



New Manager Shares Passion for Education

Strengthening the educational achievements of Ngati Porou tamariki is a kaupapa E Tipu E Rea's new manager feels very passionate about.

E Tipu e Rea Karen Pewhairangi, Te Aitanga a Mate, Te Whanau a Ruataupare, Te Aitanga a Mahaki took up her position as Education Manager of Te Runanga o Ngati Porou/ Ministry of Education partnership at the beginning of May. She brings with her extensive experience in the educational sector. For over two decades she has worked in kohanga, kura kaupapa Maori, a Maori immersion unit, as a Primary school adviser for Mathematics, and most recently, as the national coordinator of the Poutama Tau, a Maori medium professional development programme for teachers and students learning in Te Reo Maori.

Although education is her focus now, Karen says as a teenager she couldn't wait to leave school. "I have happy memories of being at primary school, primarily because the school I attended was full of my Te Aitanga a Mahaki whanau.

However when I went to Ilminster Intermediate and Gisborne Girls High my attitude to education changed. I noticed the teachers used to treat us differently. This made me angry, and at age 17 I left school and went to work in Auckland for NZ Post.

A few years later she decided to return to learning, a decision influenced by her baby son. "Mum and Dad had my eldest son Morehu while I was away working. Mum was taking him, and my nephew Nikora to kohanga, where they became fluent speakers. When I'd come home to see Morehu, I could understand what he was saying to me, but I couldn't properly converse with him in te reo. We weren't encouraged to korero maori when we were growing up because my parents, particularly Mum, were from a generation where they were strapped for talking Maori. I wanted to be able to korero Maori with my son, so I decided to become more involved with his education.

I quit my job in Auckland and came home to become a kaiawhina at his kohanga." Karen worked at Te Poho o Rawiri and E Tipu E Rea kohanga in Gisborne, from 1985-1992. These were the early years of the Kohanga Reo movement, there were so many Kuia and Koroua who were involved in kohanga at that time, the nannies I had daily contact with, Nanny Hiria Parata, Nanny Kiri Collier, Nanny Ngoi Smith, nurtured me in my reo development.



In 1993 she returned to Auckland, to continue developing her teaching skills in te reo. "I was part of the early intake of Te Wananga Takiuira, the kura kaupapa teachers training programme at Te Puna Wananga, Auckland Teachers College (ACE). Tuki Nepe was the Director of the programme at that time, she was dynamic, and passionate, and now I understand she was also instrumental in crafting the pathway I have been on.

When Karen graduated she returned to Gisborne to teach in the Te Kura Reo Rua Maori immersion unit at Waikirikiri School. Under the expert tutelage of Hana McFarland, Tautohe Kupenga, Waina Waikare, and Karin Mahuika, she developed her teaching practice and a broad knowledge of a Ngati Porou curriculum called, Te Papatipu o Horouta. This patere is still the 'tahuhu korero' for our tamariki who attend Waikirikiri school. While teaching there she participated with the Year 3 contract for Mathematics. This contract enabled her to specialize in the teaching and development of Pangarau in Te Reo Maori.

In 2000 she left Waikirikiri school to become a Mathematics advisor for the Tairāwhiti region. This was followed by a dual teaching role as National coordinator for Te Poutama Tau (professional development for teachers of mathematics in te reo Maori) and as a lecturer of Whakapiki Pangarau at ACE.

At the beginning of 2006 Karen was presented with an excellent opportunity to employ the skills and experience she had amassed during 21 years in the education sector. "I applied for the position of E Tipu E Rea manager because I'm Ngati Porou and I'm passionate about being Ngati Porou.

In my role as the national coordinator for the Poutama Tau, I visited many KKM and Immersion units all around the country, and saw many great teachers and learning opportunities for tamariki in maori medium sites. But I really wanted to come home and work with my own people.

"I have worked in many schools, with parents, principals, teachers and whanau, who have overcome challenges in the pursuit of educational success for their tamariki. If there are issues arising from misunderstandings or lack of understanding surrounding tamariki and parents/whanau needs then brokering those relationships to provide a positive outcome for our tamariki/parents is what I work towards.

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