Te Aka Pūkāea kia eke, Te Aka Pūkāea kia ita:

A Māori Modern Learning Environment in an English-medium primary school

Final report

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Contents

He mihi

Tēnei te Aka Pūkāea te whiwhia

Tēnei te Aka Pūkāea te rawea

Tēnei te Aka Pūkāea ka whakapiki ake!

Tēnei te Aka Pūkāea ka whakakake ake!

Ko te Aka ka pū, ka more, ka rea, ka weu, ka whanake!

Tāwhia, whakamaua Te Aka Pūkāea, kia mau, kia tīna! Haumi e, hui e, tāiki e!

Ko te akaaka o te rangi ki ngā rau tītapu kua huri tua o paerau, moe, mai takoto, okioki rā!

Ko te akaaka o te whenua kai ngā whakareanga ōnāianei me ērā o ngā whakatupuranga kai te whai mai.

Ko te muriwai tēnei o te ao kowhatu me te ao hou e āta kōtuitui nei ki tēnei o ngā punawai kōrero a Te Aka Pūkāea. Koia tēnei ko Te Uru Karaka me Te Awahou kua tapui nei ki te rākau whakamarumaru o Te Aka Pūkāea e tauwhiro nei i te aparunga me te apararo kua tau ki runga i te whakaaro kotahi kia ora ai a tātou tikanga, me tō tātou reo rangatira a muri nei. Hei konei ko te aroha o te ngākau ki te amorangi ki mua, ko te hunga i tāpā ai ngā ringaringa me ngā waewae kia mārō ai ngā pou o te whare kura o Te Aka Pūkāea!

Hei konei anō te ngākau mākohakoha ki te hāpai ō ki muri ara ngā whānau, ngā mātua, ngā pouaka me a tātou tamariki, mokopuna e whakatinana ana i ngā awhero me ngā kawenga o Te Aka Pūkāea ki tawhiti! Tēnā hoki koutou katoa!

Many thanks to all the voices that kindly contributed to this research study—the voices of tamariki, mātua, pakeke, kaiako, and whānau of Te Uru Karaka Newton Central School that express the value of te reo and tikanga Māori in the worlds that we live in today. We acknowledge the voices of courage, commitment, and collective determination to pursue Māori-medium education. We clearly hear the echoes of intergenerational mamae experienced due to the imposed disconnection to our language and culture that many of those who embark on this te reo journey seek to heal. To all who participated in this small study, thank you for articulating your thoughts, remembering those who previously paved the way, naming the challenges, and sharing your tightly held aspirations.

Special thanks to our kura-based researcher Ruia Aperahama and deputy principal and head of Te Aka Pūkāea Erina Henare-Aperahama, as well as members of Te Whao Urutaki, Jarod Rawiri, Tiopira McDowell, Kimi Cotter, Chris Carrington, Manu Pihama, and Margie Tukerangi. To the two school principals throughout this project, Riki Te Teina and Bryan Rehutai, thank you for your support. We acknowledge your collective leadership and guidance in this research and, more importantly, in developing, nurturing, and protecting space in this school setting for te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, and te iwi Māori.

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Ōtira, e tika ana te ingoa o te mahi rangahau nei “Ko Te Aka Pūkāea kia eke, ko Te Aka Pūkāea kia ita”!

Introduction: A Māori Modern Learning Environment

This research project investigates how two Māori-medium pathways (immersion and bilingual) work together in a newly built Modern Learning Environment (MLE), called Te Aka Pūkāea, to progress te reo Māori and the aspirations of whānau. In this study, Te Aka Pūkāea is also described here as a Māori Modern Learning Environment (MMLE). The title of this research "Te Aka Pūkāea kia eke, Te Aka Pūkāea kia ita" was gifted by Dr Jennifer Martin. It celebrates the establishment of the Māori-medium pathways at Newton Central Primary School and draws to attention the need to hold firm.

Te Aka Pūkāea is a large two-storied educational facility located within Newton Central School, an English-medium primary school in central Auckland. On 30 April 2018, Te Aka Pūkāea was officially opened with a dawn ceremony that was conducted by mana whenua representatives of Ngāti Whātua as well as kaiako and whānau. The opening, attended by more than 200 people, celebrated the new premises that bring together two distinct Māori-medium learning pathways and whānau units: Te Uru Karaka (immersion) and Te Awahou (bilingual). Students in Te Aka Pūkāea range from Year 0 to Year 6. At the time of this study, Te Awahou and Te Uru Karaka consist of three classes, with a combined total of 103 students across the two pathways, just one short of the maximum capacity.

FIGURE 1: **Te Aka Pūkāea, the Modern Learning Environment at Newton Central School** (Photo credit: Matt Crawford, 2025)

FIGURE 2: **Te Aka Pūkāea interior (downstairs)** (Photo credit: Matt Crawford, 2025)

FIGURE 3: **Te Aka Pūkāea interior (upstairs)** (Photo credit: Matt Crawford, 2025)

Research question and objectives

The overarching research question that guides this project is:

> How does a Modern Māori Learning Environment (MMLE) successfully facilitate dual Māori-medium (immersion and bilingual) pathways that respond to learner and whānau aspirations in an English-medium primary school?

This question broadly encompasses multiple dimensions of the MMLE, including the built environment, pedagogy, structure, leadership, etc. of the dual Māori-medium pathways in relation to learner and whānau aspirations. Notably, instead of a strong emphasis on an MMLE itself, what emerged during this study, based on our interviews with learners, teachers, and whānau, was much greater attention to the significance of Te Aka Pūkāea as a reo Māori space within an English-medium school.

Therefore, two of the original three research objectives were used to frame this report:

1. To provide an in-depth pūrākau of Te Aka Pūkāea as an MMLE that facilitates dual Māori-medium pathways.
2. To better understand Māori concepts of "space" and the way this is practised in an MMLE context, and its impact in the wider English-medium school.[1]

This 2-year study emphasises the ways Te Aka Pūkāea as an MMLE space is understood by participants and what it represents for students and their whānau, as well as the teachers and their leaders. Subsequently, this report focuses on the criticality of Māori language spaces and how whānau reclaim and navigate them. In doing so, this kaupapa Māori research also asserts that it is te reo Māori that creates, determines, characterises, and embodies the "space" of the MMLE.

Background

There are two shifts in education that highlight the importance of this research project and led us to propose the investigation of Te Aka Pūkāea as an MMLE. Firstly, the "right shift" to normalise te reo Māori (Higgins & Rewi, 2014) and, secondly, the spatial shift where the Ministry of Education (MoE) has undertaken the building of large, non-traditional classroom facilities, referred to here as MLEs. This section also introduces Māori notions of space, including Māori language space in educational settings.

Two key "shifts" towards the Māori Modern Learning Environment

In recent decades, there has been a groundswell of te reo Māori in the public domain as more organisations, including corporate entities, government agencies, and schools, have increased their usage of te reo Māori (Lee-Morgan et al., 2019). This is framed as the "right shift" by Higgins and Rewi (2014) and is described as a move towards the normalisation of Māori language as part of our national cultural heritage. It is demonstrated in the popular uptake of and participation in ceremonies celebrating Matariki and in activities to mark Te Wiki o te Reo Māori. This shift is also reflected and supported in governmental policy documents, including *Te Maihi Karauna*, the Crown's Māori Language Revitalisation Strategy (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2019).

1 The final objective (of the initial three) focused on successful pedagogies relevant to an MMLE setting. As indicated, this was not a topic that was addressed in depth by participants in the research interviews.

The impact of this shift in schools can be seen in the growing number of students learning te reo Māori, the increasing number of schools teaching te reo Māori, and initiatives such as Te Ahu o te Reo, which aim to enhance the number of teachers with competency in te reo Māori. Over the decade 2008–18, the number of non-Māori students learning te reo Māori more than doubled to 47% (Murphy et al., 2019, p. 29). According to Education Counts statistics, as of 1 July 2023, 1,295 schools offered Māori language in English medium, an increase of 52 schools since 1 July 2022. The number of students learning te reo also increased by 7.5% over the same time period to a total of 236,922 and, of this total number of students, only 33.2% identified as Māori. In relation to Māori-medium pathways, the number of schools with at least one student enrolled in Māori-medium education also increased by 21 schools in the same period, with a total of 330 schools (25,824 students). Of these Māori-medium education students, 95.8% identify as Māori.

The second shift noted here is what Benade (2019) describes as a "spatial turn". This term applies to the practice of the MoE building large, open-plan classroom facilities in line with international trends.

The larger classroom spaces can be referred to as Innovative Learning Environments (ILE), Flexible Learning Spaces (FLS), Quality Learning Spaces (QLS), or the term we have chosen to use in this study to refer to these relatively new open spaces is MLEs (Stewart & Benade, 2020). We deliberately extend the nomenclature in this area to include the distinctiveness of te reo Māori spaces, hence our employment of the term "Māori Modern Learning Environment".

Despite the government's recent announcement of its abandonment of large open-plan classroom builds, MLEs will continue to make up a significant part of the built environment of New Zealand schools for many years to come, given the government's major investment in them over recent years. In the 4 years 2013–17, for example, the MoE spent more than $747.7 million building and/or maintaining 19 new MLEs (Gattey, 2018). Notably, despite the MLE builds and the small but growing literature on MLEs in Aotearoa (Abbiss, 2015; Benade, 2019; Bradbeer et al., 2017; Fletcher & Everitt, 2022; Haawera & Herewini, 2020; Hunia et al., 2018; MoE, 2015; Oliver & Oliver, 2017; Pratt & Trewern, 2011; Stewart & Benade, 2020; Wall, 2014, 2015, 2016), there is a lack of research and policy specifically about Māori engagement with and participation in MLEs. While one MoE report, *Modern Learning Environments to Support Priority Learners* (Wall, 2014), recognises Māori language as important, it only goes as far to suggest some consideration be given to the location, integration, and "adorning" of the space:

> Where te reo Māori or Pasifika languages are offered within a particular learning space, the location of this space signals the value accorded to the language. It is important, therefore, that consideration is given to integrating the space with other learning spaces, and of adorning the space to demonstrate the value placed on language. While existing schools will have space restrictions on their sites, a Māori or Pasifika learning space should be placed in a location that reflects the mana of the language. (pp. 23-24)

Integrating language space while upholding the mana of te reo Māori presents inherent challenges for Māori-medium education, especially in an English-medium school, where space is shared, and the dominant language is English. Another MoE report published some 2 years later, *Māui Whakakau, Kura Whakakau: The Impact of Physical Design on Māori and Pasifika Outcomes* (MoE, 2015) acknowledged that the existing guidelines were inadequate and "will not themselves be sufficient to create a physical environment that fully meets the principles laid out in Te Aho Matua. Likewise, these guidelines will not fully

address the special character of Kura ā-iwi" (p. 12). There is a clear lack of guidelines and/or understanding of MLEs relating to Māori, particularly Māori-medium pathways and their incorporation in English-medium schools. In sum, the emphasis on the "right shift" to normalise te reo Māori, which has led to growing numbers learning the language, together with the "spatial turn" as marked by the addition of a significant number of MLEs within the built environment of New Zealand schools, provide the context for this study on the MMLE as a "new" space.

Māori notions of space

This research focuses on how the MMLE space is understood and utilised by Māori teachers, students, and whānau of the two Māori-medium pathways within the wider English-medium primary school environment of Newton Central School. In a traditional Māori view, the notion of space (wā) is underpinned by concepts of time, rather than physical dimensions (McKay & Walmsley, 2003; Paewai, 2013; Tate, 2010). In theorising space and spatiality through a kaupapa Māori lens, we consider the concept of spatial biculturalism in education (Stewart & Benade, 2020) as a form of both social and spatial justice. This concept of spatial biculturalism draws from Soja's (2010) work on spatial justice, which speaks to "developing a critical spatial perspective and consciousness as a significant force in shaping social action" (p. 3) and "new ways of thinking about and acting to change" (p. 6). Spatial justice is therefore about people having more understanding of how the built environment shapes social life and greater control over how their lives are socially produced (Gibson, 2011). These insights are significant in understanding how Māori consider their involvement in re/claiming space within schools and in articulating the role of the Māori language as that critical "space".

Māori language space

In relation to Māori-medium language "space" in English-medium schools, kaupapa Māori education preceded the recent aforementioned "shifts". Kōhanga Reo, Kura Kaupapa Māori, and Wharekura have been at the forefront of the whānau-led reo Māori revitalisation movement in education since the first Kōhanga Reo opened in 1982 (Martin, 2012), claiming Māori language space in public education to arrest the rapid decline of te reo Māori and assert the right for Māori children to be taught through Māori language instruction (Martin, 2012; Smith, 1997; Tocker, 2015). While these efforts focused on tamariki, parents also made significant efforts to learn te reo Māori in these spaces. Mere Skerrett (2014) articulates the way in which Māori language space is bound by the language itself, rather than by physical demarcations.

Language occupies physical space, in the mouths, on the tongues, and between the spaces of the people who speak those languages in the spaces they occupy (p. 17). Establishing Māori language space in schooling is an act of reclamation. The struggle to create, develop, and maintain these spaces, in particular Māori-medium environments, rests on our ability to speak te reo Māori and live in te ao Māori. For tangata whenua, te reo Māori should be our birthright (Skerrett-White, 2001), and revered as a taonga (Waitangi Tribunal, 1986, 2011). As Skerrett (2019) explains:

> Our treasured Māori language is our life force; it nourishes our souls and feeds our minds. If we think of language as a taonga and a valued resource, then the growth of Māori/English bilingual children in Aotearoa will greatly enhance the nation's mana and wealth in a system in which both the official spoken and written languages are equally sanctioned, equally valued, equally loved, equally honoured as was envisioned in the Treaty of Waitangi. (p. 501)

Forty years on since the start of Kōhanga Reo, the Māori language remains in a critical and threatened state for many of our whānau, hapū, iwi, and communities (MoE, 2016; Trinick et al., 2020). With 97% of Māori learners in English-medium schools (Education Review Office, 2020), we continue to be reliant on Māori language teaching and Māori-medium pathways in these schools to provide access and opportunities for our tamariki to learn and speak te reo. Despite the continued call by Māori whānau, hapū, iwi, and communities for better access to Māori language and culture in schools (Hutchings & Lee-Morgan, 2016), there is still a dearth of research about Māori-medium pathways in English-medium schools. Therefore, by focusing upon Te Aka Pūkāea, this study purposefully contributes to this body of research.

A lack of literature

As part of this research, we reviewed a selection of publications, reports, and theses specific to the development of MLEs in Aotearoa over the past 10 years. Only a handful of articles drew from the experiences of Māori language pathways (Bright & Smaill, 2022; Edmonds, 2021; Haawera & Herewini, 2020; Hunia et al., 2018; Oliver & Oliver, 2017). Therefore, one of the notable findings in relation to the literature reviewed was the lack of research relating to Māori-medium education pathways more generally and Māori-medium MLEs specifically (Mane et al., 2023). However, in recent times there has been growing interest from Māori researchers in MLEs within Māori educational contexts, with scholars such as Georgina Stewart investigating Māori learning spaces, in this case, as part of a large 3-year Marsden-funded research project.[2] Despite this increased focus from scholars, a lack of research undertaken in Māori-medium settings remains, which means the literature reviewed in this study drew largely from research on MLEs in English-medium settings.

Despite the attention being given to MLEs and their significance in 21st century education, Dovey and Fisher (2014, as cited in Fisher, 2021) suggest that there is a notable silence in the literature surrounding the impact of space on teaching and learning contexts. Confirming this observation, Māori involvement in the discussion of open-plan classrooms in Aotearoa is almost nil. Although much of the current focus on MLEs might suggest that they are a recent innovation, open-plan classrooms have existed since the 1970s (Cameron, 1986). Several participants in this study recall their positive experiences in large, open-plan classrooms as children during the 1980s. While there is much criticism of MLEs within the education sector (Edwards, 2021; Johnston, 2022; Post Primary Teachers' Association [PPTA], 2017), this project has looked to explore both the tensions and opportunities that MLEs offer to learners and educators in Māori-medium settings.

Kaupapa Māori methodology

As this is a study undertaken within a Māori-medium setting, it is appropriate to use a kaupapa Māori research methodology—an approach that originates from the work of whānau to transform education for Māori (Smith, 1997). Kaupapa Māori theory coincides with the development of Te Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori (Lee, 2008). As Cherryl Waerea-i-te-rangi Smith (2002) explains, "Kaupapa Māori theory emerges of practice, out of struggle, out of experience of Māori who engage struggle, who reject, who fight back and who claim space for the legitimacy of Māori knowledge" (p. 13). In this regard, kaupapa Māori theory and methodology are concerned with Māori space-making in schooling, education, and research.

2 See https://www.royalsociety.org.nz/what-we-do/funds-and-opportunities/marsden/awarded-grants/marsden-fund-awards-2021/

Kaupapa Māori methodology is founded on Māori-centred frameworks, philosophies, and practices, including Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Nepe, 1991). Kaupapa Māori research stipulates the expectation of positive outcomes for Māori (Smith, G., 1997; Smith, L., 1999). Smith (1997) suggests that kaupapa Māori is underpinned by six key principles: tino rangatiratanga (self-determination); ngā taonga tuku iho (cultural aspirations); ako Māori (culturally preferred ways of learning); kia piki ake i ngā raruraru o te kāinga (socioeconomic mediation); whānau (extended family); and kaupapa (shared vision). Ultimately, kaupapa Māori research seeks to contribute to improve outcomes for Māori across all sectors of society, and, in this case, assist in the transformation of Māori educational outcomes.

A pūrākau approach

Within a kaupapa Māori approach, this study draws on pūrākau as both a method and methodology to investigate and analyse the MMLE. Pūrākau is a Māori storytelling practice that creates, relays, and retains knowledge supporting Māori cultural norms, philosophies, and worldviews (Lee, 2008). In this project, a pūrākau method provides a "case study" type of approach to narrative inquiry (Lee, 2008; Lee-Morgan et al., 2019). Within these pūrākau, the narratives represent a range of experiences and the lived realities of contemporary Māori lives. They locate Te Aka Pūkāea within the wider socio-historical and political domain and describe the ways in which the space is experienced by teachers, learners and their whānau, and the broader school community.

Participants share their experiences, views, and opinions, with each voice being a significant part of what becomes a shared narrative about the space that is Te Aka Pūkāea. As pūrākau, these narratives work to both decolonise and re-indigenise Māori space in education (Lee-Morgan et al., 2019). Participant voices share deeply personal realities that sometimes reflect the internalised battle of what it means not to be able to speak your language and highlight the struggle and power dynamics involved in reclaiming te reo for current and future generations.

A pūrākau approach falls within the Indigenous "storywork" literature (Archibald & Lee-Morgan, 2019) that emphasises the "work" that needs to occur to ensure the stories are pedagogical and rich in meaning-making. Core to story-telling is story-listening. We draw attention to the dimension of listening in this work, as it points to an aspect that is critical in the development of an MMLE. Listening to the people who are to utilise the MLE space, namely the staff, students, and whanau, is identified as important in the planning, design, and building of an MLE (Bøjer, 2021). Listening to the realities, expertise, and aspirations of the teaching and learning community of Te Aka Pūkāea is core to this study, as we seek to better understand the "space" and how it serves dual Māori-medium education pathways. Therefore, we have foregrounded listening (in pūrākau) to the experiences and perspectives of our participants to shape the findings, listening for the most important messages to identify the key insights.

Interviews

As part of this pūrākau approach, a total of 44 participants were interviewed for this study. These were made up of whānau including representatives from Te Whao Urutaki (TWU), from Te Uru Karaka (TUK) (n = 8); whānau from Te Awahou (TAH) (n = 8); Te Aka Pūkāea governance (n = 3); ākonga (students) (n = 16); Te Aka Pūkāea staff (n = 5); and senior management (n = 4).

Initially, interviews were intended to be conducted kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face), as is the preferred practice with kaupapa Māori research. However, due to COVID-19 restrictions, interviews were largely conducted via Zoom. We experienced a high level of hesitancy in securing interviews during the pandemic and this persisted post-COVID, when whānau remained cautious. As we emerged from COVID-19 restrictions, Zoom remained the primary approach for undertaking interviews. Although most interviews were conducted with individuals and small focus groups online, interviews with ākonga took place onsite at Te Aka Pūkāea. Ethics approval was granted by Unitec Human Ethics Committee.

Research team and advisory

The research team included Professor Jenny Lee-Morgan (Waikato, Ngāti Mahuta, Te Ahiwaru), Dr Jo Mane (Ngāpuhi-nui-tonu), and Dr Cat Mitchell (Taranaki). Central to the research team was school-based researcher Ruia Aperahama (Ngāti Kuri, Te Aupouri, Te Rarawa, Ngāti Whātua, Ngāti Tūwharetoa), and project administrator Jo Gallagher (Te Aupouri, Ngāti Whātua). We also acknowledge Dr Jennifer Martin (Te Rarawa) who was part of the initial research team, and the contribution of Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga Matariki New Horizon Intern, Mihiterina Williams (Ngāti Konohi, Te Whakatōhea, Ngāti Porou, Ngāpuhi).

An important part of this kaupapa Māori project was the establishment of the two advisory rōpū. Firstly, there were Te Aka Pūkāea whānau representatives who kept the wider whānau informed and up to date with progress and any matters that arose during the research. The kura advisory comprised former principal Riki Teteina and Te Whao Urutaki members Jarod Rawiri, Tiopira McDowell, Kimi Cotter, Chris Carrington, Manu Pihama, and Margie Tukerangi.

The second group was the research advisory, made up of kaupapa Māori academics with relevant expertise across Māori language, Māori language education, and Māori architecture. We acknowledge the contributions of Rau Hoskins (Ngāti Hau, Ngāti Wai, Ngāpuhi), Dr Hinekura Smith (Te Rarawa, Ngāpuhi, Te Ātiawa), Dr Tauwehe Tamati (Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Tūhoe), and Dr Tangiwai Rewi (Waikato Ngāti Tīpā, Ngāti Amaru, Ngāti Tahinga), who were the research advisers to this project.

Report structure

This report is organised into four main parts: the introduction, the findings, key insights, and the conclusion. In the following, we outline how we have structured the findings as the largest section of this report. Specifically, we highlight the connections between the research objectives and the discussion presented in this section to enable readers to make these links more easily.

The findings section opens the pūrākau of Te Aka Pūkāea shared in this report, and, in doing so, responds to our first research objective to provide an in-depth pūrākau of Te Aka Pūkāea as an MMLE. Next, the "space" of reo section addresses the second objective of the research that concerns Māori notions of "space"; in this case, the experiences and perspectives of learners, whānau, and staff of Te Aka Pūkāea as an MMLE. Also, in response to the second research objective, we discuss the experiences of ākonga, kaiako, and whānau within the MMLE. In this writing, we particularly focus on how the built environment supports and enriches Māori-medium education and ways of being.

Te Aka Pūkāea, Newton Central School

While the MMLE of Te Aka Pūkāea was officially opened at Newton Central School on 30 April 2018, its roots stretch back nearly 30 years. Over the decades, a Māori language space within the wider school has been carefully cultivated and nurtured through the collective efforts and leadership of Māori parents, whānau, kaumātua, principals, teachers, and students.

Māori whānau and Tim Heath (principal, 1988–97) are credited with the initiation of Māori language at Newton Central School. The whānau representatives and Māori teachers during this period included: Charlie Sam (Tūhoe), Pine Campbell (Ngāti Porou), Turi Te Hira and Lili Tuioti, Finau Kolo, Marlene Pene, and Hoana Pearson. In 1994, a bilingual unit "Whakarongo Rua" named by Taura Eruera (Ngāti Whātua) was opened and blessed by Ngāti Whātua kaumātua Takutai Wikiriwhi. The number of students quickly grew and, by the following year, two classes were set up. In 1996, whānau approached principal Tim Heath again, this time with a formal request by Leonie Pihama (Te Ātiawa, Ngāti Māhanga, Ngā Māhanga ā Tairi) and Tamsin Hanley, that the school investigate establishing an immersion unit. Te Uru Karaka, opened in 1997, was blessed again by Takutai Wikiriwhi. Te Uru Karaka, led by teacher Hoana Pearson, represented new energy and radicalism in Māori education within the school. Due to increasing pressure to grow the full immersion pathway and dwindling numbers in Whakarongo Rua, a decision was made in 1999 to transition one of the bilingual classes to immersion and to disband the second bilingual class. Te Uru Karaka continued to grow and, in 2000, Ana Pipi (Ngāti Porou) was appointed to teach the second immersion class. In 2005, the bilingual pathway was re-established, and Te Awahou was set up and led by teacher Jess Rutherford.

Te Aka Pūkāea represents the coming together of the two Māori-medium pathways within an MLE at Newton Central School. Named by Ruia Aperehama, Te Aka Pūkāea refers to an important native plant that was gifted to the school by kaumātua Takutai Wikiriwhi (Ngāti Whātua) and Pumi Taituwha (Waikato). During a storm, this plant split into two main vines that have intertwined, and it is seen to represent the dual aspirations (bilingual and immersion pathways) of mana whenua and whānau for te reo Māori in the school (Te Aka Pūkāea, 2016). While Te Uru Karaka and Te Awahou both focus on nurturing, valuing, and developing te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, and mātauranga Māori, the pathways to achieving these shared aspirations and the philosophies underpinning them are distinct.

TE AKA PŪKĀEA

This logo symbolises the unique development of Te Aka Pūkāea at Newton Central School. It was developed by Ruia Aperehama as part of this research project.

Te Uru Karaka: Total immersion pathway

The vision of Te Uru Karaka aligns with one of the key national reo Māori revitalisation goals (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2019) that focuses on increasing te reo Māori as an everyday

language; in this case, for tamariki and their whānau. The aim of Te Uru Karaka is: He hāpori kōtahi, he tamariki autaia, he mana motuhake (Te Aka Pūkāea, 2016). Te Uru Karaka supports tamariki who already have a level of proficiency acquired from an early childhood setting (e.g., at Kohanga Reo or within their homes). The expectation, as outlined in the Te Uru Karaka handbook (Te Aka Pūkāea, 2016), is that all whānau are proactive in developing and using te reo Māori, with the aim of supporting a high standard of te reo Māori for all tamariki who attend Te Uru Karaka. The whānau is considered the foundational learning community for the tamariki. Te Uru Karaka is made up of three classes spanning from Year 0 to Year 6. At the time of this study, there was a total of 54 students.

Te Awahou: Bilingual pathway

Te Awahou is a bilingual Māori-medium pathway that caters for whānau who have little or no reo Māori. Students in this pathway are consistently exposed to Māori language, culture, and values through English language instruction, with the aim of incrementally progressing towards reo Māori immersion in Years 5 and 6. There are three classes, with a total of 49 students from Years 0–6. This pathway also espouses clear language goals aimed at reo Māori revitalisation and emphasises bilingualism as a factor of academic success. It is expected that all tamariki in the bilingual programme will become fluent speakers in English and Māori by the end of their schooling. Te Awahou's vision is to provide an environment that supports tamariki to become active learners, developing lifelong skills and a passion for learning.

Te Whao Urutaki: Co-governance structure

The dual Māori-medium pathways of Te Aka Pūkāea are further supported by a co-governance group Te Whao Urutaki (TWU). In 2001, shortly after Te Uru Karaka was established, the Māori Education Committee, which later became Te Whao Urutaki, was formed (Te Aka Pūkāea, 2016). This group, led by Te Kawehau Hoskins (Ngāti Hau, Ngāpuhi), Rihi Te Nana (Ngāti Hāua, Te Atihaunui a Paparangi, Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Tuwharetoa, Ngāti Raukawa, and Ngāpuhi), and others took on the task of redrafting the school's Treaty of Waitangi Policy that was adopted by the board. In 2007, Te Whao Urutaki was strengthened by the inclusion of Ngāti Whātua representation as mana whenua. Anaru Martin (kaiako, Ngāti Whātua), Ngāhuia Hawke (kaiako, Ngāti Whātua), and Rangimārie McColl (parent, Ngāti Whātua, Te Whao) were integral to progressing the relationship and fostering knowledge of Ngāti Whātua history within the school.

In addition to Te Aka Pūkāea, TWU has the responsibility for Māori education and overall school governance shared between the representative Māori group and the board (Hoskins, 2018). The success of this model was recognised by the formal approval of the Alternative Constitution by the Minister of Education in 2023 (MoE, 2023). This Alternative Constitution was pursued by Te Whao Urutaki[3] to safeguard the significant work accomplished over the previous two decades and to maintain the school's longstanding commitment as one of the few mainstream schools in Auckland to offer Māori-medium pathways. It requires 50–50 representation of Te Aka Pūkāea and mainstream whānau, as well as tangata whenua representation.

3 See: https://web-assets.education.govt.nz/s3fs-public/2024-03/2.-1314044-Alternative-Constitution-for-the-Newton-Central.pdf?VersionId=4Py9LGFrAfM60nO2YM7jgvjEOX6zCw7_

Findings: The "space" of reo at Te Aka Pūkāea

Wā can be described as the Māori notion of "space" (Paewai, 2013; Tate, 2010). Wā incorporates both time and place and is discussed in ways that reflect deeply personal, individual, collective, and intergenerational experiences and realities. In this study, the kōrero from participants went beyond the physical space of Te Aka Pūkāea to encompass what has brought people to the reo "space"—that is, what the space offers and enables—as well as their journey of finding, determining, navigating, and holding space. In the context of this study, te reo Māori is the "space" (which is neither limited by time nor physical boundaries). The desire and deep yearning for te reo Māori, the bereavement of its loss, and the anxiety, joy, and hope associated with its reclamation, is all part of the "space". The following kōrero explores what the space of Te Aka Pūkāea represents for the learner, whānau, and staff, and how this shapes their experiences of the dual Māori-medium pathways within the MMLE. In order to better understand this discussion, we begin by locating Te Aka Pūkāea as a Māori educational initiative within the broader context of schooling in New Zealand.

Languageless: The dangerous unknowing

The history of colonisation in Aotearoa is recognised as the primary cause of the state of Māori languageless that many of our people experience today. The repercussions of the 1867 Native Schools Act, which required English to be the only language used in schooling, were profound and led to the eventual, widespread dispossession of te reo Māori for whānau Māori (Simons & Smith, 2001; Smith, 1997). The devastating impact of being left languageless remains today and is expressed explicitly in the words of the following parent:

> I think it's [not knowing te reo Māori] just it's very bad for your wairua and your hinengaro, I think it leads to identity issues, self-harm, suicide, violence, I mean those all the things I've been through, you know all those things it's just, it's just dangerous—dangerous being Māori and not knowing what that means. (Pāpā, TUK/TWU)

The imposition of a dominant culture's language on colonised Indigenous peoples is acknowledged as causing psychological and emotional harm (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2001). The intergenerational suppression of Indigenous languages has been described as both *linguistic genocide* and *linguistic racism* (Dovchin, 2020; Shelton, 2005; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2001). Identified as a crime against humanity, linguistic genocide is described as a central aspect of cultural genocide, when children and their families are coerced into speaking the dominant (colonial) language and forced to put aside their own Indigenous language (Skutnabb-Kangas 2001). Linguistic racism has also contributed to Indigenous populations seeing their own Indigenous language as inferior or second rate (Fanon, 1991) and lacking cultural or economic value to society (Haar et al., 2019). This discourse has caused profound intergenerational damage whereby the Indigenous language is perceived as a barrier to success (de Bruin & Mane, 2016). This is reflected in the following kōrero:

> It [te reo] was just not something that was strongly advocated for in our family because of the feeling that you had to follow whakaaro Pākehā to survive. (Māmā, TUK)

> It [Māori language] was their first language and they [my parents] never really taught us as they didn't see the benefit in it. (Māmā, TUK)

In colonial-settler societies such as Aotearoa, the language of Indigenous colonised populations has been commonly positioned as inferior (May, 2023). Most parents interviewed in this study spoke about how Māori languagelessness has been experienced across generations of their whānau. As a tool of colonisation, schools were key sites where Māori were assimilated into Western culture and the value of te reo Māori was undermined, with the widespread use of physical punishment and shaming to discourage the use of the language (Awatere, 1984; Selby, 1999).

Schooling has become, however, a contested site for Māori education and a critical kaupapa Māori space for the reclamation of te reo Māori (Martin, 2012; Pihama et al., 2002; Pihama et al., 2015; Smith, 1997; Tocker, 2015). Te Aka Pūkāea is one of these schooling spaces.

Reclaiming te reo Māori: The Mercedes waka

Given the significant impact on Māori who have been left without te reo Māori, the road to reclaiming the language is not necessarily straightforward. Many parents of Te Aka Pūkāea discussed these challenges. One father explained:

> There's lots of intergenerational trauma and mamae … and it's not just as simple as showing up to a class and learning the words. (Pāpā, TAH/TWU)

This father expresses the complex emotions that act as a psychological barrier in learning one's ancestral language as an adult. Similarly, other parents talk about their feelings of whakamā (shame), their lack of confidence, and fear of learning to speak Māori:

> There's a lot of guilt, and much shame. (Pāpā, TAH)

> When I did try to learn, I did it, but I was scared to start in case I failed. (Māmā, TAH)

This kōrero illustrates the very real sense of loss—of language, identity, and self—experienced by most of the parents we interviewed.

The feeling of "not being Māori enough" is repeated in several parent interviews, mainly in relation to their struggles with learning and speaking te reo Māori and the importance of language, culture, and identity:

> Until having our children in Te Aka Pūkāea, you have this kind of identity crisis where you know you're Māori, but you're not Māori enough, but you're not Pākehā either. (Māmā, TUK & TAH)

Whānau participants, both trustees and parents, discussed how the intergenerational loss of language is a key driver for parents to pursue te reo Māori for their tamariki, and the importance of te reo Māori for tamariki identity and wellbeing:

> I didn't want them to grow up feeling like I do about not having it [reo]. (Māmā, TUK)

Each whānau are at different stages in their language reclamation journey. The make-up of Te Aka Pūkāea includes whānau who are at the beginning of their journey as well as those who are proficient. Regardless of where whānau are at in their journey, they are clear in what they want for their children's education:

> I want the best education my kids can get, and I want them to get the reo … I want it all mate … I want the waka and the Mercedes mate, I want the Mercedes waka! (Pāpā, TUK/TWU)

Reclaiming language, culture, and identity are consistently stated as clear objectives by whānau across interviews.

Finding the reo space: Where are the on-ramps?

> To me, if te reo Māori is a motorway there's only off-ramps, there's no on-ramps … there's constant options for you to be cut out of it, but where are the on-ramps? So, if you don't start at the beginning of the motorway, where are the on-ramps? We need on-ramps all the time but instead we've got off-ramps. (Pāpā, TUK/TWU)

The above comment indicates the obstacles in getting on the reo Māori schooling "motorway". Parents identified several barriers to inclusion, including entry requirements, the lack of easily accessible information, and limited options.

A standard approach for Māori-medium pathways, rūmaki in particular, is the expectation that whānau have a high level of commitment to ensuring te reo Māori is spoken in the home to support children's language acquisition (King et al., 2017). However, not all whānau have given thought to the education pathway options prior to their tamariki turning 5 years old and/or are uninformed about the entry requirements. One parent explained that she was completely unaware of the criteria for enrolling her children in Māori-medium schooling:

> We were so, so thankful that there was a Te Awahou space for us. If you don't go to Kōhanga Reo, you've missed the boat on that because you're a bit slow, and you don't know what's going on. (Māmā, TAH/TWU)

Many parents find that the requirement that tamariki have already reached a level of proficiency in te reo Māori particularly challenging. This sentiment was expressed by a parent who is a te reo Māori speaker:

> I a au e kimi i tetahi kura mō tōku tamāhine … i runga i te ipurangi i kite au i ētahi momo ture, i ētahi momo tikanga e uru ai te tamaiti ki roto i te kura … Ko tetahi mea, … he momo taumata. Me mārama, me kōrero ai te tamaiti kia uru ai ki te kura. Mōku ake, mōhio au ka mārama. [Taku tamahine] ki ngā kōrero … engari kāre ia e taea te whakapuaki, te whakamārama i ōna ake whakaaro i roto i te reo Māori. (Māmā, TUK)

For those children who did not learn te reo Māori at a preschool level, whānau find themselves trying to navigate their way through a scarcity of Māori-medium schooling options.

Exacerbating this entry requirement issue for some whānau is the lack of information about potential Māori-medium pathways. Parents describe their experience:

> I spent months googling and going through Ministry of Education spreadsheets looking for mainstream schools in Auckland that had Māori-medium pathways. The only three we came up with were Newton, Grey Lynn and Freemans Bay. (Māmā, TUK)

> I te kimi i ētahi kura e tino kaha ai tā rātou ū ki te reo Māori, tā rātou akiaki i ngā take Māori i te ao Māori, he uaua. Kei Tāmaki nei, he uaua. (Māmā, TUK)

There are a limited number of schools that offer te reo Māori pathways and numbers are often limited. The principal of Newton Central School noted, at the time of interviewing,

that whilst Auckland possesses the largest number of schools in the country, only very few mainstream schools offer te reo Māori immersion and bilingual options. Fewer still offer the opportunity of both Māori-medium pathways.

Despite MoE's *Māori Language in Education Strategy* to strengthen and grow the Māori-medium sector (MoE, 2024), this has not been achieved (Hunia et al., 2018; Skerrett, 2014). This view was highlighted in interviews with kaiako, who noted that only half of those seeking enrolment are likely to gain entry. While Te Aka Pūkāea endeavours to accommodate as many students as possible, the limited number of spaces means that not all whānau successfully find a place for their children. One parent involved in the selection of tamariki to be enrolled describes how difficult this process is:

> [We] do tono hui (2014) for whānau coming through for Te Awahou. The amount of people that want to come in, and the number of spaces that we have, just doesn't balance up anymore, and they all deserve to have a space, all of them … and it's such a mamae … If [we] haven't cried at one of them [tono hui], then you know it's pretty rare. Because everyone is at that point where they really want this, and there's just nowhere else for them to go. (Māmā, TUK/TAH/TWU)

The idea of the limited "on-ramps" to participate in Māori-medium pathways is demonstrated in this enrolment process that can be highly stressful for all involved. This dilemma is not uncommon, as Mere Skerrett (2014) points out, many whānau are unable to access a Māori-medium schooling option; subsequently, the only alternative is often mainstream schooling.

Te Aka Pūkāea as a safe space: We can just be Māori

Much like the research about marae-ā-kura (Lee, 2012), participants in our study indicated that the space demarcated by Te Aka Pūkāea was seen as a "safe place" to be Māori for tamariki and whānau in a "mainstream" setting. One of the students clearly articulated the significance of Te Aka Pūkāea as a "safe reo space" in the historical context of schooling:

> I think it feels like quite a safe space because back when my mum and my nana were kids, they weren't allowed to speak Māori you know, but now people are getting to learn it, it feels really cool, and it feels quite safe. (Ākonga)

For many parents who had experienced the negativity of being unable to speak Māori and were at different stages (to their children) in their te reo reclamation journey, Te Aka Pūkāea was seen as a welcoming and non-judgemental space, where whānau feel accepted, encouraged, and supported in the kaupapa and to learn te reo Māori. Several participants described feeling a sense of belonging and connection, commonly expressed in relation to how people experience urban and ancestral marae (Lee-Morgan et al., 2021):

> It's not just a classroom, it's a space where we can just be Māori, no matter what our involvement with our whānau, or our iwi, or our hapū has been in the past, you can just go in and be Māori in your own way. (Pāpā, TAH/TUK)

For whānau who have lived away from their kāinga for several generations, Te Aka Pūkāea may well be their only connection to te ao Māori, where Māori values are demonstrated, lived, and practised. Living in an urban environment away from their own haukāinga, many participants appreciated the everyday connection that Te Aka Pūkāea provides to normalise Māori values, traditions, and cultural practices:

> Ā, ki ahau nei, he mea e hono ai i tōna tuakiri, i tana tuakiritanga, he mea nui tērā ki a au kia tipu ake ōku tamaiti i roto i tā rātou ake tuakiritanga. (Māmā, TUK)

The importance of whanaungatanga that Te Aka Pūkāea provided was expressed by various participants:

> Ehara i te mea he kimi i te reo Māori anake, engari he kimi i tētahi whānau, tētahi hāpori. Koirā tāku. (Māmā, TUK)

> I guess we chose that pathway so that my boys grow up knowing who they are because we aren't at home. I grew up knowing who I was because I was home; we are not home now. So, I must give that to them, I must find that space for them here. (Māmā, TUK)

These expressions of whanaungatanga and sense of creating a kainga and/or community, speak directly to what it is to be and work as a collective—not necessarily as whānau related by whakapapa, but as whānau connected by their purpose and commitment to regenerate te reo Māori as a community.

A space of mana: Te Aka Pūkāea and spatial biculturalism

Participants expressed how the new MMLE affirms the mana of Te Aka Pūkāea within Newton Central School. For the whānau, including the students, they are conscious that the new large two-storey building that opens onto green space and the park, locates te reo Māori and te ao Māori as a valued space:

> I felt like before, when we were in the other classrooms, that we were the same as everyone else, but then when we came in our building it felt much more special, 'cos we were different, but in like a good way. (Ākonga)

> I think first having a space that was just for them, really gave them mana, they felt like they had a place, and their place was special, so that was a very big change in the school. (Māmā, TUK)

> When I saw the building, I felt very confident, and I felt very happy to be in a very special place, because I really wanted to learn Te Reo. (Ākonga)

> It was a lot bigger than I expected, and because it was bigger, I felt that I was learning bigger too, like I learnt more and more, and it was easier. (Ākonga)

Aligned to the notion of spatial biculturalism (Stewart & Benade, 2020), Te Aka Pūkāea represents an important reclamation of space for Māori language education, and culture more broadly, and contributes to a school environment that reflects a commitment to partnership as expressed in Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The mana that is accorded to Te Aka Pūkāea is not only demonstrated in the position and design of the built environment but also reflected in the school's organisational structure that includes governance to ensure the ability of Māori to determine the use of the MMLE space.

In this regard, whānau recognised the critical and proud achievement of the school's Alternative Constitution that formalises the co-governance model, to ensure the mana of te iwi Māori will upheld—particularly in relation to Te Aka Pūkāea:

> It's also about us moving into that space, that's how I feel about it. Yeah, real tino rangatiratanga because … that's a hell of a model for how every other school should operate in this country. (Pāpā, TUK/TWU)

> What we've got to this last year and a half is what the Kura has been trying to achieve for 25 years; it's coming to fruition. Yeah, and it's [co-governance] not an easy thing to push through, you know, because we are leading the country. We're not following a model; we're working it. This is almost succession planning to greater governance spaces and wider spaces. (Māmā, TWU)

The development of Te Aka Pūkāea and its associated co-governance model exemplifies the long-held aspirations of Māori whānau and community for te reo Māori and an active recognition of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The establishment of co-governance at Newton Central Primary School in particular is ground-breaking, especially significant in today's tenuous political environment.

Two pathways to achieve bilingualism in Te Aka Pūkāea

One of the unique features of Te Aka Pūkāea as an MMLE is the operation of dual Maori-medium pathways together in one building. While Te Uru Karaka and Te Awahou both prioritise nurturing, valuing, and developing te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, and mātauranga Māori, they differ in their approach to achieving their shared aspirations.

When this study was conducted, the popularity of Te Awahou as a bilingual pathway was evident. In relation to the negative experiences of some of the parents, Te Awahou represented a safe entry point back to te reo. As one parent articulates:

> Yeah, we didn't feel confident in our ability to help our tamariki in that [rūmaki] environment … and I think that relates to trauma. You know, it felt so safe to go where we can be in this bilingual environment and have our tamariki to be exposed to it … and then it's the starting point … (Pāpā, TAH/TWU)

The demand for places in Te Awahou by Māori and non-Māori far outweighed those sought in the immersion pathway. This is unsurprising given the "right shift" (Higgins & Rewi, 2014) to value and normalise te reo Māori as our national cultural heritage, and the proficiency requirements for the immersion pathway. In addition, this may also reflect the increasing popularity of bilingualism worldwide in recent decades, due to its perceived contribution to student academic success (May, 2017).

It is important to note that most participants felt unclear about Māori-medium options prior to entering Te Aka Pūkāea. There was some confusion about the levels of bilingual language proficiency that might accrue from participation in an immersion language pathway or a bilingual pathway. This is unsurprising since the terminologies of bilingualism and bilingual education can be both challenging and confusing; there is a wide range of definitions, leading to common misunderstandings (May, 2017; Ritchie & Skerrett, 2014).

The approach of Te Awahou is described by the former principal, Riki Te Teina, as "simultaneous bilingualism". However, this term is usually used to describe children learning two languages from birth or prior to turning three (Skerrett, 2014). Children in Te Awahou typically enter as English-only speakers and incrementally learn te reo Māori across several years. This is, therefore, more properly described as sequential bilingualism, when a second language is learnt after a first language has already partially developed. This approach, utilised in Te Awahou, might also be described as transitional bilingual education (May, 2017). Described here as a bilingual pathway, the goal of Te Awahou is described in the following way by a kaiako:

> the goal … by the end of their journey, they're bilingual, bi-literate children who are again strong and confident in who they are as people and if they're Māori then they [are] strong and confident in their Māoritanga, that they can move confidently in both worlds … the starting point is the difference. (Kaiako)

If "bilingualism" is viewed as the *outcome* rather than the way it is achieved, its meaning is inclusive of an immersion pathway. The following definition of "bilingual immersion" indicates this difference:

> Māori immersion settings are bilingual settings, not because they use two languages in the program, but because they are supporting bilingualism as an outcome in Māori-medium programs. (Ritchie & Skerrett, 2014, p. 36)

In the end, both pathways seek the same outcome—that of bilingualism. As one parent who has four tamariki in both pathways articulates:

> I think parents should also realise that we've all got the same goal, which is to have fluent tamariki who will continue on that pathway by the time they finish at Newton Central. (Māmā, TAH)

Another parent, who has children in both pathways, spoke about how each pathway served their needs, given their children's different levels of te reo Māori confidence:

> … for me they're both amazing spaces, so I think once again I'm very lucky to be in that space in Te Aka Pūkāea … because it turns out that I needed both. (Māmā, TUK/TAH)

The ways of achieving competency in both Māori and English are distinctively different: a bilingual pathway where instruction is provided in both in English and Māori; and an immersion pathway that instructs almost exclusively in te reo Māori. Whether this aspiration of bilingualism can be achieved to the same level via each of the pathways by the end of Year 6 would benefit from further research.

Te Uru Karaka: The struggle for immersion education

Beyond the differences in the approaches of the two pathways in Te Aka Pūkāea, the immersion pathway has a distinctive relationship to kaupapa Māori educational development (e.g., Te Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori), that further impacts the way the "space" is understood and valued.

The establishment of Te Kōhanga Reo in 1982 was a watershed moment in Māori education. Led by whānau, this total immersion te reo Māori early childhood initiative began outside of a state system—where tamariki Māori were repeatedly being (academically and culturally) failed (Smith, 1997; Walker, 1990). Part of a broader struggle for Māori rights under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and self-determination, the revitalisation of Māori language that was in Māori control was also a political response.

Soon after Kohanga Reo, primary and secondary school options followed. Te Kura Kaupapa o Hoani Waititi, the first primary provider, was opened in 1985 with provision for secondary students via the Te Wharekura o Hoani Waititi established in 1993. The numbers of Kōhanga Reo, Kura Kaupapa Māori, and Wharekura grew throughout the country, and today remain an important Māori language option underpinned by a distinct philosophy and curriculum. By the 1990s, these immersion education settings began receiving government funding and were overseen by MoE.

This total immersion Māori language movement has been recognised around the world and inspired other Indigenous groups in the reclamation of their own languages. Furthermore, the impact of these immersion initiatives can be seen in the ways the younger generations today are able to utilise te reo Māori in all aspects of their lives, including the media, arts, and business. Despite the success of this type of education, the benefits of Te Kōhanga Reo, Kura Kaupapa Māori, and Wharekura, in which speaking Māori is normalised, remain undervalued (Hunia et al., 2018; Skerrett, 2014).

In most immersion settings, students are usually taught at a distance from English-speaking environments to maintain a Māori-speaking environment (Hill, 2016). In the context of a mainstream school, the demarcation of a total immersion space becomes complex. Whereas Kōhanga Reo etc. are able to designate the whole organisation (space) as a Māori language zone, which is still in itself not straightforward, Te Uru Karaka is part of Te Aka Pūkāea, located within a mainstream school where the dominant language is English. The struggle to create and sustain Māori immersion spaces is ongoing and requires constant energy and vigilance.

A key challenge to the success of an immersion pathway is the infiltration of English. This concern is reflected by Te Uru Karaka whānau and their stance to actively protect the full immersion pathway from the influence of the pervasiveness of the English language:

> It [English] just sneaks on in, and then sends all those messages to our kids, oh it's okay to speak te reo Pākehā then, we can just default, it's alright, te reo Māori isn't something that we need to hang on to … (Māmā, TUK)

> As soon as the dominant language comes in, English, that's it, it's over, it's done, that's not a rūmaki space and so we had to fight for that. (Māmā, TUK)

> If my boys were going to go into bilingual classes … they are going to have English around them all the time, you know, and so having that really dedicated space for them to be able to be Māori and not have any of those outside English influences, I think was kind of why I wanted rūmaki. (Māmā, TUK)

When designating the spaces of Te Aka Pūkāea to the two Māori-medium pathways, Te Uru Karaka resolved to protect the immersion space by utilising the building's design to easily separate the two pathways: Te Uru Karaka immersion pathway is located on the top floor; and Te Awahou on the ground floor. While the two pathways are mostly taught in their home base on different levels, they have shared spaces including a kitchen and ablution block on the ground floor. In addition, both pathways regularly meet together as a whānau of Te Aka Pūkāea for shared activities including karakia and waiata on the ground floor.

In the establishment of Te Aka Pūkāea there was much discussion amongst kaiako and whānau about how both pathways might operate together in the same building. During this period, the designation of specific spaces for each pathway was not simple and had to be negotiated between Te Uru Karaka, Te Awahou, and the school. For some whānau in Te Uru Karaka, they felt it was a struggle to "hold space" as a distinctive immersion setting in Te Aka Pūkāea. These parents refer to this period of development as having to "fight" for their right to a rūmaki space within Te Aka Pūkāea:

> The whole [establishing] Te Aka Pūkāea thing was probably the first time in my life that I'd been conscious of the connection between claiming physical space as it's connected to claiming our knowledge space, our theoretical space, and that's the space that often people can't see if they haven't gone down in their decol

> [decolonisation] journey. That's the space that leads me to feeling frustrated with our reo rua whānau. There is something in there around physical space and our spaces of knowledge, not just to practise, or disseminate our knowledge in the physical space but I'm specifically talking about during that fight [for maintaining reo rūmaki space] that it wasn't just a physical space that was being claimed. I felt like there was a space in my being that was being claimed. (Māmā, TUK)

The "fight" to maintain a separate physical space for the immersion pathway represented the broader struggle for self-determination, where te reo, tikanga, and te ao Māori is the norm. Students, too, demonstrated a political astuteness about the need for te reo Māori to have equal standing to English and were conscious of the limited space te reo Maori occupied (on the top floor of Te Aka Pūkāea) in the wider school:

> Tōku whakaaro i noho ōrite te mana o tōku reo, nā te mea i tāku kura tawhito i Maungārongo, i kōrero Māori te katoa, engari, i kōnei, ko te reo Māori anake kei runga. (Ākonga, TUK)

> Āe, ka rongo ngā teina i ngā tuākana e reo Māori ana, ka whai mai rātou, ā, ka ako i ngā āhuatanga i roto nei. (Ākonga, TUK)

Furthermore, they understood the importance of upholding the immersion space and their responsibilities to be role models.

One kaiako describes the immersion pathway as a cultural safe haven and stronghold for te reo, tikanga, and mātauranga Māori. The following comment makes clear the struggle to *live as* Māori (Durie, 2001) in a mainstream school and wider school community, and therefore the critical space Te Uru Karaka provides even within Te Aka Pūkāea:

> Rūmaki in its core essence is the only place we have had cultural safety, nowhere else, not on the board of trustees, not in the senior management, not in middle management and certainly not amongst the Kaiako—it's the space of rūmaki that held a space for safety for both reo and mātauranga Māori to come through, 'cos nobody questions it at rūmaki—it's a given. (Kaiako)

Te Uru Karaka as an immersion space is a pivotal site within a mainstream school because it is not merely a space for the language to be spoken, but creates room for te reo, tikanga, te ao Maori to cohere and provides a culturally safe and culturally rich environment that work together to (self) determine the space.

The benefits and challenges of the MMLE space

Benefits

A common theme that emerged from the interviews was the increased opportunities for whakawhanaungatanga created by the MMLE space. One of the key benefits of combining two distinct Māori-medium pathways into a single building, along with the establishment of Te Aka Pūkāea as a whānau, was the immediate creation of a focal point for te reo Māori and a visibly strong Māori collective.

One parent talked about the way the relationship between the two pathways had been strengthened by coming together:

> What we've started seeing this year [2023] is Te Aka Pūkāea is one space and that everyone comes together more, the pathways don't feel 'us and them'—they just feel

> like two different methods of teaching … I think you've got to have someone who's leading that kaupapa, otherwise you just can exist as two separate groups in the same building, but I think the building helps too … (Māmā, TAH)

Similarly, students noted the increased interaction between the two pathways through participation in shared activities and cultural practices, since the development of Te Aka Pūkāea from single cell classrooms to the MMLE. Students made the following comments:

> We didn't socialise with any other class at all [single-cell classrooms], and we would do our karakia in our separate rooms. Now that we are in one building, we all come together in the morning and in the afternoon, and we come together to do kapa haka. We don't usually go upstairs, and they don't usually come downstairs, but we still gather much more than we did in the side classrooms. (Ākonga)

> I also like having everyone in one space because then you know everyone. Back in those classrooms [single cell], we didn't talk to anyone who wasn't in our class, but now, because we are all in the same space, we socialise with everyone. (Ākonga)

> It's good because we can be apart but also be together. It's like we are in different classrooms but then we are in the same classrooms. I like us all being together because it's like a bigger community. (Ākonga)

The strength of whanaungatanga and kotahitanga (unity) among Te Aka Pūkāea students was evident to parents through the increased opportunities to foster tuakana–teina relationships within the MMLE:

> The set-up allows enough separation when needed … but there is the collective space that enables the whakawhanaungatanga and the younger kids will learn heaps off the older kids in that kind of space, so for me it's very Māori in its thinking and I love it! (Māmā, TUK)

The pedagogy of tuakana–teina is referred to consistently by whānau, ākonga, and kaiako and is an example of culturally responsive practice in Te Aka Pūkāea. Based on the concept of tuakana as the older sibling and teina as the younger sibling, both having responsibilities to each other (Nepe, 1991). The notion of tuakana–teina is used commonly in Māori educational settings where students who are older or who have acquired a particular level of skill support or scaffold the learning of students who have yet to master the skill to be learnt. Parent interviews frequently mentioned the practice of tuakana–teina. One parent noted:

> The two stand-out things for me were watching the tuakana–teina mix. What I liked was … that the tuakana–teina were able to merge and tautoko one another, so you could see the tuakana–teina workings were real, not coaxed. (Māmā, TAH)

> The fact that the space is so open means that I know [my child] had the privilege of hearing and observing what the tuakana are doing. They are not just isolated from what they're learning; they're exposed to other things as well. It also means that I think it really helps the support of the tuakana–teina relationship because all the different year levels are close by, so they feel connected to each other. (Māmā, TAH)

> Since we've been in that space they do a lot more things together, rather [than] when they had all the separate classroom—like there's more tuakana–teina stuff. (Māmā, TAH)

Parents and students themselves also talked about one of the benefits being the ability to enact their actual tuakana–teina with their own siblings. The MMLE enabled them to see their younger brothers and sisters and therefore take care of them. As one parent observed:

> I think it's been lovely for the boys, anyway, for us. [The elder one] is right there. Especially when [the younger one] started, he knew that he could go to his brother, and he didn't have to go out of the classroom to get that comfort from his brother. (Māmā, TAH/TUK/TWU)

Students also spoke positively about this aspect of the Te Aka Pūkāea space:

> It's like, cool, 'cause I get to see [my younger brother] more and I can check up on him, and he can come and see me too. I like that. (Ākonga)

> I like it because I can always look and see my little brother. He was nervous when he started, and so, like, I could see him, and he could see me. (Ākonga)

The MLE building and the establishment of Te Aka Pūkāea enhanced the ability for whakawhanaungatanga, and in turn provided a foundation to embed more broadly other cultural practices such as tuakana–teina that also applies to teachers. In team teaching environments such as Te Aka Pūkāea, the more experienced teachers are able to support new teachers, and/or work to each teacher's strengths and expertise. The relationship is reciprocal, with both parties learning from each other. Often this working together as teachers is described as collaboration:

> Obviously, there is more collaboration between teachers now. The children do have that wealth from all three teachers, which is great because obviously each of the teachers come with their own, I guess goodness and expertise in certain areas … so I think that's been great! … and I guess it is more than one leader … so you are showing the tamariki that there's time for different people to lead. (Māmā, TAH)

A non-Māori parent and a teacher in the wider school also recognises the collaboration between kaiako and the value of the cultural practices inherent in a Māori learning environment:

> I think Māori-medium education has, for a long time, been doing things successfully that mainstream has a lot to learn from, too. The level of collaboration between kaiako and between tamariki is something which, in mainstream, it's only just occurring to us that those are really good ideas, and those are actually just absolutely implicit to a Māori context … there are things that just sort of happen implicitly in Māori spaces that all of a sudden in the mainstream we are learning is actually really good, and there's research to tell us it's really successful for all learners. (Māmā, TAH)

The MMLE space was identified as not only enhancing opportunities for teachers to learn from each other and to work closely together but also for fostering an environment where collaborative teaching practice is promoted. According to much of the literature related to MLEs, teacher collaboration is vital for effective teaching in these settings (Haawera & Herewini, 2020; Oliver & Oliver, 2017; Wells, 2018). Teaching in large, open-plan classrooms requires teachers to adapt to new ways of teaching and learning that involve a high level of flexibility, innovation, and collaboration (Haawera & Herewini, 2020). In discussing the impact of the space on their collaborative working, one Te Aka Pūkāea kaiako reflected, "I think even the definition of collaboration changes when you work in a collaborative space [of Te Aka Pūkāea]" (Kaiako, TAH).

Challenges

While kaiako were largely positive about the MMLE model, they noted some challenges. There are three key challenges highlighted here. The first relates to the development of the building design. A lack of engagement with whole communities is identified as a

key issue raised in the literature about MLEs, particularly the absence of teacher input in designing and planning new school builds or renovations (Wall 2014; Wells, 2018). While Māori specialists and whānau were invited to contribute to the cultural aspects of the build of the MMLE at Newton Central School, there was limited consultation in its physical design:

> The building designs were made with very little, as I recall, consultation with whānau and very little evidence that what was being proposed in the physical space was good for our kids in their respective pathways. (Māmā, TAH)

As a result, one kaiako expressed overt frustration with the design of open-plan classrooms, noting various shortcomings and how these impacted on the teaching space:

> Ka hanga te ao Māori i roto i to mātou akomanga? Ka kore e taea. (Kaiako)

There were also several concerns about the physical space in relation to noise levels and whether the space provides for the needs of students that may be neurodiverse or have a disability or learning impairments. While it is acknowledged that specific attention should be given to acoustic design that ensures a wholly inclusive setting for learning (Benade, 2019; Rose-Munro, 2021), whānau expressed a desire to ensure classrooms are built fit for cultural and [all] student purpose.

The second challenge identified by teachers is the lack of preparation to work in a dual Māori-medium MLE. While tamariki adapted to the new building relatively easily and were comfortable in using the open-plan classrooms, the kaiako found the transition from single-cell classrooms more difficult. This finding aligns with research undertaken by Wells (2018), who finds that students are "better able to adapt to their learning space than the teachers" (p. 139). One teacher says:

> [It's] hard to get out of four walls thinking … to imagine what we might need to know and prepare for. (Kaiako, TUK)

The insufficient time and training given to teachers to adapt their teaching practice from single-cell to open-plan classrooms has been identified as an issue for MLEs (Nelson & Johnson, 2021). While there was some prior work to prepare Te Aka Pūkāea kaiako for teaching in an MLE, not all kaiako had participated (some were new teachers). In addition, Te Aka Pūkāea teachers not only had to learn to work differently in open-plan settings but also had to figure out how the "language space" functions for each distinct pathway, when coming together. One teacher says:

> It's only now, after three years, that things are starting to drop and make sense because they were only concepts and ideologies. It was only until it became pragmatic and practical … [through] failure and then by working out why the failure, what worked and what didn't work, we had to allow our kaiako to go through that experience, and we couldn't rush that process. (Kaiako)

In the end, the teachers indicated that much of the figuring out how to use the space has come through actively working in it.

The final key challenge raised in the study was the lack of resourcing for MMLE, with a focus on the availability of kaiako who are fluent in te reo to staff a Māori-medium pathway, particularly the immersion pathway. The scarcity of "good" Māori-speaking teachers is especially noted by the school leadership:

> Finding good kaiako in that environment is actually a real challenge and we've had to really grow our kaiako within, to create stability, and that was another thing that was a real challenge prior to my tenure here at Newton is that teachers were coming and going, and we could not get any sort of traction in what we're trying to achieve. (Former tumuaki)

The lack of te reo Māori primary school teachers was an issue also raised by whānau. One parent who has had several children attend Te Awahou over a 12-year period, reiterated the challenge and its impact on the success of the pathway:

> I've been in there for 12 years, there have been times where we really struggled with Kaiako—and there's been times when we've had to have kaiako who aren't fluent because they couldn't find someone who was … so that's not to do with how the pathway should work but to do with the practicalities of the kaiako that the school could provide. (Māmā, TAH)

The high rate of teacher turnover, the limited supply of quality te reo teachers, and the quality of teaching practice are viewed as critical. As one parent noted, a teacher maybe fluent in te reo "but didn't have good teaching skills" (Māmā, TAH).

The paucity of teachers who are proficient speakers of te reo Māori continues to be a major issue. Despite recommendations from the Waitangi Tribunal to improve the quality of Māori-medium education (Waitangi Tribunal, 2011, as cited in Hunia et al., 2018), most schools still struggle to find Māori language teachers (Collins, 2018; PPTA, 2024; Turner-Adams & Rubie-Davies, 2023). According to Skerrett (2014), the lack of skilled teachers has hugely impacted the progress of the Māori language education sector and disadvantaged its growth.

The absence of adequate funding and resourcing for schools interested in implementing Māori-medium pathways is also a barrier, especially for principals. This issue was highlighted by Newton Central's former principal:

> Principals will go this is like, oh it's too hard, too difficult … I'm not going to get any additional funding or anything, why would I do it? You know the way structures are put in place, there are very few tumuaki who are actually even want to encourage this process because of the work involved. There needs to be remuneration or a recognition of the uniqueness of the role that the tumuaki has to undertake, so you know there's a real need for an increase in Māori-medium programmes and mainstream, but there is no incentive.

These comments explain the reluctance of some school principals to pursue Māori-medium pathways. It also raises issues regarding the inequitable resourcing and funding that schools offering Māori-medium pathways receive. For example, the leadership team at Newton Central School is effectively managing three pathways (Māori immersion, bilingual, English immersion) under the banner of one school. At the time of the interview, while there was a deputy principal for the mainstream school, there was no deputy principal for Te Aka Pūkāea (a deputy principal was later appointed to Te Aka Pūkāea in Term 4, 2022). If Māori-medium pathways are to expand to meet the growing demand from the community, then school leadership needs to be supported with proper resourcing from MoE. The former principal says:

> For this to happen, it really is the tumuaki that must lead it. The other part is that there needs to be funding and structures … a tumuaki can't do it alone. So, there needs to be recognition from the Ministry [of Education] that someone in the Māori medium will have to step up as a deputy principal or something like that, a leadership role.

In relation to the importance of structural support, participants noted the critical achievement of protecting the Māori language space through the establishment and now the official formalisation of the co-governance model "Te Whao Urutaki" at the school. One parent reflects:

> I've been at the school 17 years and the demographics of the area surrounding the school have changed … it was quite a shock … to see the pushback from the mainstream … about the fact that 'we bought a house in this area, therefore, our children have a right to come to this school and we don't want out-of-zone children taking up the space if it means our children can't come'. That was not how the school was when I started … I think there was a real risk that we could have lost that kind of co-governance [Te Whao Urutaki] that was happening unofficially. (Māmā, TAH)

> Actually, pushing that co-governance model to an official state … is important because just get one year of parents who aren't quite as committed, or one year of the mainstream who doesn't want shared governance, and it [Te Whao Urutaki] will all just disappear. (Māmā, TAH)

These comments highlight the changing demographics of the inner-city school population and the tenuous nature of co-governance in a school. Hence, the significance of the formalised co-governance arrangements as a means to ensure Māori language space could be protected with a level of Māori control within this school environment.

Key insights

While this study set out to focus on the MMLE of Te Aka Pūkāea as the space for investigation, the participants emphasised that te reo Māori is the crucial "space" in Māori education settings. The participants' intergenerational stories express how te reo Māori is the space that is yearned for, the space that has been fought for, and the space that is actively being reclaimed through Māori-medium education. Subsequently, te reo Māori determines, characterises, and fills the space. In this sense, the zones of space exist and operate both inside and outside of the built environment or the MMLE; te reo Māori cannot be confined to a physical space. This study found that participants were less concerned with the specificities of the building design of a classroom and were more interested in seizing the opportunities within the school environment to teach, learn, speak, and live te reo Māori.

The assertion of te reo Māori as space in the form of Te Aka Pūkāea within the English-medium setting of Newton Central School may also be understood in terms of spatial biculturalism (Stewart & Benade, 2020), wherein Te Aka Pūkāea clearly represents and demarcates Māori language space. From its radical beginnings in the early 1990s, the development of this reo Māori space is intimately associated with the momentum of kaupapa Māori education, in particular the growth of Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori, as well as marae-ā-kura. Te Aka Pūkāea is the result of ongoing whānau-led initiatives that have required a huge amount of energy, strategy, and determination and hold the notion of tino rangatiratanga at their core.

As we grapple as a nation with the concept of co-governance today, Newton Central School provides a model that has successfully developed over more than two decades. Māori have a central place in decision making at all levels of the school (operation and governance), not just for the Māori-medium pathways but also for the wider school as part of a tangata whenua–tangata tiriti relationship. The constitutional change represented by the Alternative Constitution enables Te Whao Urutaki to advocate for and protect the right to provide Māori language pathways in recognition of tangata whenua as First Peoples and te reo Māori as the first language of Aotearoa.

Te Aka Pūkāea is unique in that it provides two Māori-medium pathways (immersion and bilingual) within the same premises. Both Te Uru Karaka and Te Awahou are highly valued by whānau who choose for their tamariki to learn in te reo Māori settings. The number of whānau who commute considerable distances into central Auckland at peak traffic times is evidence of the dedication to Te Aka Pūkāea. The dual pathways also serve to cater to the diversity of whānau at different stages of their te reo journey, bringing together the two whānau groupings in one building as a te reo Māori community. In coming together in the one building, the two pathways create a Māori centre and a critical mass of Māori language learners practising cultural values including manaakitanga and whanaungatanga. Students can more easily come together daily for karakia and mihimihi in the morning, as well as to learn collectively together for particular topics or events. Importantly, Te Aka Pūkāea represents a safe Māori space for whānau, where whanaungatanga is strengthened, practised, and normalised. However, Māori spaces, by their very nature, are complex and hold multiple challenges for whānau as they navigate their language reclamation journey.

While both Māori-medium pathways are committed to Māori language acquisition, with the aim of growing confident bilingual children, each pathway represents a different approach to te reo Māori education: a bilingual approach encompasses the notion of the normalisation of te reo Maori, whereas an immersion approach is centred on revitalisation of te reo Māori. The co-location of both distinct pathways together in the same building presents some challenges. For the rūmaki pathway, like all immersion settings, the relentless infiltration of English is an ever-present problem, requiring strategic protection and vigilance. Given the precious nature of such a space, this Māori language-only pathway is highly desirable and coveted. It is also considered the space in which mātauranga Māori can be more easily expressed, accessed, and developed. Understanding and respecting the boundaries for the rūmaki pathway to flourish is critical to the overall success of Te Aka Pūkāea, which operates two qualitatively different but related Māori language pathways.

Despite the aspiration of Te Aka Pūkāea to continue to grow te reo Māori pathways within Newton Central School to meet the demand in the community, the ongoing lack of provision and government underinvestment in Māori-medium education has effectively stymied the growth of the schooling sector for nearly three decades (Hunia et al., 2018; Skerrett, 2014). Most whānau in this study describe having had insufficient information about Māori language pathways and, as such, have had limited Māori language learning options for their children. Even with the willingness and commitment of whānau to travel across Auckland, many have experienced difficulties in securing places in a Māori-medium pathway because there are simply not enough spaces in school programmes. Considering the pressure on Māori-medium pathways, te reo Māori spaces in school settings must not only be safeguarded and protected but also advanced and increased in number if the educational aspirations of whānau Māori and others are to be met.

Conclusion

> What I've come to understand is, in the infrastructure of the school, in the hierarchy of the school, no institute has monopoly over the space of the heart … until we recognise the space of the heart, and particularly the heart of mātauranga Māori—the space doesn't mean anything. It [a building] can't be utilised unless the space of the Māori heart has clarity. (Kaiako).

The insightful comment above made by a kaiako shifts our attention from the physical space of the MMLE and the structural conditions of the school system back to ourselves as Māori. An inside-out view begins with knowing what's at the "heart" of who we are, who we want to become, and how we are going to get there. In this regard, Te Aka Pūkāea offers a rare Māori space for whānau to actively engage in matters close to the heart which requires a commitment and conviction to pursue te reo and tikanga Māori.

The establishment of Te Whao Urutaki, the unique co-governance structure instituted over 20 years ago, demonstrates the way in which Māori aspirations for self-determination and Māori space go hand in hand; in this case, with the creation of a grounded te reo Māori space. The Alternative Constitution status achieved by Newton Central School in 2023 is a testament to the assertion of tino rangatiratanga and the relationships established with Māori leadership and whānau within the school. Furthermore, the Alternative Constitution reflects the commitment of the wider school to protect Māori space through the co-governance mechanism of Te Whao Urutaki as an affirmation of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Ultimately, the space of Te Aka Pūkāea as an MMLE is defined by the way people, their relationships, cultural values, and practices are lived through te reo Māori. Te Aka Pūkāea is the legacy of Māori leadership by kaumātua, staff, whānau, and students, envisaged when kaumātua planted the Aka Pūkāea tree at Newton Central School in 1994. Nurtured by te reo and tikanga Māori, Te Aka Pūkāea is now a feature of the school landscape that continues to grow and provide sustenance for not only the learners and their whānau but also others beyond the school community who are in pursuit of te reo Māori education for their tamariki. For Māori whānau, te reo Māori evokes a cultural, spiritual, social, and political response that can also be referred to as "heart space". In the end, the powerful reclamation of te reo Māori that is facilitated through Te Aka Pūkāea leads us back to the space of the heart, with a clarity that will propel us as Māori into the future.

Glossary

ako	teach, learn
ākonga	student
Aotearoa	lit. “Land of the Long White Cloud”; Māori
hapū	extended whānau, kinship group
hau-kāinga	ancestral home
hui	meeting, gathering
iwi	tribal group, related by common ancestor/s
kaiako	teacher
kāinga	home, residence, address
kaumātua	elderly, elder
kaupapa	purpose
kaupapa Māori	Māori-led approach
kawa	customs or marae protocols
Kōhanga Reo	“Language nest”, Māori language early childhood education
kōrero	talk
kura	school
Kura Kaupapa Māori	Māori language school, special character school with te reo Māori as the language of instruction
Maihi Kaurauna	Crown Strategy for Language Revitalisation
māmā	mother
mamae	hurt
mana	authority, prestige
mana motuhake	authority, independent
mana whenua	iwi/hapū that holds customary title/authority over specific geographic boundaries

Māori	lit. “normal”, name assigned by colonials to describe tangata whenua
Māoritanga	Māori ways of being
marae	communal open meeting area
marae-ā-kura	school marae
Matariki	star constellation that signals the Māori New Year
mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge
ngahere	forest
pāpā	father
Puna Reo	“Language spring”, refers to Māori language in early childhood
pūrākau	traditional practice of storytelling, Māori methodology
reo rua	two languages/bilingual
rūmaki	immersion
taha	side, edge
tamariki	children
Tangata Tiriti	“people of the Tiriti (Treaty)”; used to refer to Pākehā that uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Te Tiriti of Waitangi gives Pākehā the right to be and live in Aotearoa
Tangata Whenua	people of the land
Te Aka Pūkāea	lit. “The trumpet vine” (Tecomanthe speciosa), a native plant; and the Modern Māori Learning Environment at Te Uru Karaka Newton Central School
te ao Māori	the Māori world
Te Awahou	lit. “The New Stream”; bilingual te reo Māori learning pathway at Te Aka Pūkāea
teina	younger sibling/peer
te reo Māori	the Māori language
te reo Pākehā	the English language
Te Tiriti o Waitangi	the Treaty of Waitangi

Te Uru Karaka	lit. “Karaka Grove”; total immersion te reo Māori learning pathway at Te Aka Pūkāea
tikanga	cultural protocols
tikanga Māori	Māori cultural protocols
tino rangatiratanga	self-determination
tono	ask, request
tuakana	older sibling/peer
tuakana–teina	Māori approach of peer-learning
tumuaki	principal
wā	time, space
wairua	spirit
Waitangi	lit. “crying waters”; place where te Tiriti o Waitangi was signed in 1840
whakaaro	thought, consider
whakamā	ashamed, shamed, shameful
whakapapa	genealogy, linked through blood ties
whakarongorua	listening/hearing of two tides
whānau	family, kinsfolk
whanaungatanga	relationships
whare	house, building

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Research team

Professor Jenny Lee-Morgan (Waikato, Ngāti Mahuta, Te Ahiwaru) has a distinguished background in teaching and kaupapa Māori research. A former teacher, Jenny's research interests include Māori education, Māori development, pūrākau as methodology, and more recently Māori housing. She is currently a co-Director of Pūrangakura, an independent kaupapa Māori research centre based in Tāmaki Makaurau.
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Dr Jo Mane (Ngāpuhi-nui-tonu) is a senior researcher at Pūrangakura. She has a background in Māori education, Māori media, and community research. Her work focuses on supporting Māori-led initiatives that advance the aspirations of tino rangatiratanga and empower Māori communities to achieve their goals, particularly within Te Tai Tokerau.

Ruia Aperahama (Ngāti Kuri, Te Aupouri, Te Rarawa, Ngāti Whatua, Ngāti Tūwharetoa) is a highly regarded Māori educator and Māori language advocate. He is also an acclaimed musician, and was awarded the Arts Foundation Laureate in 2012. Ruia is a highly experienced teacher and played a pivotal role in the establishment of Te Aka Pūkāea at Newton Central Primary. Raised at Rātana Pā, he is steeped in te reo Māori, church traditions, and musical performance.

Dr Cat Mitchell (Taranaki) is a senior researcher at Pūrangakura, working on various projects related to education, te taiao, housing and homelessness. She holds a PhD in higher education from the University of Auckland and has over 15 years of experience as a lecturer in academic development. Cat has a particular interest in kaupapa Māori academic writing and is passionate about supporting emerging scholars to grow their skills and confidence in research.

Nāu i Whatu te Kākahu, He Tāniko Taku