

# Weaving Te Ao Māori with our Learning Strategy

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# OUR MAHI IS WEAVING TE ARA KOTAHİ

Poipoia te kākano, kia puāwai

*Nurture the seed and it will blossom*

## Tirohanga Whānui - overview

### **Our Te Ara Kotahi commitment**

We have been committed in bringing Te Ara Kotahi to life in the mahi we do over the last 21 months, working hard to understand what it looks like to weave it through our everyday mahi and how we can get better at it. We've been able to analyse how we tautoko and develop our people's capabilities and talents to become participants and leaders in Te Ara Kotahi.

Te Ara Kotahi provides Waka Kotahi with strategic direction to guide how we work with and respond to Māori as the Crown's Treaty partner, and what this means for how we do business.

Te Ara Kotahi is one of our foundational pou for the design and development of our learning strategy, as well as our guiding pathway for weaving Te Ao Māori concepts and perspectives throughout our mahi.

Our approach to including Te Ara Kotahi within Tā Tātou Rautaki Akoranga is to acknowledge, build and grow a greater understanding of Te Ao Māori – this includes Te Ao Māori concepts, mātauranga Māori, ngā mātāpono me ngā uara, and Māori perspectives. By doing this we acknowledge the depth and breadth of richness it provides our learning strategy, especially in developing and shaping our learning strategy story.

As such we want to weave together our korero about our learning ecosystem with Te Ao Māori concepts that naturally align.

### **What is a learning ecosystem?**

People do better when they have the ability to learn at work. And organisations also do better when they benefit from their people learning.

This is even more true in today's world when we are facing so many challenges. Consider our people, for example – what can they do to future-proof their careers so they won't be replaced by artificial intelligence or computers? Think of organisations – what can they do to avoid being squeezed out of the market by more efficient, productive, and innovative competitors?

Learning ecosystems are important because focusing on formal training at work isn't big enough. We have to consider, discover, and support the ways our people learn informally on the job. We have to provide them additional learning and performance support.

A learning ecosystem is a system of people, content, technology, culture, and strategy, existing both inside and outside of an organization. These all have an impact on the formal and informal learning that goes on in that organisation.

The word "ecosystem" is worth paying attention to here. It's not just there to make the term sound fancy or scientific. A learning ecosystem is the L&D equivalent of an ecosystem out in the wild. Just as a living ecosystem has many interacting species, environments, and the complex relationships among them, a learning ecosystem has

many people and pieces of content, in different roles and learning contexts, and complex relationships.

Just like a living ecosystem, a learning ecosystem can be healthy or sick, nurtured or threatened, self-sustaining or endangered. Achieving your development goals, then, requires us to be aware of our own ecosystem, including its parts and the internal and external forces that shape them.

The takeaway here is that, if we want learning to be successful, we need to pay attention to our entire learning ecosystem. When we start doing that, we'll discover that investments in learning technology and content are well worth it. Getting the right technology and content is a no-brainer.

A highly developed learning ecosystem, supported by various modern enablers, language, culture, and leadership which support its people to share, grow, adapt, and develop to facilitate business outcomes.

### **Ako**

In Te Ao Māori, the concept of ako means both to teach and to learn. It recognises the knowledge that teachers and learners both bring to learning interactions. It acknowledges that new knowledge and understandings can grow out of shared learning experiences. This powerful concept has been supported by educational research showing that when teachers facilitate reciprocal teaching and learning roles in their classrooms, students' achievement improves.

The principle of ako affirms the value of the pair and group learning approaches in which people interact with their peers, leaders, tasks, and resources. These are very effective approaches for teaching and learning.

In a reciprocal learning relationship one person is not expected to know everything. In particular, ako suggests that each person brings knowledge with them from which all are able to learn from.

Embracing the principle of ako enables people to build caring and inclusive learning communities where each person feels that their contribution is valued and that they can participate to their full potential. This is not about people simply getting along socially, it is about building productive relationships between leaders and teams and each other, where everyone is empowered to learn with and from each other.

Ako is grounded in the principle of reciprocity and recognises that the learner and wider whanau cannot be separated.

One way ako is represented is in the concept of tuakana-teina. Tuakana-teina is a teaching and learning approach drawn from Te Ao Māori. It refers to the relationship between an older person (tuakana) and a younger person (teina). The meaning is literally "older sibling-younger sibling". Traditionally, it is specific to teaching and learning in the context of Māori. But while these terms have their origin on the marae, we have come to use them to talk about relationships in adult education contexts in Aotearoa.

### **Māori perspective on ecosystems**

Māori have an intricate, holistic, and interconnected relationship with the natural world and its resources, with a rich knowledge base – mātauranga Māori – developed over thousands of years and dating back to life in Polynesia and trans-Pacific migrations. This ancestral traditional bond links Māori to ecosystems and governs how they see and understand ecosystems. There is no single Māori word or translation for ecosystem, but mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge), te reo Māori (Māori language) and whakapapa (ancestral lineage) are used together to unlock

this perspective and understand what an ecosystem is, and its components and functional units. Ecosystems can also be explained through traditional knowledge and the interwoven concepts of mana, kaitiakitanga, and possession of the spiritual qualities of tapu, mauri, and wairua.

The Māori world view acknowledges a natural order to the universe, a balance or equilibrium, and that when part of this system shifts, the entire system is put out of balance. The diversity of life is woven in this world view through the interrelationship of all living things as dependent on each other, and Māori seek to understand the total system and not just parts of it.

For Māori, there are clear links between healthy ecosystems and people's cultural and spiritual well-being. There is a realisation that most ecosystems require a diversity of life forms to exist and function properly, and to sustain the ecosystem. The strength of the interdependency between humans and ecosystems can be described as a reciprocal relationship comprising manaaki whenua (caring for the land) and manaaki tāngata (caring for people).

This is also evident in the concept of Te Whare Tapa Whā, which is one model for understanding Māori health and well-being – the four cornerstones (or sides) of Māori health. With its strong foundations to the whenua (land and environment) and four equal sides, the symbol of the wharenui illustrates the four dimensions of Māori well-being.

Should one of the four dimensions be missing or in some way damaged, a person, or a collective may become 'unbalanced' and subsequently unwell. In a traditional Māori approach, the inclusion of the wairua, the role of the whānau (family) and the balance of the hinengaro (mind) are as important as the physical manifestations of illness.

The great Māori scholars Sir Apirana Ngata and Te Rangi Hiroa both wrote of the tradition of harmonising with the environment; and Rangi Mete-Kingi wrote of how the ancestors established their philosophy of preservation and conservation as a foundation on which future generations could build.

Respecting and valuing the Māori world view and Māori concepts is an essential first step to understanding the Māori perspective of ecosystems.

## TĀ TĀTOU KŌRERO – OUR STORY

Our learning strategy helps tie together all the learning & development goals of our learning ecosystem. This starts with understanding our goals and aligning our learning and performance support with those goals and continuing in a cycle of never-ending continuous improvement.

It takes a really good story and image to help people connect to our strategy, so that they understand it, understand their place in the learning ecosystem and then reciprocate that to others.

We have taken a purposeful and meaningful approach to weaving te ao Māori concepts like ako and Māori perspectives of ecosystems in creating our learning story and image.

Our image tells the story of a place in Waka Kotahi where a beautiful, healthy, and lush forest grows. In the forest stands a huge, tall tree, surrounded by an abundance of other native plants at different stages in their growth. There is a diverse range of native birds, insects and animals that add to the balance of the forest.

Near the forest is a community of our people, living in and around our marae, where people learn from and teach each other, sharing their knowledge. They follow Maramataka (the Māori lunar calendar) and have different garden beds, where they learn about growing the right types of food at the right time of the year, learning from elders the importance of nurturing seedlings and more.

We have a body of water close by which is a source of all life, where we find sustenance, how we travelled to our home, and where you'll be able to see our waka. We are also guided by the stars, sun, and moon to ensure we have a balanced environment.

Each part of our image relates to or represents a very specific part of our strategy which will be described over the following pages.

This image and story are just the beginning, as it will grow and evolve over time, shifting with our growth in this space. That is why this story may be different in five or ten years' time. This image and story fit our current state at this particular time and place.

Essentially this image and story becomes a part of our history, our whakapapa, our backbone to who we are, what we do, how we do it and most importantly why. There are many more layers of mātauranga that can be added, explained, and identified as time goes on, which will add to the tapestry of our journey.

With all the interconnectedness and interdependencies comes a balance of many parts coming together to create the whole. This is our aspiration when it comes to the learning ecosystem we want to achieve with Waka Kotahi – one that is healthy, nurtured, and self-sustaining, where our people are empowered to drive and own their learning, wherever and however it happens in our world.

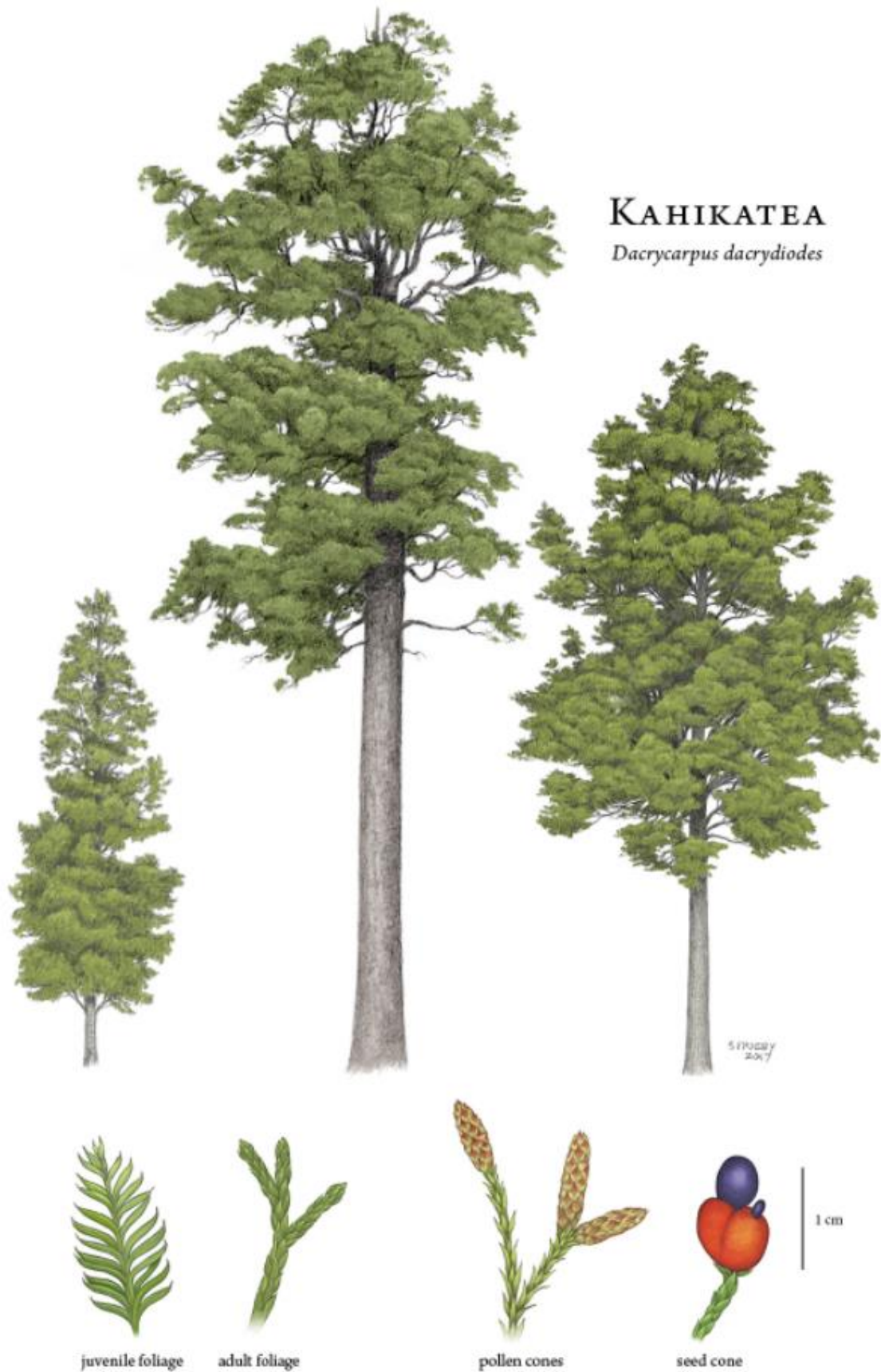




For Māori, the kahikatea had many uses. The fleshy berries or koroī were an important food resource and was served at hākari (feasts) in great amounts. Birds flock to the kahikatea when the berries are ripe, and they distribute the seeds far and wide. Koroī grow on the female trees. Soot obtained from burning

the heartwood supplied a pigment for tā moko (traditional tattooing). The wood was also favoured for making bird spears and waka. Medicinally, kahikatea wood infused in water was used as a tonic for stomach complaints and bladder problems, the bark can be chewed to numb the mouth or in lotion to apply to bruises, and the resin has a bittersweet taste that was used for chewing gum. The white odourless timber was used extensively to make butter boxes for much of the late 1800s and early 1900s. It was this practice which all but eliminated kahikatea-dominated swamp forest from the North Island and northern South Island. Kahikatea are now protected and harvesting is controlled by the Forests Act.

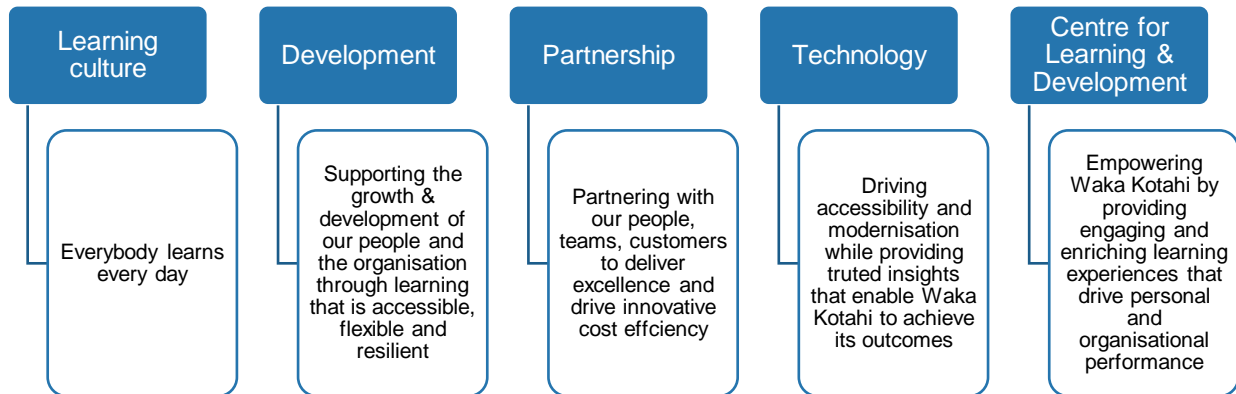
From a te ao Māori perspective we can think of the trunk as our Māori language and culture, the heart of who we are as a people. The roots that stretch out underneath represent our Whakapapa Māori, our genealogical ties connecting us to our world in all its complexities, to our past, to our present and our future. The green branches, stretching above represent our continual growth as Māori and the tangible human interconnection of whānau, hapū and iwi. Also, as an uru kahikatea (kahikatea grove) stands strong to the natural elements, so do we as a Māori people, standing strong against the trials and tribulations of the ever-changing world.





## Ō tātou pekapeka – Our branches

Growing in a natural stand, kahikatea shed their lower branches to produce long, straight trunks with buttress roots. Closer to the top is an array of top branches. In our kahikatea tree, there are five main branches (surrounded by smaller branches) that represent the five key areas of our learning strategy:



These branches offer shelter, guidance, and shade. They also provide reduced air pollution (cleansing and clarity), reduced heating and cooling demands, as well as improving physical and mental health. These branches also provide koroī (berries) which are an important food source to us, as well as our native birds that help with distributing the seeds far and wide. These birds could represent the people or channels used to spread our learning strategy to other parts of the organisation/teams/groups.

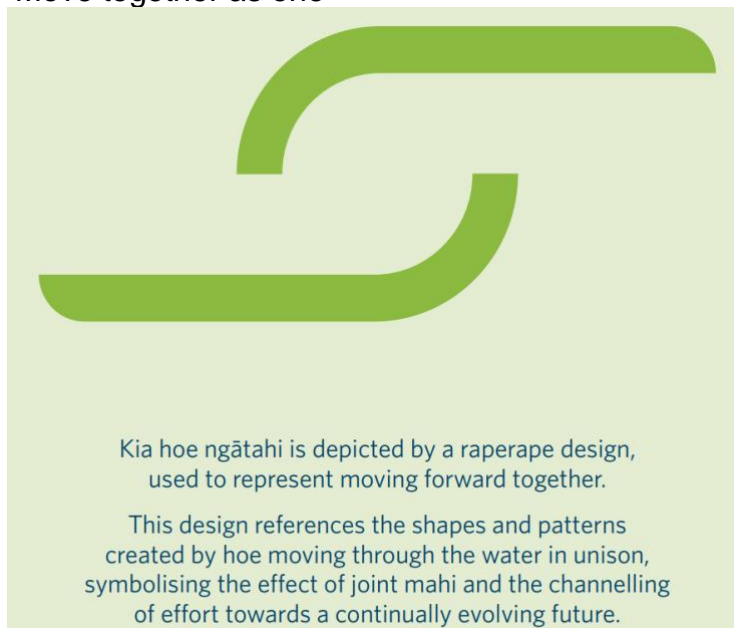
## Te kāpehu

### Our roles

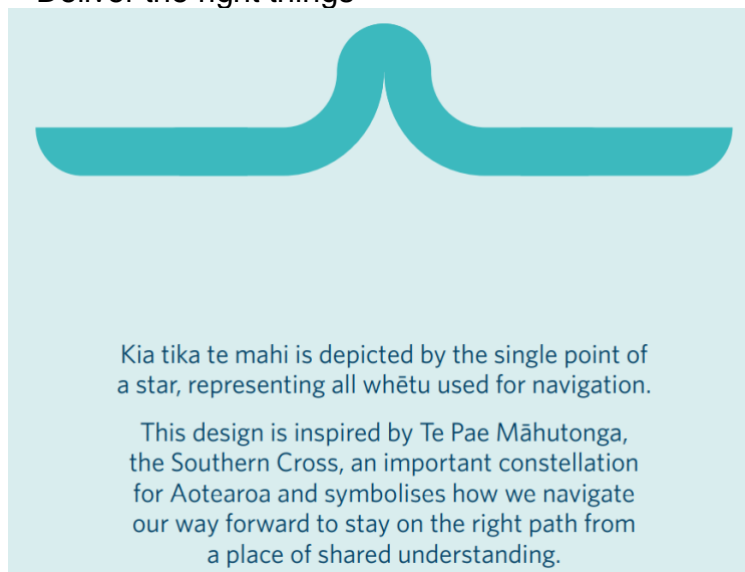
The Waka Kotahi learning strategy is our roadmap to becoming a high-performing learning organisation. We ask the question: how can Waka Kotahi move together as one, leave great legacies, deliver the right things, and enable a safe system without learning anything new?

Our learning strategy seeks to enhance, enable, and give direction to the process of creating, retaining, sharing, and transferring knowledge at Waka Kotahi for the purposes of achieving Te kāpehu and unleashing the potential of our people. This is represented by our graphic symbols which represent our roles:

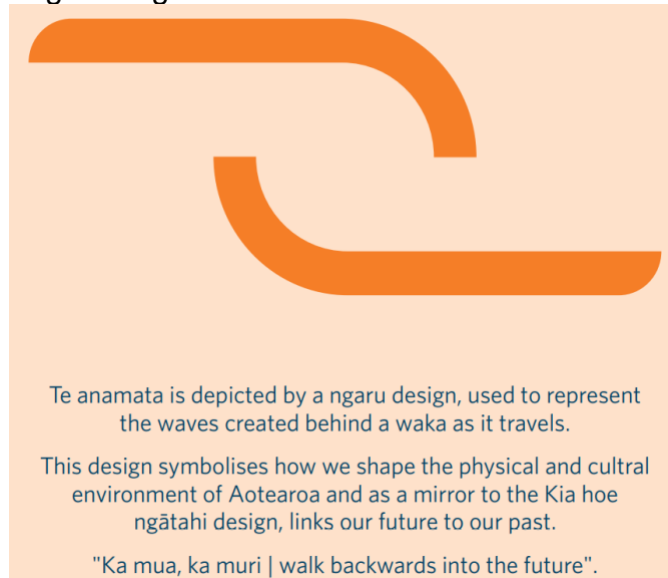
Kia hoe ngātai – Move together as one



Kia tika te mahi – Deliver the right things



## Te anamata – Leave great legacies



## Kia marutau – Enable a safe system



Our roles represent elements of the environment that guide the waka on our journey.

## Ngā Mātāpono – Our values and behaviours

Our values and behaviours shape our culture and guide the way we work together. They define what's important to us and help us deliver our best work, every day. Our values and behaviours influence how we work within Waka Kotahi and how we engage with iwi, partners, stakeholders, and communities.

The values and behaviours are a part of the foundation on which our learning strategy stands.



### Ngākau aroha – Have heart

Ngākau aroha is depicted by the taurapa. The taurapa is the stern post of the waka and represents whakapapa (genealogy) and connection with Ngā Atua (the gods) and our environment. This taurapa design tells us a story of Papatūānuku (Mother Earth), Ranginui (Sky Father) and Te Whaiao and Te Ao mārama (the world of light and understanding), representing who we are, where we have come from and our environment. The space between is the area that was created when Tāne Mahuta (along with his siblings) split Ranginui and Papatūānuku apart in order to create a world of light and space where they could breathe and grow.



### Kotahitanga – Better together

Kotahitanga is depicted by the aukaha. The aukaha are the lashings that bind the rauawa (bulwark) to the hull, connect the taurapa to the tauihu and provide strength to the waka. This aukaha design tells us of strands weaving together, working in unity, and strengthening meaningful relationships. The symbol not only represents the aukaha, but it also has a connection to the pikorua twist which symbolises the bond between people, the many paths of life, ebbs and flows and new growth.



### Kia maia – Be brave

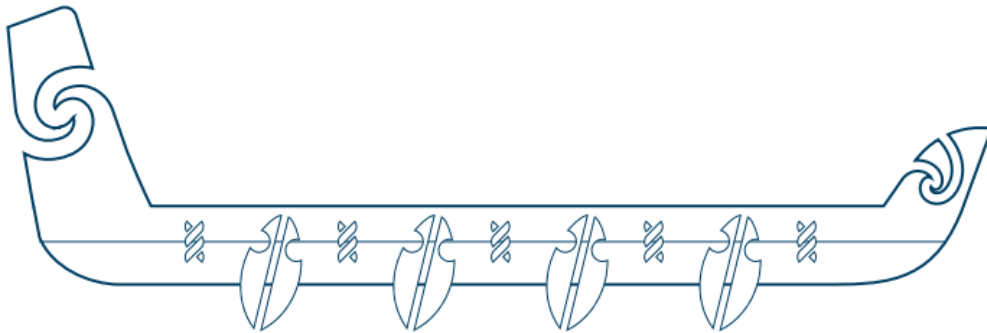
Kia māia is depicted by the tauihu. The tauihu is the prow of the waka, the edge that cuts through the water first and leads the way. This tauihu design symbolises journeys of discovery, new horizons and includes a pūhoro design, representing the bow wake, where the waka strikes through the water with swiftness, action, and agility.



### Mahia – Nail it

Mahia is depicted by the hoe. The hoe is the carved paddle that is used to propel the waka. This hoe design represents action, influence, success and includes a mangōpare, hammer head shark, acknowledging our determination, strength, and a fighting spirit. The mangōpare is in the negative space (space between).

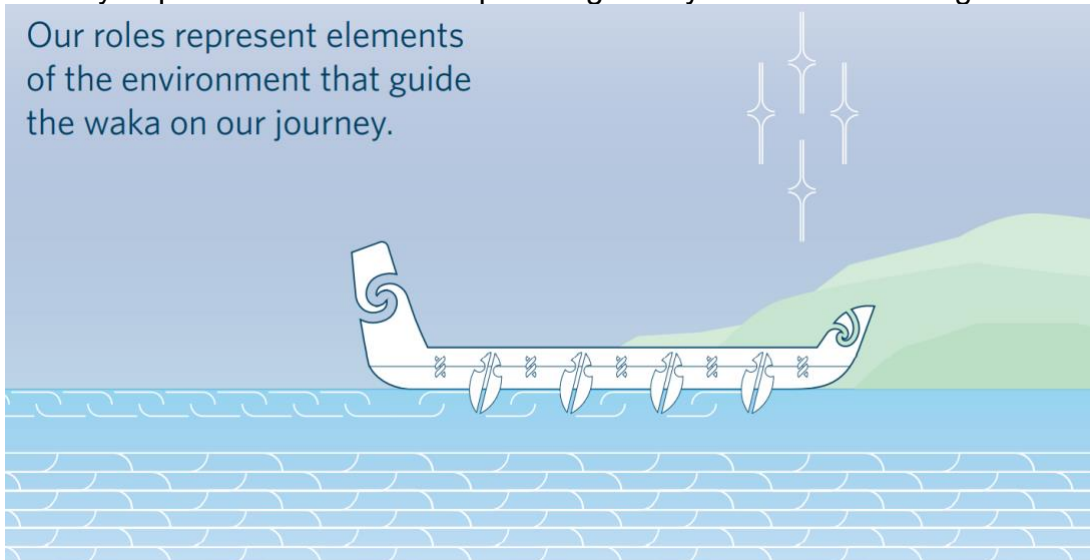
Collectively they are represented by our waka



Waka taua are built for action, they are generally used for shorter, more task oriented journeys and expeditions. We use it here to represent how we need to actively apply our values every day, to every relationship, on every piece of work.

When you put our roles and mātāpono together you create this image:

Our roles represent elements of the environment that guide the waka on our journey.



This represents Te kāpehu and you can see this in our learning strategy image.

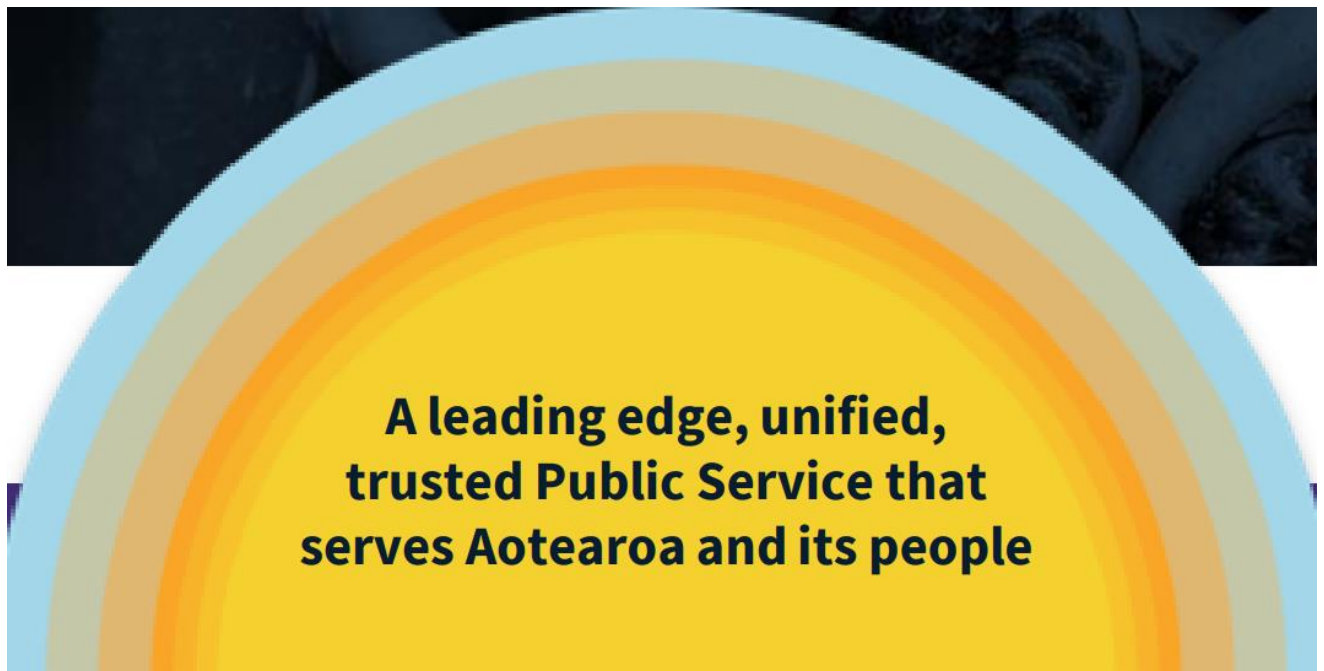


## Te Kawa Mataaho

As part of our wider whanau, we are connected to Te Kawa Mataaho and the public sector. This landscape has evolved with the introduction of the [Public Service Act 2020](#) and our mahi seeks to uplift the “*Highly skilled and capable*” and “*Prepared to meet future challenges*” key pillars of the act.

We are dedicated to adding public sector value, and while it is early days, we are already partnering and working collaboratively across the public sector. We are committed to working on similar learning needs together to reduce cost, time, resource, and effort as well as to support the Public Sector Act 2020.

To represent our connection to this whanau we have added the sunset as it represents their imagery from the act and their strategy.



## Ngā putanga rautaki – Strategic outcomes

The strategic outcomes listed in the learning strategy include:

- learning is a strength that is celebrated
- we share, learn, and grow our knowledge
- learning is inclusive and accessible to everyone
- our people drive their own learning within a supportive learning ecosystem
- learning is valued and prioritised
- we partner to increase the commerciality of learning
- our learning ecosystem contributes to a safe system for New Zealand
- we anticipate future learning needs to develop responsive and innovative strategic interventions
- we are empowered to realise our potential and the value of tuakana-teina.

These are not represented by one specific symbol or one part of our image but more so by the overall story and interaction of different components of our learning ecosystem.

On the following pages are parts of the story that can be used to describe our strategic outcomes as a collective, as an ecosystem.

### Strength

The kahikatea is Aotearoa's tallest native tree, but unlike other native giants such as the tōtara and the kauri which root deep into the ground to avoid being blown over by the strong winds of Tāwhirimātea (God of Winds) the kahikatea possesses a shallow root system. Therefore, to gain strength the kahikatea only ever grows in uru kahikatea (kahikatea groves), entwining its root system with other kahikatea to form a strong matted knot allowing it to grow to mighty heights. Its strength and stability are therefore gained from a collective unity of purpose. This root system can represent how learning is our strength, how learning is inclusive, our sense of kotahitanga and supporting each other.

### Marae

The marae is a focal point for Māori, and it is central to the concept of Māoritanga and the Māori cultural identity. Māori oratory, language, value, and social etiquette are given their fullest expression on the marae. The marae is socially integrative in the sense that it fosters identity, self-respect, pride, and social control. The marae is also integrative in that all people are welcome as guests. It is one institution where Pākehā can meet Māori on Māori terms and come to a better understanding of what it means to have a bicultural society. For that reason, the marae in our learning strategy image represents our whānau at Waka Kotahi, a home where you are accepted for who you are, being uplifted and given what you need to flourish and be nourished. It is also a place where you learn, teach, and contribute to the wider community, a place to be innovative, ask pātai and discover solutions and interventions.

It is a complex generally made up of several buildings – a wharenuī (carved meeting house) with an open space in front of it (marae ātea), a whare kai (dining hall) and cooking area and toilets/showers.

The most important of the buildings within the marae is the wharenuī. It resembles the human body in structure, and usually represents a particular ancestor of the tribe.

The tekoteko (carved figure) on the roof top in front of the house represents the head, and the maihi (front barge boards) are the arms held out in welcome to

visitors. The amo are short boards at the front of the wharehau representing legs, while the tāhuhu (ridge pole), a large beam running down the length of the roof, represents the spine. The heke (rafters), reaching from the tahuhu to the poupou (carved figures) around the walls, represent the ribs.

Many wharehau contain intricate carvings and panels that refer to the whakapapa (genealogy) of the tribe, and to Māori stories and legends. It is also common to see photos of loved ones who have passed away placed inside.

The people who belong to a marae usually do not live there full time but will come and stay during important occasions. Marae life is very communal – everyone sleeps in the same room (usually the main meeting house) on mattresses lined against the walls. They eat together in the dining room, help with chores, and spend time together learning, discussing, and debating tribal matters.

### Te Whare Tapa Whā



Te whare tapa whā is a model of the four dimensions of wellbeing developed by Sir Mason Durie in 1984 to provide a Māori perspective on health. The four dimensions are:

- taha tinana (physical wellbeing)
- taha hinengaro (mental wellbeing)
- taha wairua (spiritual wellbeing)
- taha whānau (family wellbeing).

With four walls, the wharehau (meeting house) is a symbol of these four dimensions. The wharehau's connection with the whenua (land) forms the foundation for the other four dimensions.

#### Taha tinana (physical health)

The capacity for physical growth and development. Good physical health is required for optimal development. Our physical 'being' supports our essence and shelters us

from the external environment. For Māori the physical dimension is just one aspect of health and wellbeing and cannot be separated from the aspect of mind, spirit, and family.

#### Taha wairua (spiritual health)

The capacity for faith and wider communication. Health is related to unseen and unspoken energies. The spiritual essence of a person is their life force. This determines us as individuals and as a collective, who and what we are, where we have come from and where we are going. A traditional Māori analysis of physical manifestations of illness will focus on the wairua or spirit, to determine whether damage here could be a contributing factor.

#### Taha whānau (family health)

The capacity to belong, to care and to share where individuals are part of wider social systems. Whānau provides us with the strength to be who we are. This is the link to our ancestors, our ties with the past, the present and the future.

Understanding the importance of whānau and how whānau (family) can contribute to illness and assist in curing illness is fundamental to understanding Māori health issues.

#### Taha hinengaro (mental health)

The capacity to communicate, to think and to feel mind and body are inseparable. Thoughts, feelings, and emotions are integral components of the body and soul. This is about how we see ourselves in this universe, our interaction with that which is uniquely Māori and the perception that others have of us.

#### Whenua

As the foundation for the other four dimensions, the health of the land and the natural environment is strongly connected to your health and wellbeing. You can think about whenua as your place of belonging. For Māori, the whenua is a key part of identity. Connection to the land and to nature has been shown to improve mental and physical wellbeing.

When was the last time you took a moment to enjoy nature? Not just the bush, mountains, or beach but the small, everyday wonders all around us – the rustling of the wind through the trees, the spring flowers or the sound of birds settling for the night.

#### **Native plants and animals**

The diverse range of native plants included represent the uniqueness of Aotearoa as they have evolved in isolation for millions of years – 80% of our trees, ferns and flowering plants are endemic (found only in Aotearoa). The same can be said for the diverse range of native animals included – Aotearoa has many unique native fish, insects, birds, lizards, and frogs. Our only native mammals are bats and marine animals. This diversity can represent the diversity of our people, the diversity in learning/teaching methods and the diversity of our learning ecosystem as a whole. Our learning ecosystem represents the natural world which forms a cosmic family, in the traditional Māori view – Te Ao Mārama. The weather, birds, fish and trees, sun and moon are related to each other, and to the people of the land. In nature everything is linked together, and this is explained in our whakapapa, our stories, and genealogies.

## **Māra**

The representation of our people working in the māra, we demonstrate people working together, sharing, learning, and growing their knowledge through tuakana-teina. It demonstrates that learning is accessible to everyone and that they drive it themselves and for each other. All types of people, using different tools, some talking, some working in the māra, some learning about maramataka, learning how to do it better and sharing it onto others. The māra can also represent the importance of growing our own food for sustenance and our survival – it is valued and prioritised and creates a safe and sustainable home for everyone.

## **Tuakana-teina**

You might hear people use tuakana-teina to talk about teaching and learning in four different ways:

- Peer-to-peer – teina teaches teina, tuakana teaches tuakana.
- Younger to older – the teina has some skills in an area that the tuakana does not and is able to teach the tuakana.
- Older to younger – the tuakana has the knowledge and content to pass on to the teina.
- Able to less able – the learner may not be as able in an area, and someone more skilled can teach what is required.

Tuakana-teina is a mentoring approach where typically the mentors (tuakana) share their experiences, and their knowledge as well as provide information. But it's also more than just mentoring approach. The tuakana is a support person and adviser for the teina and the teina gives the tuakana a chance to learn new things and meet new people.

How does this approach contribute to a learner-centred teaching environment?

Tuakana-teina relationships are essentially learner-centred in nature. Even when you are the tuakana, the relationship is more of a conversation or two-way street. It's flatter and less of a monologue or one-way street.

This empowers people to take responsibility for the learning, and often some of the teaching too.



## Ngā honohono – Other linkages

### Maramataka

To help us define our timings for the rollout and growth of the learning strategy we leaned on the Maramataka Māori and the seasons to better reflect our long-term investment and commitment.

The Maramataka, which literally means ‘the moon turning,’ is the Māori lunar calendar, and is the traditional Māori way by which time was marked. Instead of following the movement of the sun throughout the year, iwi noted the movements of the moon over a typical month and year. Each phase of the moon was named, and each typical year was marked by the passage of 12 or 13 lunar months (depending on the location throughout the country). Most iwi list 12 months in the lunar year. Each month also had its own name, which sometimes varied between tribes.

Tūtakangahau, a Ngāi Tūhoe chief from Maungapōhatu, provided the ethnographer Elsdon Best with these names and descriptions:

Pipiri (May–June)

*Ka pipiri ngā mea katoa i te whenua i te mātao, me te tangata.*

All things on earth are contracted because of the cold; likewise, man.

Hongonui (June–July)

*Kua tino mātao te tangata, me te tahutahu ahi, ka pāinaina.*

Man is now extremely cold, and so kindles fires before which he basks.

Here-turi-kōkā (July–August)

*Kua kitea te kainga a te ahi i ngā turi o te tangata.*

The scorching effect of fire on the knees of man is seen.

Mahuru (August–September)

*Kua pūmahana te whenua, me ngā otaota, me ngā rākau.*

The earth has now acquired warmth, as also have herbage and trees.

Whiringa-ā-nuku (September–October)

*Kua tino māhana te whenua.*

The earth has now become quite warm.

Whiringa-ā-rangi (October–November)

*Kua raumati, kua kaha te rā.*

It has now become summer, and the sun has acquired strength.

Hakihea (November–December)

*Kua noho ngā manu kai roto i te kōhanga.*

Birds are now sitting in their nests.

Kohi-tātea (December–January)

*Kua makuru te kai: ka kai te tangata i ngā kai hou o te tau.*

Fruits are now ripe, and man eats the new food of the season.

Hui-tanguru (January–February)

*Kua tau te waewae o Ruhi kai whenua.*

The foot of Ruhi (a summer star) now rests upon the earth.

Poutū-te-rangi (February–March)

*Kua hauhake te kai.*

The crops are now harvested.

Paenga-whāwhā (March–April)

*Kua putu ngā tupu o ngā kai i ngā paenga o ngā māra.*

All straw is now stacked at the borders of the plantations.

Haratua (April–May)

*Kua uru ngā kai ki te rua, kua mutu ngā mahi a te tangata.*

Crops are now stored in pits. The tasks of man are finished.

### What was the Maramataka used for?

Historically, the Maramataka was consulted for almost any activity taking place in an iwi community. Some days (nights) of the Maramataka were better to do certain activities than other days. For example, planting and harvesting food supplies was conducted almost always through consulting the Maramataka. Similarly, fishing or convening an important hui or conducting rituals, such as baptisms, the Maramataka was consulted. The Maramataka also marked significant annual events such as celebrations in the time of Matariki and other seasonal activities.

### Where did the Maramataka come from?

The Maramataka was brought to Aotearoa by the first Pacific Islanders from Hawaiki, it was then adapted by Māori to accommodate the southern hemisphere's sky, seasons, and climate.

The original Maramataka was an oral tradition which was later documented by early ethnographers who recorded some of this knowledge while it was still in use and is still in use today among various iwi.

### Pōhutukawa

To show our seasons we chose the beautiful pōhutukawa tree:

Pōhutukawa trees are coastal evergreens in the myrtle family with many names. You might hear them called by their scientific name, *Metrosideros excelsa*.

These beautiful multi-trunked spreading trees grow up to 25 metres high and are one of 12 *Metrosideros* species endemic to New Zealand. They have matted, fibrous aerial roots, leathery leaves with dense, white hairs, and red flowers. Although, some also grow white, orange, and yellow flowers. Pōhutukawa trees flower from November to January, peaking in early Summer.

For Aotearoa the pōhutukawa tree is an icon and is sometimes referred to as our version of the Christmas tree. However, for Māori it has a deep spiritual meaning, connecting the beginning and ending of human life.

For Māori it has continually served as a source of cultural inspiration in legends and tradition. One story tells of a young warrior named Tāwhaki who attempted a perilous journey to locate the heavens and request their help in avenging the death of his father. His cause was lost, and he fell to earth, his spilt blood now seen among the red blossoms of the Pōhutukawa.



**Kōanga** | Spring  
(0-12 months)



**Raumati** | Summer  
(12-18 months)



**Ngahuru** | Autumn  
(18 months – 3 years)



**Takurua** | Winter  
(3 + years)

Te Rerenga Wairua – One pōhutukawa tree in particular holds great significance for Māori, where Maunga Piko, Whangakea, Maunga Kohu-a-naki and Te Rēinga stand as sentinels along the eastern and western pathways to Te Rerenga Wairua (the spirit's leap), at Cape Rēinga. The tree clings onto a rocky outcrop extending out into the ocean and is around 800 years old. It is from here that the spirits of the dead begin their journey to their traditional homeland of Hawaiki. From this point the spirits leap off the headland and climb down the roots of the 800-year-old tree, descending into the underworld on their return journey.

The nectar from the flowers was collected by Māori and used in the treatment of sore throats. The honey made from this nectar is pale and sweet and honey produced from the pollen is white with a distinctive flavour. The inner bark was used in the treatment of diarrhea. Māori used the wood in a variety of ways – ngā hoe (paddles), ketu (gardening tool), kō (digging stick), wakahuia (containers for treasures), weapons and more.

By utilising the pōhutukawa tree in our learning strategy, is to acknowledge another connection to one of our natives that has been here many years, its longevity a nod to our timeline of commitment and the cycle of life.

### Kumara

In our learning strategy we have outlined what it means to people as individuals, as teams and as people leaders. We have utilised this image to represent those components:



Māori placed great value on the kumara, a plant they brought with them from their travels. It would not grow in winter in Aotearoa, so it had to be stored and planted again when the weather became warmer. Some areas in Aotearoa were too cold to grow it at all.

Some of the other plants that Māori brought did not grow well in Aotearoa so kumara became very important. Māori developed large māra kumara and they grew the plants in puke (mounds) of soil, adding sand and gravel to make it drain better. Fences protected the gardens from wind and pūkeko birds. The plants were sometimes attacked by caterpillars of the kumara moth, and Māori kept tame seagulls to eat the caterpillars.

Kumara were harvested around March. They were stored in underground pits over winter, so some could be eaten, and the rest planted out in the next spring. Kumara

were cooked in hangī, roasted, baked, boiled, grated, or steamed. Small kūmara were sometimes dried in the sun to make a delicacy called kao.

Rongomātāne (Rongo) was the god of kūmara and other cultivated plants. When the kūmara was planted, karakia (prayers) were said. Sometimes an offering was made – often a bird. The tohunga (priest) placed a tapu (religious restriction) on the crop until it was ready to be harvested. Taumata atua (stone images) or atua kiato (carved wooden pegs) were believed to protect the mauri (life force) of the growing kūmara.

If we were to dig deeper into kūmara we would find another common whakataukī that adds to the tapestry of our learning strategy:

**Kāore te kūmara e kōrero ana mo tōna ake reka**

*The kūmara does not brag about its own sweetness*

This whakataukī is a helpful reminder to be humble and practise humility, we should not be seen as boastful or bragging. It also represents manaakitanga as practising humility is about putting others before yourself and to be humble is to be strong.

There are many more interpretations of this whakataukī and it can open the door to more meaningful kōrero.

We chose kūmara to represent our learning to reflect its importance to each of us as well as tying us to our whakataukī, being seeds that grow with knowledge. We also wanted to choose a plant that is native to Māori and Aotearoa that everyday Kiwi's may recognise, creating an opportunity to teach people about the kūmara and its history.

## TĀ TĀTOU MANAWANUI – OUR COMMITMENT

Te Ara Kotahi is one of our foundational pou for the design and development of our learning strategy, as well as our guiding pathway for weaving Te Ao Māori concepts and perspectives throughout our mahi.

We continue our commitment with Te Ara Kotahi, working hard to understand what it looks like to weave it through and how we can lift our game in this space.

Our approach to including Te Ara Kotahi within Tā Tātou Rautaki Akoranga is to acknowledge, build and grow a greater understanding of te ao Māori - this includes te ao Māori concepts, mātauranga Māori, ngā mātāpono me ngā uara, and Māori perspectives. By doing this we acknowledge the depth and breadth of richness it provides our learning strategy, especially in developing and shaping our learning strategy story.

Our image and story are a part of our journey, our history, our whakapapa, our backbone to who we are, what we do, how we do it and most importantly why. There are many more layers of mātauranga that can be added, explained, and identified as time goes on, which will add to the tapestry of our journey.

With all the interconnectedness and interdependencies comes a balance of many parts coming together to create the whole. This is our aspiration when it comes to the learning ecosystem, we want to achieve with Waka Kotahi – one that is healthy, nurtured, and self-sustaining, where our people are empowered to drive and own their learning, wherever and however it happens in our world.