

Puāwai Pūrau Academy

Report on Activity 2024



The Puāwai Pūrau STEM Academy completed its third year in 2024, and with some changes to the funding structure, we are still happy to report that all of our milestones and goals were achieved.

You can read about the academy launch in the Wairarapa Times-Age [here](#).

In 2025, we are looking to change it up some more, setting our sights on our biggest year yet with a one-day Wairarapa Equity in Education Symposium for kaiako, educators, leaders, ākonga and interested whānau.

The invitation to attend this Symposium is to reimagine what equity in education might look like. We are excited to present Dr Hana O'Regan as our keynote address. In

addition, we are looking at the potential of taking our ākonga global, more details to come.

REAP Wairarapa continues to be a crucial partner in the delivery of this mahi and we are ever fortunate and grateful to them and to Whaea Trudy Sears for the relationship that we have and the tautoko that they provide for this kaupapa.

In 2024, we had a bittersweet farewell to all of our Year 13s, who were our first targeted age group as year 11s in 2022. They have grown with the academy and inspired a large part of our academy outcomes. Leading the way in the development of this kaupapa, this cohort also includes my firstborn son; Jayden Collings (not pictured as he was at mahi) who was the inspiration for this kaupapa.

My own experience in education, particularly in Math and Science meant that these were not subjects that I personally pursued at school so felt out of my depth to then promote and

support our children through this learning and therefore the Academy was borne. We were very sad to say goodbye to our year 13s, our rangatira of this kaupapa. However, we know they will do some amazing things in the future and we look forward to



them coming back to share with us what they will accomplish going forward.

We had a total of 37 ākonga register in 2024, this is up from 32 in 2023 and 14 in our first year in 2022. We also had one of our old students, Rose Haira-Harmon, participate in a couple of sessions, encouraging her little sister to come along too. Rose is now studying at Massey University in Design Engineering. We were lucky enough to visit with her when we went on our haerenga (trip) to Wellington in the Term 3 school holidays. More details on the haerenga below.

New supporters and growing interest

A big change for the academy this year was reconfirming funding support and due to changes in the Health Sector we were not able to reconfirm funding from Kia Ora Hauora. We continue to maintain a relationship with them which has opened other opportunities for our students in the health space, including visiting the local Wairarapa Hospital in one of our weekly sessions (more details below). We consider ourselves very fortunate to have had that original start up support from them, without that financial nod for this Kaupapa it may not have come to fruition.



We had two major funders this year, from the Masterton Trust Lands Trust and Internet NZ. REAP Wairarapa also continues to play a major role in the implementation of our academy and provide support through Whaea Trudy Sears who helped the academy obtain our majority funding allocation from Masterton Trust Lands Trust. Our next major funder was Internet NZ who was recommended by Wairarapa local Amber Craig. It cannot be overstated how fortunate we are to have this support. It is clear that these are organisations who value and are invested in ākonga Māori success.

Other local businesses who have supported the academy this year includes Ten O'clock Cookie who sponsored kai for our first two sessions while we reconfirmed funding. We were also fortunate to be a recipient of the Ruamahanga Restoration Trust fund, providing funding for an overnight stay in Te Whare Taiao o Manukura marae at Pūkaha National Wildlife Centre. This provided opportunity for our ākonga to connect with the taiao (environment) in a uniquely cultural context, while also learning about local initiatives to restore our native flora, fauna and animal species.

For the first time this year, we visited the Wellington Museum and Te Papa Tongarewa, exposing our ākonga to new learnings within their wider region. Another new opportunity this year was an invitation by local te ao Māori and iwi representative Makuini Kerehi, also employed by REAP Wairarapa, to carry out some conservation based service to our community

by planting pīngao in their whānau whenua in Rangiwahakaoma - Castlepoint.

Puāwai Pūrau STEM Academy

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS 2024

- Thursday 12 SEPT: VISIT to Wairarapa Hospital
- Saturday 28 SEPT: Planting at Rangiwahakaoma Whānau help encouraged
- Thurs/Fri 3-4 Oct: Holiday Haerenga Visit Universities in Wellington
- Thursday 17 OCT: Back to Academy Term 4
- Fri/Sat 25-26 Oct: Overnight noho Marae at Pūkaha - Ruamahanga Trust
- Thursday 31 OCT: Community Open Night Prizegiving/Awards

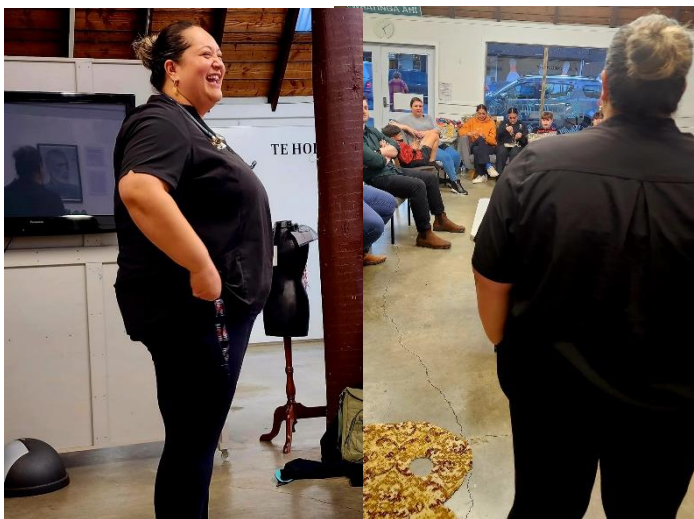
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Getting underway

Our first academy night kicked off on 25th July, with a presentation from our founder and director Waireka Collings. She talked about the inequities that have led to the educational outcomes that we see today. The discussion was structured to empower ākonga and demonstrate how their attendance at academy is contributing to changing those outcomes.



We were then fortunate to also hear from local nurse; Cherry Matthews, who talked about her career in nursing, how she got into it, a bit about her upbringing in a single parent household and all the opportunities she's had over the 10 years working in that field. Finally, we were treated to a presentation from Nanny Paremo Matthews, local kuia and pioneer for te reo Māori in Wairarapa. She shared her experience contributing to the revitalisation of te reo Māori in the Wairarapa.

We were so happy to welcome back our teaching team and kaiako; Mike Brown, Kathryn Houlston, Fleur Hardman and also welcome our new kaiako Bhavik Patel. Wendy Jacobsen continued to support from afar and was able to attend some of our final sessions in Term 4 as she took up a contract with Otago University in Term 3.

In 2025, we are hoping that hosting our Equity in Education PLD opportunity will help to promote the academy to more teachers and encourage more ākonga Māori to attend which in turn will help us to bring more ākonga Māori into the kaupapa.



Our guests

Amber Craig – Te Whare Hangahanga

We know that there are plenty of findings about ākonga only being what they can see. Exposure for our ākonga to Māori within our community who are bucking trends is a significant element for helping our ākonga to imagine what they can achieve if they set their minds to it.



Amber was a first time visitor to the academy and she was able to showcase her innovative programme for sustainable housing known as [Te Whare Hangahanga](#).

Amber is a passionate local leader working on bringing greater technology equity to our Wairarapa Tamariki in kura. Her and her husband are on a mission to create healthy and affordable homes for our whānau and community by designing 3D printed materials for building homes on papakāinga. This was a great demonstration to our ākonga of what can be achieved with an idea and Māori ingenuity.

Rachael MacKenzie – REAP Wairarapa



Our close working relationship with REAP Wairarapa has continued to provide access to amazing people resources like Rachael MacKenzie one of this years guests, she worked with our ākonga to understand their optimum learning styles. In this session we learnt that most of our ākonga are kinaesthetic learners preferring to learn in a multitude of ways including; movement, testing, trial and error usually best in a non-traditional learning environment. This information will help ākonga to understand themselves and



hopefully advocate for their learning style in a classroom situation.



Janeen Cross and Danni Sargeant – Wairarapa DHB

We continue to have a great working relationship with Wairarapa DHB and this year we welcomed Whaea Janeen Cross, Kaiwhakarite Waiora and Whaea Danni Sargeant, Kaiwhakahaere Kaupapa to the academy for the first time. They came along to invite our ākonga to visit the Wairarapa DHB to learn about the operating rooms and to talk to one of their surgeons. They also talked about the pathways in health and what it meant to have more Māori working in the industry. This year we have 3 aspiring doctors and 1 aspiring midwife so this opportunity was great to help our taiohi to see what they can be. More details on our visit to the Wairarapa Hospital is included below.

Kara Kenny – Marine Biologist



Kara Kenny is a return presenter to our academy. She is a local Marine Biologist who works for Rangitāne iwi and Mountain to Sea Wellington. Kara was invited to the academy to share pūrakau about pīngao and Toitoi to prepare for our haerenga to plant pīngao at

Rangiwhakaoma - Castlepoint. It is always good to have local Māori working in these STEM fields to show our ākongā what is possible. Following Kara’s presentation the ākongā were then asked to retell the story of pīngao and toitoi. The winners received movie tickets for their efforts.



Karin Stillberg – Ruamahanga Restoration Trust



One of the areas that we wanted to focus on this year, was increasing opportunity for learning more about being Māori. The majority of our ākongā are in mainstream education and we want to normalise the celebration of whakapapa Māori. Initially, we had wanted to start the academy year off at Pūkaha but due to funding being unconfirmed at that time we moved it to later in the year. After discussions with Pūkaha about our plans, they recommended us as a potential scholarship recipient for the [Ruamahanga Restoration Trust](#) and we were

successful recipients.

Karin Stillberg (pictured above) is the Environmental Education Lead. She came along to academy to present the scholarship to us and to talk about the amazing mahi that the trust does for Wairarapa schools and see what the academy does for our ākongā. Motu-Waireka Rawiri accepted that scholarship on behalf of the academy.



Tracey Veneberg-Kent – Māori midwife



While Tracey is the mother of one of our ākonga, she is also a Māori midwife who works locally in Wairarapa. When talking to the ākonga about what they wanted to do beyond school, one

of them said she wanted to be a midwife. It was pretty exciting to put Rory Carswell (pictured with Tracey on the left) and Tracey together to talk about what amazing things are available to ākonga Māori in the field of midwifery.

Ngā Haerenga – Our Trips

Trips are always a highlight in the academy calendar and we were able to do three trips this year.

Planting Pīngao at Rangiwahakaoma - Castlepoint



The first of those trips was our trip to Rangiwahakaoma – Castlepoint. This trip was by invitation to the academy which came from Makuini Kerehi, Kahungunu ki Wairarapa and REAP. For this trip we were tasked with planting 50 pīngao. Due to schooling commitments and other kaupapa, we decided to invite ākonga to attend on

a Saturday as a service to their community. Transport and lunch was provided and most likely one of the draw cards to attend, but everyone likes a little incentive from time to time. Needless to say the mahi was completed.

Whaea Jo Walker (pictured on the right), also from REAP Wairarapa is a pīngao expert, conservationist and weaver and accompanied us on the trip, giving tips and tricks on how to best plant the pīngao and invited our ākonga to come back year after year to see how their pīngao are growing.

Here is a little [video](#) of that trip.



Our holiday Wānanga to Pōneke

Rā Tuatahi - Day One



Each year Makoura College supports our academy venture by providing a second van for our travel so it is a great place to begin our overnight adventure. Once we left our whānau at Mākoura College, we went straight to the Wellington Museum. In past years a lot of our haerenga focus has been on health related industries but this year we wanted to incorporate more technology and engineering based experiences for our ākonga.



The Wellington Museum has exhibitions that showcase the founding of Wellington city and uses different technology to tell those stories including theatrical illusion. [Ngā Hau](#) time machine and a holographic storytelling show were the highlights of this visit. A lot of our ākonga didn't know that this museum existed so it was great to expose them to something new.



Following the Wellington Museum our next stop was Te Papa, there we were greeted by Mero Rokx and Jessie Robieson the amazing learning team. We were treated to a tour of the Taiao exhibition and learnt more about Māui and the threats that are impacting te taiao -

the natural world. Ākonga th e participated in an activity to solve some of those environmental issues using ipads and design

technology. The scenario was to build a safety vessel or building to combat the threat of flooding, a common environmental issue for our region. Two of our ākonga Thomas Hutton-Kawana and Ava Kent passionately shared their enthusiasm and inspiration for their projects



and were awarded movie tickets as a prize for their efforts.

Following Te Papa we checked into our accommodation at the Top 10 Holiday Park, and were later treated to dinner at a 2 for 1 burgers restaurant. Our evening activity was Laser Force where our ākonga were separated into teams and were invited to work together to defeat all of the other teams. Team Dawgzzz took out the top prize winning all 3 rounds. Ice cream for dessert then back to our whare to relax and get ready for moe.

Rā Tuarua - Day Two

Our second day included visiting the location of study of one of our own Rose Haira-Harmon who is studying Design Engineering at Massey University. Our ākonga were treated and gifted 3D patu that they had to tidy up and prepare and were lucky enough to take these home with them.



While there were a few heavy eyelids after spending the night with friends, all were engaged in making 3D printed taonga today...a patu and a mau kaki. It was also great to see other Wairarapa whānau including Rongomaiaia Te Whaiti who works at Massey University and Master of Design student Nan Moeung née Walden an ex Wairarapa College student.

Our two day Wānanga is definitely the culminating event of our academy calendar and it is always good fun and an honour to take our Wairarapa ākonga out of the area to see what is possible for them in the wider ao tūroa – world.

Here are some more photos of our day at Massey.





Haerenga Ki Pūkaha – Final Celebration

To end our academy year we had an overnight noho marae at the Pūkaha Wildlife Centers own Marae; Te Wānanga Taiao o Manukura. This noho was funded through the Ruamahanga Restoration Trust Scholarship we received. As part of this noho we also had our prizegiving and final celebration evening. Most of our ākonga attend mainstream schools so we believe that it is very important to continually find ways to connect them to their whakapapa Māori, this was one of those targetted opportunities for this.



As well as staying the night at the marae, we were able to welcome whānau and our teaching team in for kai and a few fun activities. We kicked off with a whakatau and kai and the ākonga were given some time to plan their evening dinner challenge. They were each tasked with bringing together a meal of 3 courses to serve up to whānau and teacher judges in the evening. They were to plan and execute the menu all on their own. This was a great



exercise in collaboration, planning as well as financial management. Following their planning session we were fortunate to have Matua Suni Brown from Rangitāne Iwi come and share the history of the whenua that Pūkaha is situated and the history of Rangitāne which many of our ākonga whakapapa to.

Following that kaupapa, it was off to the supermarket with selected leaders from each group to get all of the ingredients for their evening kai. Then it was all go back in the kitchen as the teams set out to win the prize of the night.



From Gourmet nachos, to crumbed chicken pasta to pani popo, ice cream sundaes and a chocolate cream dessert, it was not only clear that this activity supported the whanaungatanga in the group while also showing gratitude to our teachers and whānau, the task was completed and all had a great time in the kitchen, eating the kai and being together.

Following kai, each student received a participation certificate to acknowledge their commitment to the Kaupapa. Present by both myself and Whaea Trudy, it was great to acknowledge our ākonga. We also drew the prizes for attendance, each week when students attend academy their attendance is placed into an end of the term prize draw, one week of attendance equates one entry. More photos on the next page.

The final activity of the evening, was a little hīkoi through the native bush to go with our Year 13 graduates down to the awa to have their pounamu bathed in the water and blessed by Matua Pene Matthews.

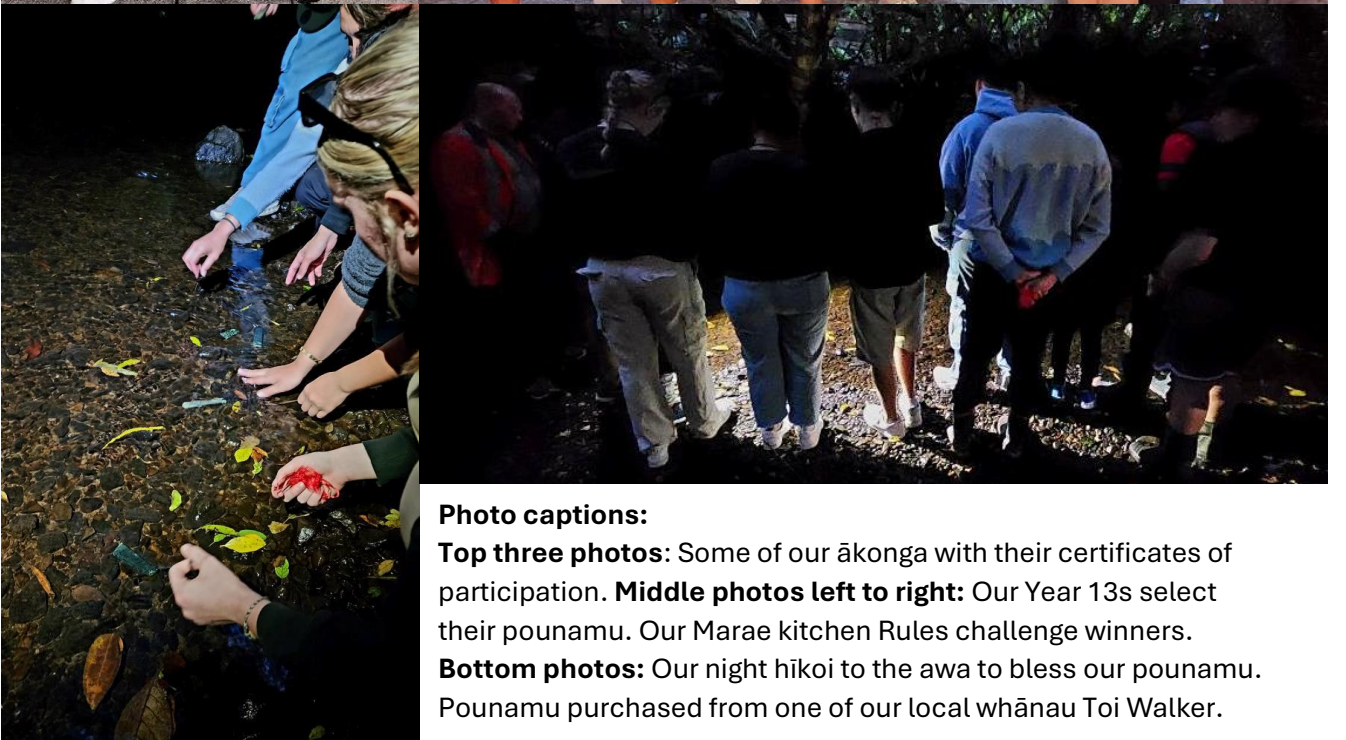


Photo captions:
Top three photos: Some of our ākonga with their certificates of participation. **Middle photos left to right:** Our Year 13s select their pounamu. Our Marae kitchen Rules challenge winners. **Bottom photos:** Our night hiko to the awa to bless our pounamu. Pounamu purchased from one of our local whānau Toi Walker.

You can't tell from the photos but each of the pounamu given to our year 13s had one smooth side and one rough side, this will serve as a metaphor for our ākongā that their journey has only just begun and that there is still plenty of work to do in their lives to smooth out all of the edges, representing lifelong pursuit of learning and education.

A big mihi to Tracy Kawana and the Education team at Pūkaha for their Manaaki of us and out ākongā.

So that is a wrap for another year, we continue to grow incrementally in our contribution to our community and it continues to be an honour and a highlight in the calendar year. Ākongā have expressed to us that they are keen to obtain additional assistance with internal assessments earlier in the year so we are planning on how and what that might look like in 2025.

Once again, we would like to thank all of our sponsors the **Masterton Trust Lands Trust** who has sponsored all our learning and in class time and **Internet NZ** for sponsoring our holiday Wānanga and haerenga adventures, **Rumahanga Restoration Trust** for our final haerenga to Pūkaha, **Makoura College** for the van loan for our haerenga and **REAP Wairarapa** for the ongoing management of our financial affairs and allowing us to have the support of the amazing **Trudy Sears**.

In the words of the great late Whitney Houston...I believe the children are our future, teach them well and let them lead the way!!!

Ngā mihi for another successful year
Waireka Collings
Puāwai Pūrau STEMM Academy Director