has strengthened and shaped the passion I have to help our people sitting in that circle [system]."* (Willie)





## TE AO MĀORI

Deep Te Ao Māori beliefs, values, and practices are evident when working with whānau at Hoani Waititi Marae:

*"I can confidently say that here at Hoani Waititi Marae we have that cultural component that oozes out of us in our delivery. Manaakitanga with their whānau. A broader focus I suppose, with mental health issues, there is a lot that comes with it, and often it comes back to disconnection. Disconnection of whānau, disconnection of hapū, iwi, whenua. It is understanding that and that is why this place was built and is one of the key essences as to why we can easily connect with people because that is what the place was built for." (Carla)*

Through a simple process of whanaungatanga and mihi to the whare, Carla ensured all whānau knew the kaupapa of Hoani Waititi Marae:

*What I do with my whānau who are new to Hoani Waititi... I will take them up to the gate and we will have a bit of a chat. I will talk about why this place was built and try and ensure they are able to capture that this marae was built for you. I invite them to bring their tūpuna with them, they are here anyway, but I ask them to bring them with them and they can*

*hang out with our loved ones here. Then I take them through to the house and say, "I just want to take you through the front doors because I would never rock up to your house through the back door." (Carla)*

Vernon explained that practising in a way that upheld tikanga values means doing things right, with care and compassion for people first, not things or money. He believed in speaking and acting from the heart, and believes that he and his team, and all the kaimahi at the marae share the same values of aroha, manaaki, tika, pono. Put simply, Elaine explains that whānau from all walks of life are drawn to Hoani Waititi because it is a safe space:

*"I have so many different people come in (and others here) wouldn't know if they are whānau or is that someone going to court, or someone wanting bail or is it someone on meth charges?... [Being here] ... it is the anonymity... the marae is like a protective cocoon that people can feel like they are protected here." (Elaine)*

Willie describes how his practices are shaped by his ancestors. He explores and tests boundaries as he strives to get whānau to see a situation from different angles. He teaches tāne that rather than being a square in a circle – restricted and confined – we can be free to be a circle in a

## EXPERIENCES OF INEQUITY

The whānau at Hoani Waititi continue to work collectively to provide a positive environment despite the many challenges they face including: lack of funding and resources; time constraints and an increasing demand on them by government departments to provide more tikanga based programmes for less.

Overall, kaimahi and whānau of Hoani marae are a positive, active team, working diligently to challenge stigma and discrimination, to advocate for the rights of Māori, frustrated by the covert and sometimes overt effects of colonisation and yet, open to working collaboratively with others. Vernon says "they demand and deserve recognition, an equal voice, that it is only right and proper that this happens." He says they not only don't have that voice, but they are hampered by lack of resources and funding, by policies and practices that are outdated, irrelevant, and clearly have not worked. It is time for change.

Shane's work on the marae with whānau is not fully funded, rather they coat tail much of what they do with other things they do to support the mahi.

*"It is advantageous that most people have, or there is a perception that they have, a drug issue. That is where we can hook people into Patua te Ngangara as a client and attached stuff around them – real stuff about the person. Half is done as a tick box exercise for parole, half is done that is then actually about them."*

Of the rewards that come from helping whānau who come onto the marae, Shane adds:

*"[We do it] for the community, it's being a servant for the community, and in that there's no money in it, there's no kudos, there's no tohu, there's no degree or anything like that, but the interaction that you get from the whānau, particularly the whānau who come on who don't know... It's a rediscovering journey for them... That's sort of priceless and it sort of builds the networking and connections of the marae in the Māori community and in a lot of ways it brings them back into the fold."*

There are challenges in delivering government contracted programmes on the marae, which are government funded that must conform to other "tick box" requirements. For example, the "learning tikanga is a lifetime journey" for it to be truly embraced in a way that will transform people's thoughts and habits then more time is needed beyond a four-day wananga.

Over the years a number of changes have impacted on the reduction of the tikanga programme, these were once full-week programmes. Future indications are they may be run as day programmes, though the marae is open to trying alternative ways of delivering the programme but are doubtful it will have the same impact or effectiveness. As Willie explains, it means attendees will be "living in two worlds and for us its better if you eat [and] sleep" this stuff. Discussions have taken on the marae to extend the potential of the programmes to maintain an ongoing connection with whānau after the completion of court-directed programmes and to see how whānau are developing. But because funding is limited this is unlikely to come to fruition.

square box. While challenging whānau with new ways of seeing and being, his overall aim is to work with whānau in a way that is mana enhancing. The marae is the very place where everyone has a role and tasks to perform, no one is excluded for their past wrongs.

## DIVERSE PATHWAYS OF SUPPORT FOR WHĀNAU

### TE WHĀNAU AWHINA

Te Whānau Awhina is the oldest restorative justice program in the country. Though it had its beginnings in the 1960s, this alternative approach has continued to be implemented on Hoani Waititi marae to this day. Against the backdrop of issues arising in the Te Atatu community, came a Te Whānau Awhina hui facilitated by Māori and other community leaders on a voluntary basis at the local high school or in the Te Atatu community hall. These hui then moved to the marae once it was built. The forum aimed to resolve disputes without police involvement, in a way that would restore the mana of all present.

*"Te Whānau Awhina, it is a pragmatic approach where the victim gets to speak to the harm that has been caused. The person who caused the harm gets to speak as to why that harm was caused so that it is taken away from you and me to a wow look at us and how are we going to fix this. That's a really Māori approach and it's an indigenous approach. Indigenous people resolve issues by kōrero and by listening and by sharing and by reconciliation and by loving one another and respecting one another and appreciating one another and understanding one another." (Rosie)*

As Te Whānau Awhina continued to develop, it came under the purview of the police and for a short time was known as the "marae diversion programme." Over time the judiciary saw an opportunity to formalise the mahi being carried out on the marae as Rosie explains:

*"It [Te Whānau Awhina] was identified by the crime prevention unit, which was a branch of the Ministry of Justice. At that time, the judges were Judge Mick Brown, he would often refer rangatahi to the marae for whatever, for bail, for salvation, for advice, for some stern words. He would refer to them to the marae, go and do some community work and come back and show me what they have done. It was a common-sense pragmatic approach, that took some judicial leadership. The judiciary saw an opportunity to formalise the mahi being carried out on the marae. In addition, the police were supportive of the work taking place on the marae and in the community".*

In addition, Judge Coral Shaw was instrumental in helping the marae tono for their first lot of funding in 1995. With

that funding, matua Phil Paki was able to attend court where he had an office space and he became "the kanohi of the marae within the court setting." (Rosie).

Under the tutelage of matua Phil Paki, Rosie learnt a lot about organising, facilitating whānau hui, and writing Te Whānau Awhina whānau reports. In 2005, she took over as the Te Whānau Awhina coordinator until she graduated from law school and became a practicing lawyer. She explained why Te Whānau is a powerful alternative approach:

*"So the idea of Te Whānau Awhina was to pull our people out of the hinaki and talk to them about what's causing the offending and to talk to them. The discussion happens in the presence of mum and dad and so they know they cannot pull the wool over the eyes of those present. The presence of whānau is really important because we hold each other to account, we expect better, we want better. So in a court directed process, the whānau member may have no connection to the person sitting in the high seat, but they will have a connection to the person right next to them or the person who wakes them up each morning to go to work or to go to school. So it's a whānau ora approach, it's the whakapapa link, it's the whānaungatanga and it's a sense of belonging. So a lot of our whānau in the cities don't connect to court, don't care about the police and don't have a sense of belonging to the community. The marae fixes that. So when you take them on to the marae the other thing that helps is our tūpuna, who help steer that person's waka in the right direction."*

Today, police continue to refer cases to Te Whānau Awhina where the offence will bring a sentence of 6 months imprisonment or less. There is no longer a funded designated role for anyone from the marae. This means most cases involve low level offending such as driving offences, no license, shoplifting, theft, and occasionally, common assault may be considered. After the referral is received, a summary of facts are sent to the Te Whānau Awhina facilitator and a pre-conference hui is held with all of the relevant people (victim, participant, whānau members, relevant services and the police). The pre-conference hui is run by a trained and Ministry of Justice accredited Te Whānau Awhina facilitator and provides an opportunity to get the participant's story and some probing to ensure the participant is pono (telling the truth).

Te Whānau Awhina begins with a traditional Maori greeting – exchange mihimihi would begin the occasion and this would be followed by a prayer or Māori karakia. After this comes the formal speeches and enquiry into the misdemeanour – the whaikorero – patapatai. This is led by the panel of kaumātua (elders) specifically selected for

the particular circumstances of the event being discussed and is directed particularly towards the offender. An agreement is reached, apology letters are presented, and the participant works on their agreed plan for up to 6 weeks. Usually, they will only appear before the panel once, however, there may be occasions where they will appear several times to check on progress if this is helpful. Following the conference, the victim may then be contacted if they did not attend the hui to tell them about the outcome and/or following processes.

Rosie provided an example of a case that may come before Te Whānau Awhina:

*"I had a boy come through TWA and his crime was, having stolen car parts in the driveway. For him and his mum that wasn't actually the problem, the problem was, his Mum had gone away... he had some idiot mates around and they left stuff at the house... So she came back to her son being before the courts. Now for her, it wasn't about the charges, it was about that breach of trust and it was the damage that had been done to their relationship. TWA didn't just get the boy and say "bad boy, you have to pay the victim of the stolen car parts... And you've got to do some community work, there you go, off you go. No! To get to the crux of it, this boy had offended his mum and if he didn't sort it out, he would continue to walk away from his mum. He wouldn't be in the light he would be in the darkness. So [I told him] ... every night your Mum comes home from mahi, you make her a cup of tea. And on one particular night, you're going to make your whole whānau a kai. You're going to buy the kai, you're going to make the kai, you're going to feed your mum and you're going to clean up after. I put that in a plan, and the lawyer thought I was cracked! He was like "what the hell is this?" I told him that's his action plan, well he wanted to know where the reparation plan and community work was? That was what he wanted, and I told him that's not what I'm asking for because that's not going to fix this boy's offending, he's breached the trust with his mum. So [Te Whānau Awhina focuses on]... those connections. You have to connect our people to a sense of something else because otherwise they just don't care." (Rosie)*

Since a change in legislation, the mainstreaming of restorative justice processes has shifted to a focus on the victim and loss of the indigenous way of restoration and balance for all involved. Shane acknowledges the utilisation of traditional Māori models:

*"Naida Glavish was adamant, there's a Māori model that's been utilised for thousands of years called "hohou te rongo" about spreading of peace and about settling things. She believes in a way that was the basis of the Whānau Awhina." (Shane).*

Te Whānau Awhina has a whakapapa that is premised on tikanga and focused on supporting and restoring whānau:

*"So what's restorative in a Māori sense is it's restoring their mana. It's restoring a sense of belonging, it's restoration on a wider sense. Its addressing the cause of their offending, it's not just a meeting or a hui its a process and it is an ongoing process. It's a process that creates bonds at the marae".*

## PRISON-BASED TIKANGA PROGRAMMES

Today, Shane helps to run tikanga programmes in prison over two days at a time. It is always highly attended. Together they sing waiata and take time to kōrero. Shane aims to support his peers to "exercise their brain", by learning "some waiata from your area, not just learn how to say the words but understand what they mean. Learn your pepeha. Something relevant to you".

To illustrate the powerful impact of cultural connection through living and breathing tikanga, Shane recounted a story from his own time in prison when he had wanted to get a kapahaka team to come in and work with whānau in prison. He wrote to Ngapo Wehi (kapa haka legend) once a month over 2 years. Ngapo finally came, bringing 200 performers with him to support all whānau in prison, Shane recalls they began with a patere (chant) called "E Pā tō Reo:"

*"E pā tō reo e te Tai Rāwhiti ē...  
Pākatokato ai te aroha i ahau  
Me tika taku rori me tika ki Maketu rā...  
Hāngai tonu atu te rae kai Kohi  
Kai atu aku mata kai atu ki Motu rā...  
He huihuinga mai nō ngā iwi katoa  
Hoki atu e te kino hoki atu ki to nohohanga...  
Kei te haere tonu mai ngā ture  
He aha rawa te mea e tohea riria nei ē...  
He tuahae kai kōrerotia te Rongopai  
Me tū ake au i te marae o te whare nei ē...  
Ki te whakapuaki i te kupu o te Hūrae  
He aroha i a nei ki ngā morehu o te motu nei ē...  
Mō ngā kupu whakaari e pānuitia nei  
Mā koutou tātou e kawē ki te wai wehe ai ē...  
Kia mutu ake ai te aroha i ahau."*

(See <https://soundcloud.com/tumeke-fm/e-pa-to-reo>)

Composed by Te Kooti Arikirangi who is best remembered as a warrior, leader, and founder of the Ringatū faith. Te Kooti travelled extensively carrying a message of peace and reconciliation, he wrote this waiata while on his way to Maraenui. He had been invited by those who had once opposed him. Te Kōoti foresaw that Māori would lose their



land under the law (Binney, 1995).

Shane clearly remembers how he felt after hearing this waiata:

*"Still works for me, still does. The roof lifted. And I thought, wow, that is kapa haka. I called a practice the next day, and our group had quadrupled in size."*

*"We all felt it. We all wanted some of that and that's right, 'you can still be part of your gang, but in here can we just be Maori's. Let's row in our canoes and see how far we can get.'"*  
(Shane)



Afterwards, Ngapo asked who the Shane White guy who kept contacting him was. At this moment, Shane thought:

*"You're scary, your much more scary than any gangsta in here. You are scary in a good way, your scary in a mana way, a wairua way. I thought I need to be around that old fella".*

Shane often thinks of this story when taking calls from people in prison wanting his help to go before the parole board. He asks them to think about who they are and introduce themselves to him before they think of moving forward to have his support and help them create a safety plan:

*"You have to get off your arse, you need to use your brain, exercise your brain... start with a mihi, pepeha. Something*

*quite relevant to yourself... jump into a waiata from home, I will send you one. Not just learning how to say it but what it is saying."*

Shane says he always has a smile while giving straight-up kōrero, and uses humour, to connect with real emotion. It is important to him to be genuine and believe in what he says, "or get punched".

A lot of Shane's mahi involves providing information and helping people with a safety plan for upcoming parole hearings. For example, helping people plan for parole meetings and tick the boxes (e.g. completing alcohol, anger, and parenting programmes) and to "play the game". In many cases, Shane explains that whānau must agree to participate in existing programmes in jail to then be released. Parole boards have what he described as 'default settings'; they will put people into residential rehab, even if no addiction issues are present. This conflicts with his experience-based expertise that it is not all about the real things people need, like housing, getting a job, reconnecting with whānau – aspects that whānau ora seeks to realise.

## MARAE BASED TIKANGA WANANGA

Hoani Waititi marae runs up to ten tikanga programmes each year, 9 for tāne and 1 for wahine. The programme is funded by the Ministry of Justice and involves a four-day noho marae wananga, where tāne and wahine are directed by the courts or probations to attend. The programme facilitators are Willie and Winnie who respectively facilitate each of the wananga. The following details what takes place in the tāne programme.

Shane provides backup support and the Kaiarahi will also come in to speak with the attendees who may need their or other services available in the community during the wananga. This opportunity allows men to know what they can access if they need to, Willie reiterates to the tāne not to "ever be too shy to ask for help".

The wananga begins with a pōwhiri, this provides the first opportunity for Willie to observe who is open or closed off, as he sees a physical change in tāne once they hear the karanga. The programme aims to "work with tāne wherever they are at" and if they "shrink and close down. Then I know my job is to open them back up again and to get them to understand that their own world is not that scary; it's the Pākehā world [that is scary]". The wananga draws on whakataukī which Willie tries to emulate throughout the wananga and normalise for tāne. The beginning of transformation happens for tāne during the ongoing whanaungatanga and hononga/connecting processes.



## TĀTOU POUNAMU – FAMILY VIOLENCE PROGRAMME

The Family Violence programmes are also respectively facilitated by Willie Tahuri and Winnie Retimana for tāne and wahine who have been directed by the courts or probation to do the programme. The section details what takes place in the tāne programme. Although the programme is designed for Māori, because Pacific men can attend Fono and Europeans usually go to Man Alive, Willie will work with anyone.

For the unemployed and those who have key parenting roles, the day programme involves individual and group sessions. After work-group sessions cater for those working during the day. Each person will come to the programme with a requirement to do a specified number of hours, usually the maximum is 25 hours per tane.

Tane going through this programme will cover several topics including: whanaungatanga; creating a safety net strategy; instilling knowledge and options to recognise a take/issues and how these can be dealt with. As an educational programme, the relevance of the Treaty of Waitangi principles of partnership, protection and participation are presented in a way that relates to violence. Willie explains what he says to the tāne:

*“When we have a partner that’s called a partnership. We have to protect that partnership. As a partner, we participate in protecting one another. So, if we miss out on one of those things we miss out, we fail to do what we are supposed to do”*

The programme is about building up trust. In the first hour, they have to learn something and in the next hour, they have to research it. That might mean “jumping on koro google and looking up what the Vulnerable Children’s Act is and asking them what they think it means. So, it is very interactive, we write things on the board and talk about them. Then I use that to find the discussion points”. As Willie states, “For me, it’s about me having an ear, and listening to our tāne, but it’s more about them having a voice.”

## PATUA TE NGANARA

Shane works with Elaine to facilitate the Patua Te Ngaranara programme, which supports people using meth to give up. Patua Te Ngaranara is an Auckland wide programme, although they will travel the country sharing their resources, conducting community hui, and raising awareness.

*“For me, it’s about giving the whānau the skills or sharing some of our resources on how to identify different stages*

*of their loved one’s use. Whether they are a danger to themselves or a danger to their whānau.” (Elaine)*

Key to the programme is the ‘cycle of abuse’ model which speaks to stages in using meth:

*“Binging – keep binging trying to get to that high but no amount will get them there.*

*Tweaking – they are up for days, argumentative, smarter than everyone else, agitated, tearful, etc. This is where they are most dangerous.*

*Crash/Normal – this is the only time when you can offer some kind of intervention.” (Elaine)*



The model helps whānau supporters to understand the cycle of behaviours they may be seeing; it helps gangs to understand the behaviours of the dealer; and, through the eyes of a child, see what is happening to mum or dad:

*The Rush – don’t have to go to school*

*The High – they can get anything they want, living in motels*

*The Binge – Mum is not stopping in now, children stuck at the motel, no food*

*The Tweaking – ring nana to come and get me, I’m worried for the younger kids.” (Elaine)*

## TE PAE ORANGA

Te Pae Oranga is an iwi community panel and is a relatively new initiative, starting on the marae in July 2018. In that time the panel has seen 80 participants. Te Pae Oranga offers a very different environment to court processes. People are called 'participants', they are welcomed in with aroha, manaakitanga and leave with a sense of hope. They are encouraged to be pono, to be accountable and responsible for their behaviour and then encouraged to reach their aspirations. Appearing before the kuia, they are "slapped with a feather". Though it is victim-focused like Te Whānau Awhina process, Te Pae Oranga has more focus on diverting participants from becoming entangled in the criminal justice system. Rosie adds, that Te Pae Oranga "is modelled on Te Whānau Awhina, they looked at what was happening... [but] at the end of the day it is a police process but its a good thing".

## TE KŌTI RANGATAHI

Te Kōti Rangatahi enable rangatahi (youth aged 14-17yers old) to have their Family Group Conference (FGC) plans monitored on the marae. Kōti Rangatahi o Hoani Marae has been taking place since 2009, it sits every second Wednesday for a morning and an afternoon session. It begins with a pōwhiri, whakawhanaungatanga introductory circle, and ends with the whakanoa process of sharing kai. Then the formal process of hearing from each rangatahi as they share their pepeha and update the panel on their progress. Like the above two initiatives, the role of the kaumātua and other whānau at Hoani Waititi they are all instrumental in modelling aroha and imparting cultural knowledge that contributes to the potentiality of transformation:

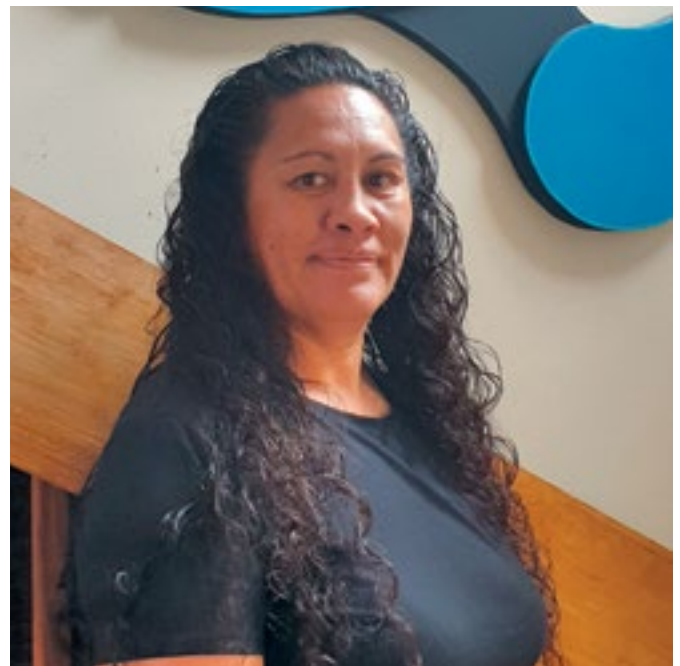
*"When you got the kaumatua and whaea sitting there who go, "Hey, man, I know your [koro, nanny, etc] ..." and you see their eyes light up and you go hey man, there's a connection there. Whether they take that on after they leave, but it's actually us sowing a seed. I always say to my staff when you feel down and you don't see change happening... [I say you] sowed a seed somewhere and that is going to come out at some point." (Shane)*

## WHĀNAU ORA

At the heart of all the whānau supports the marae offer, are two kaiārahi (navigators) which are part of Whānau Ora services. The roles are carried out by Carla and Vernon; together they work with whānau to help with whatever their needs are when they come to the marae seeking

help. Whānau are seldom referred from services and simply arrive at the marae, usually at crisis point often need food, a home, or their car fixed so they can go to work. Some rangatahi in particular "walk through here they don't necessarily know what they want, but they know what they are doing is not what they want. They just want help and they come here. Not just Māori, non-Māori too, out of desperation (Carla)." While whānau arrive with what often seems like a simple problem, it can often end up being massive. Such as being homeless is linked to living in poverty. The extent of the issues becomes clearer, it is very common for Carla and Vernon to start supporting one whānau member and end up involved with the whole whānau. Correspondingly, the support provided to whānau by kaiārahi is diverse:

*"We do anything from helping people get an ID or driver's license or getting some food for a quick fix, right through to helping with mental health issues, court or justice matters, homelessness, looking for work and anything in-between." (Carla)*



The overarching kaupapa of their mahi was to connect whānau to what is available and what might be helpful to them so that by the time they had worked together, whānau have the tools to be able to be clear on what they can do to not go back down the same track again. Rather than create a situation of co-dependency, this means collaborating with whānau to create tools, strategies and connections to networks of support.

Most whānau needed help accessing social housing and employment. Kaiārahi had had success through working with Vision West and Kahui tu Kaha in getting whānau access to Housing First placements, which meant further



wrap-around support. Kaiārahi also work closely with Housing New Zealand and WINZ, having learnt how to get through the barriers and the red tape to get what whānau are entitled to. Vernon explained he regularly attends WINZ offices where he can use his experience and knowledge to advocate for assistance and benefits that whānau are often unaware of or too shy to ask for. Helping whānau to access housing coming out of prison to avoid going into prison is always top of the list for the marae and whānau ora kaiārahi on site.

Another feature of being a kaiārahi may mean connecting whānau to specialist mental health and addiction services. This was a challenging aspect of the whānau ora kaiārahi because it was often a struggle to get whānau to be able to access these services. Whānau may be reluctant to pursue their full entitlements where they have previously encountered negative experiences. Providing a space for whānau to be able to talk about their fears and frustrations with kaiārahi assisted in reducing the likelihood of whānau being re-traumatised by their voices being ignored by specialist services or helped them to be empowered to access these services on their own accord. This kind of mahi takes time. Carla described building a trusting relationship with whānau requires ample kōrero about their situation that often includes very intimate information.



Supporting whānau through criminal court matters and issues with the police are common and challenging. Vernon says police have finally started to realise that they need to engage with Māori, to learn from Māori if they are to ever address the disparities in numbers of offenders. He says that when he supports whānau at court where he and other whānau from Hoani Waititi marae are welcomed by court. The presence of the kaiārahi and other Hoani Waititi

marae whānau and kaumātua in the courtroom are viewed as positive support. As Vernon states, "he does not stand alone, he stands for his iwi, his marae, his tupuna" he uses this to guide his practice when working with whānau, and aspires to use these principles to positively influence people's lives.

Working with Oranga Tamariki with whānau is also very common and often frustrating. Carla explained the process of often being a translator for whānau when up against different Government systems. She gave an example of a case where an assessment was done by Oranga Tamariki and mental health services about her whānau client which was written in a way no layperson could understand. As the middle-person between professionals and whānau, Carla explained how she faced the challenge of creating positive communication processes that allowed everyone to work together to truly hear what each other were saying and get the best outcomes for whānau. Blockers in the system are often exemplified in professionals' lack of ability to move beyond their prescribed roles continued to let the whānau Carla was supporting down. She challenges us all to think about how we can think outside rigid roles and structures:

*"Māori are survivors and we are also very innovative.... We were not created to work inside boxes because we are a fluid people. So we should be, and we are, very good at stretching and moving and words and concepts. Can what our whānau need fit inside a box? [No] You actually need to be working right outside that box."*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The He Ture Kia Tika rūpū would like to sincerely thank Hoani Waititi marae for supporting this rangahau and making what it is today - an awesome kaupapa striving for better ways to support whānau. We thank the kaimahi for sharing with us how transformational change can be supported by hāpori that sit with whānau with where they are at, sowing seeds for change collaboratively. We pay particular thanks to Shane who has guided us with his wisdom and shared beyond this project alone how we can find strength to live positive lives through our acceptance of difference, cultural connection and deep sense belonging.

All photos/images provided by Hoani Waititi marae or from our project rūpū collection.

**HE TURE  
KIA TIKA**  
LET THE LAW BE RIGHT