



YMP WAKA AMA

KIA KAHA KIA TOA

YMP

WAKA AMA

**Sharing of Waka Ama Resilience Strategies
Through our Programme: “Te Parekereke”**

March 2021



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TE PAREKEREKE

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This document serves as a report to Waka Ama New Zealand on a programme run by YMP Waka Ama focussing on resilience. In this report we wish to share with Waka Ama New Zealand some of the strategies we have found to build Rangatahi resilience and grow leadership in a waka ama context. We were fortunate to receive funding to undertake this programme and as part of this, we wanted to make an offering to Waka Ama NZ to share our experience and our insights on resilience strategies and ways in which we have sought to build future leaders in waka ama.
- 1.2 We freely share this korero in the hope that this report is shared with Waka Ama clubs around the motu with a view that some of these strategies may be of some benefit to our wider waka ama whanau.

2 Te Parekereke

- 2.1 This summer our club developed and executed a waka ama resilience wananga series called Te Parekereke. Te Parekereke means the seedbed, and comes from our waka histories of Turanganui a Kiwa and the arrival of the kumara to Aotearoa.
- 2.2 In our history, the Horouta waka brought the kumara to our shores. Paoa was the captain, kiwa the tohunga, and Hinehakirirangi the high priest with the role of finding the appropriate place to plant the kumara as sustenance for our people. The story of the coming of the horouta waka and the job of Hinehakirirangi is a story of resilience and perseverance. Hinehakirirangi and her crew faced the oceans and the seas, arrived to a new land (Turanga), and used their knowledge to find the right place to plant the kumara and as such, we, the people of Turanga continue to grow this kai today as sustenance for our iwi. She built her parekereke, or seedbed for the kumara. From this seedbed, the kumara plants were then taken out and planted in their respective fields to face to extremities of the environment. Similar to this approach, our programme is a seedbed for helping build strong and resilient rangatahi so that they may face the world using waka ama as a vehicle to do so.

3 Ko wai matou?

- 3.1 In 2016, we established YMP Waka Ama to provide a pathway to support our tamariki to success through waka ama as a vehicle. We wanted a specific way of supporting our tamariki and focussing on individual and team development, while giving our teenage Rangatahi a sense of pride, community, connection and develop skills for dealing with the harsh realities of life.
- 3.2 We cater to communities including Manutuke, Muriwai, Te Karaka, Whatatutu and children in town and Kaiti. We are one of three clubs in Gisborne, with Horouta Waka Hoe being the largest and Mareikura Canoe Club being the oldest in the country. We are the teina club and recognise the positive impact Mareikura Waka Ama and Horouta Waka Hoe has had on our district. We see waka ama as a positive vehicle that is Kaupapa Maori, and driven from a values system to help nurture and grow our tamariki to better tackle the world. We have hononga to Marae primarily in Rongowhakaata and Ngai Tamanuhiri, and as part of our



programme we name all of our teams after sites of significance of the iwi, and hold wananga to teach korero about those sites and the ancestors from whom many of these tamariki are descended from.

Waka Ama National Competitions



3.3 In 2021, we fielded 8 teams to compete in the junior division of the Waka Ama Sprint Nationals. These teams were:

- a 1 midget boys team
- b 1 midget girls team;
- c 2 intermediate boys teams;
- d 2 intermediate girls teams;
- e 1 J16 women's teams;
- f 1 J19 women's team.

3.4 We were successful in our campaign with medals from our intermediate men and women teams, our J16 and J 19 teams. One team (our development intermediate women team) on our programme did not medal at the National competitions but they enjoyed the racing and understand the level of competition and what is required at this level of competition.

3.5 We were fortunate as a club to receive:

- a Intermediate Men w6 500m Bronze medal
- b Intermediate Men w12 500m Bronze medal



- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| c | Intermediate men w6 500m (turn) | Bronze medal |
| d | Intermediate Women w6 500m (turn) | Bronze medal |
| e | J16 Women w6 500m turn | Silver medal |
| f | J19 w12 500m | Bronze medal |

3.6 We consider that the work in our programme helped support this achievement, alongside the effort and work undertaken by all of our Rangatahi.

4 Our Programme

How this came to be

4.1 The coaches of YMP waka ama have been successfully involved in the sport of waka ama for over 20 years. We have seen, and through anecdotal evidence, that the next generation of tamariki coming through, particularly at the teenage group are more disconnected to each other, and are lacking a drive and resilience that we had been fortunate to have instilled into us at the same age. We know rangatahi need to be mentally prepared to compete at a national level and to learn how to grow through adversity. We see waka ama as a vehicle to help us build our rangatahi because waka ama is physical, mental and spiritual, and gives us a connection to our histories and taha Maori.

The Programme

4.2 The Programme is a resilience programme designed and run by YMP Waka Ama with a focus on waka ama sporting as a vehicle for developing resilience strategies for sport and life. The entire programme consisted of:

- a a series of 5 wananga to build rangatahi resilience and leadership with Kaupapa including:
 - i Goal Setting and Planning;
 - ii Resilience;
 - iii Māori Leadership;
 - iv Identity, Language and Culture; and
 - v Nutrition and Wellbeing;
- b a 6 week team building and individual development programme; and
- c the development and monitoring of an individual development plan for each young person involved.

4.3 We had 40 rangatahi part of our programme from intermediates to J19s.

4.4 Our programme was part of our club's Waka Ama Nationals campaign for 2021. The programme itself was focussed on three key areas:

- a Taha tinana (physical wellbeing through training and development)



- b Taha hinengaro (specialist support and group mentoring by top coaches and high profile sportspeople)
- c Taha whakapapa (learning about history of the YMP club, and connection to the tipuna and team names that each team represent). Whanau are included as active participants in this kaupapa.

Taha Tinana

- 4.5 Through the physical, we pushed our rangatahi and prepared them for racing on the water. Our training programme included warm ups, running and physical fitness, paddling on the water, technique, and racing strategy. This aspect challenged our rangatahi physically as these trainings were demanding. The focus was for the National competitions where our Rangatahi competed against the best in the country.
- 4.6 Our training programme was a six week programme focussed on group trainings and individual trainings.
- 4.7 Our Rangatahi competed at the waka ama nationals in Karapiro in January 2021. This kaupapa tested all of our rangatahi physically and mentally and was a platform to put all of their teachings to test during the week long campaign. Our Rangatahi showed their hard work, dedication, competition pressure, mental preparedness and learning to deal with winning or failure (and putting into practice some of the teachings from kaikorero).



Taha Hinengaro

- 4.8 This aspect focusses on developing a strong mindset. It will also include teaching technique, and learning new skills with a waka focus in mind. This includes aerodynamics and speed on the water, technique for paddling, learning to turn the waka. We also had korero from people of our rohe who are doing great things but who have faced adversity in their lives. This is



about talking about strategies, mental preparedness, mindset, and how to deal with issues when times were tough.

- 4.9 As part of our wananga, we held sessions on mental strength, planning and preparation for competition, and being mentally prepared to reach the highest accolades.

Taha Whakapapa

- 4.10 As part of the training we held wananga to push participants physically to work through the difficult training regime. At our wananga we placed our Rangatahi into their respective teams and gave the teams their names. As part of this process, we told our Rangatahi what the name of their team meant as the names were either tipuna names or names of sites of significance to the iwi who have mana whenua on the rivers we are training on.
- 4.11 Our Rangatahi were given the history of the YMP club (120 years) and the significance of our waka club in that history.
- 4.12 We are also working with new coaches to train all of our different groups. We have our own coaching development programme which helps our coaches to undertake these Kaupapa. It is whanau driven. Our coaches will learn the processes as part of this project. This helps us sustain the project beyond this year.





Does it work?

- 4.13 We cannot be certain that our methods work. Our only evidence is experience based. We are the evidence of this approach. We have seen the changes in our young people. We are products of this type of environment and the teachings and tools we have been provided to get through life's challenges. These come from a sense of belonging, a sense of identity and self, a sense of belief. Our tipuna had to fight many obstacles and were resilient. The story of Hinehikirangi is the story of the ultimate resilience where she had to bring the kumara from Hawaiki and find a suitable place to plant it for the survival of her people. The stress was real, the job was real, and her story is a testament to all of the key facets of what we are trying to instil - a sense of knowing, of knowing the practices, of knowing the signs, of knowing what to do and when, and of seeking help when necessary. These are all critical skills that we believe help and support our people to be resilient.

5 Strategies

- 5.1 We have undertaken a reflective approach to the strategies that were employed. Through this reflection, we have grouped our mahi into six strategic areas. These are the areas we consider have supported our programme and have the biggest impact on supporting our Rangatahi in filling their own knowledge with tools to face adversity. These are:

- a Fail to plan, you plan to fail;
- b Connection and belonging;
- c Tuakana/ Teina;
- d Wananga and reflection;
- e Role modelling;
- f Group culture;

6 Fail to Plan, Plan to Fail

- 6.1 The first strategy we wish to speak to is about goal setting and setting a plan for success. We ran wananga around goal setting with our Rangatahi. One key focus was to break down barriers. We asked our Rangatahi what they wanted to achieve. We had to reinforce that we were asking them to tell us what they wanted to achieve, and not what they thought we wanted to hear. This was important as it



set the tone for personal goal setting in relation to waka ama and the subsequent actions our Rangatahi would have to do to achieve the goals they have set for themselves.

- 6.2 As part of this, we also had a training programme focussed on physical and mental strength, which had clear training times so our Rangatahi knew where they had to be and when. We



also had coaches for each of our divisions with a head coach overseeing the development of our Rangatahi and helping to support our coaches with specialist technique work and race strategy.

- 6.3 In building resilient leaders in waka ama having a plan and a goal is critical to success. This helps with focus and determination, especially when trainings and other Kaupapa become hard.
- 6.4 As part of the planning, we worked with our Rangatahi to prepare individual development plans. The development plans consisted of:
- a Their goals and aspirations;
 - b What actions they thought would help them achieve their goals;
 - c A nutrition diary;
 - d A reflections aspect on training and things to work on;
 - e Notes on the race strategies;
 - f Whakatauki on resilience and perseverance to remind our Rangatahi that their tipuna had the same mindset and used whakatauki to help them through too; and
 - g Karakia for the waka.

- 6.5 This development plan helped us discuss with our Rangatahi some of their habits, and to link up their eating diaries with their performance on the waka. In conjunction with this plan, we also had an exercise plan for the teams. These different depending on the age group.



- 6.6 We were able to reinforce the work they were doing in training by having them write their specific instructions and improvements in their diaries.

7 Connection and Connectivity

- 7.1 Connectivity and having a sense of belonging is hugely important and is something we as the programme co-ordinators have grown up with, in our own reflections of our successes in waka ama, we have found that this is a contributing factor to success and to resilience. Therefore, as part of our wananga, we:
- a Made sure wananga were held for the entire group of rangatahi so as to build whakawhanaungatanga and an understanding of who is part of our club;
 - b Ensured our midgets (6-10 yr old paddlers) were included as part of our wananga so they could see their tuakana training. It also allowed for the whole club to connect and stay as one given the weekly trainings were team specific and at different times.



- c Shared the history of the YMP Club (120 years), and how we are the teina of the YMP sporting codes. We talked about the names of the teams and the connection back to the mana whenua, for whom, most of our paddlers descend from those tipuna. The names for our teams include tipuna names, names of marae, names of sites of significance to the iwi of Turanga. Our waka are all named after maunga and awa and through wananga we are able to talk about connection to place and why we named our teams the names they have and why our waka are named as such.
- 7.2 Understanding the history gives our rangatahi a sense of pride and connectivity to those gone before them. It also provides context to who we are as a club and why it is important to do what we do as best as we can. The whakapapa inherent in our club name brings with it an expectation to be the best we can, and our Rangatahi so use this as part of their connection to the sport of waka ama.
- 7.3 Our managers for each team also organised as part of their team trainings whakawhanaungatanga session. These included games before training on the water, korero, sleepovers. This all helped our Rangatahi to feel connected to each other and to the club.
- 7.4 Whanau involvement is crucial and our whanau play a huge part in the club. We have a club Facebook page for general information, but also have social media pages for each of the teams whereby parents had communication with the managers and coaches. Training expectations and individual fitness was communicated through these pages so that parents knew what our Rangatahi were required to do. For some of our teams, videos were used to show our paddlers completing their allocated fitness. This gave a sense of obligation to the team, and a sense of building the connectedness. Parents usually took the videos and some parents joined in on some of the exercises which helped reinforce this sense of belonging to the club and its history.

8 Tuakana/ Teina



- 8.1 This strategy has a three pronged focus:
- a To build leadership qualities in our Rangatahi;



- b The first is to build and strengthen relationships in the club;
- c The second is to build club resilience by having additional skills available.

Leadership Qualities

- 8.2 Our tuakana/teina strategy focussed on our J19 paddlers leading by example and coaching our midget paddlers. This was a deliberate leadership strategy in waka ama because it provided our senior paddlers with an opportunity to share the knowledge they have acquired over the years and share it with our newest paddlers. Our J19 paddlers had the support of coaches so had support when needed. Our coaches had to build a rapport with our midget paddlers, teach health and safety on waka, ensure all paddlers were wearing life jackets, teach our midgets how to paddle, get comfortable working with young people, and to also learn to communicate with our Rangatahi and their parents.
- 8.3 Our head coach and Chairperson was available to our paddler coaches to provide technical advice, innovative ways to help our midgets learn to paddle, support with communicating with adults/ parents. They attended most trainings and provided assistance where necessary. This way, there was tuakana/teina mentoring and support at the midget level and at the paddler coaches level.
- 8.4 It was a definite challenge for our paddler coaches but one our Rangatahi embraced. They were able to learn leadership skills and also focus on the technical side of paddling which helped focus their own paddling skills. These Rangatahi are an asset to our club and its future.



Build and strengthen relationships

8.5 Our tuakana/teina strategy also helps in building relationships across the club and across the age groups. Our wananga had these components included. For example, the J16 teams took the intermediate teams for fitness training and trained with them, pushing them to go further. It gave the J16s an opportunity to show leadership and work with those not much younger than them. Our older teams had a buddy system during the wananga and during the training programme to make sure the older ones could check in on their younger ones and show them what is required of them. In this way, we built connectivity across the club and allows our Rangatahi to be able to reach out in times of crisis and need.

Club resilience

8.6 By having a tuakana/teina system, we can share the workload and provide practical solutions to continuity of the club. Our head coach acts as tuakana to the coaches who are still new at coaching waka ama. By having the technical expertise, we can sustainably grow our club and support our coaches to provide for our Rangatahi. By having our own coaching aspect, we can share responsibility of coaching and not rely on a few people. This gives us better systems and future proofing the club to continue to compete in waka ama. This is the same for having our J19s coach our midget teams. This gives the connectivity between paddlers and whanau associated to the club because our paddlers are now working directly with the parents of our future paddlers. It also provides a network for our paddlers to access in the future.

9 Wananga and Reflection





9.1 Resilience was a key theme throughout all five wananga. We use exercise, and creating pressure through hard training practices to get our Rangatahi to push through the mental blocks and the mental barriers, to push through the hard times and complete the task at hand.

9.2 We also spent time throughout wananga talking about what it means to be resilient with our Rangatahi telling us what they thought resilience means and what they consider it takes to be resilient and to deal with tough times. We also held facilitated discussions with Rangatahi about resilience and what it means to rise again after falling. During this korero we sought to understand the “why” from our Rangatahi. This why was the motivation behind why they were at waka ama and what they wanted to achieve. During the hard times and the physical endurance of the wananga, we would go back to asking them their why and to push through.

9.3 As part of our wananga, we held reflections on what works and what doesn't on the waka, what is happening, and what makes people mad. This reflection was tailored to the specific age groups. For our intermediates, it was as simple as standing in a circle after coming off the water and asking questions about how they went, what they need to focus on before heading back out. For the J16 and 19s, it was more focussed and in depth. For example, the older ones talked about frustrations and how this leads to poor performance on the waka. This was a critical korero that was facilitated during our wananga. We were able to provide a safe environment to wananga and reflect, and then focus on strategies and action plans for improvement.

9.4 Throughout the waka ama nationals we met and discussed with our Rangatahi their strategy for races and also reflection of their race about what worked and what didn't. This happened after every race. This gave them the opportunity to consider how they could have done better and what they could work on in the next race.

10 Role modelling

10.1 Our tuakana/teina strategy is directly linked to role modelling so we will not repeat that here.

10.2 Our role modelling is about practice of coaches, and leading by example. By leading by example, we can show our Rangatahi what is expected. This in turn is modelled through our



tuakana/teina programme. As part of the role modelling, our coaches go out on the water with our Rangatahi and paddle with them and discuss all aspects of paddling with them. We discuss the technical aspects of the reach, the catch and the run of the canoe and show this so that our Rangatahi understand, and feel what it should be like. This helps our Rangatahi understand and know what is happening on the water, and what actions may need to be done to correct. We also talk about why we do things the way we do. This is important as our Rangatahi then get an understanding as to why something is done and is more likely to continue to follow the progress when things get hard.

- 10.3 We also had speakers come and korero about what resilience means to them and some of their strategies for coping and for pushing through when times got tough. Our speakers were from Te Tairāwhiti and were successful in not only waka ama, but in other areas. We sought iwi leaders, sports leaders, high performance sports players, and entertainers. We sought to get a mix of people to highlight that resilience is not just about sport, but about people. We also wanted to make sure that the people our Rangatahi were hearing from were people who grew up, or had whakapapa to the rohe which they are living in. It was important to show that these people who are successful in their respective fields are in fact their whanau, or people like them. We filmed the videos and shared to our club members so as to keep these for future teams. The reflections and learnings are applicable to all of our teams.

11 Group Culture

- 11.1 Our group culture is the glue that holds this Kaupapa together. Our club uses waka ama as a vehicle to help with personal growth and resilience. We look to share korero and provide a sense of belonging and knowing of who you are. We introduced karakia for our Rangatahi to learn to help with the wairua and focus on the water. Our whanau are actively involved in the club and we have sought to keep our club numbers small. Our paddlers understand the expectations, our parents understand what our focus is with our paddlers, and we are very clear on expectations. Our expectations is focussed on giving your best and being your best. You may not win, and that is ok. What is important is that you have worked hard and followed your plan for growth. That is all we can ask for.
- 11.2 This clarity of focus helps our club culture. Our philosophy that we teach our tamariki is “where there is a will, there is a way”. Some of our rangatahi could not afford to pay for paddling and its associated costs. We found ways to support them financially because we have always believed that money should not be a barrier to our sport. We are focussed on our Rangatahi and they know they feel valued. This is part of who we are and is the Kaupapa that underpins our resilience programme. These values, along with our tikanga and kawa, our karakia and teachings of the awa are incorporated into everything we do. We know all of our waka clubs across the country have a clear focus and this is what makes each club distinct, unique and special.

12 Reflections/ Conclusions

- 12.1 We are only beginning in this kaupapa. It is a journey that we hope to continue to build on. We want to further focus on some of the aspects that we wish to increase. This includes more kaupapa including:
- a Learning and teaching te reo words for the parts of our waka;



- b writing and teaching specific waiata and haka for our club linked to the stories and history of the club and the team names;
- c teaching additional water kaupapa like fishing practices in the awa;
- d enhancing the connection by finding ways to keep our older Rangatahi J19s involved in the club and support their continued development and leadership in waka ama.

12.2 Collectively, we see these Kaupapa as helping to build well rounded Rangatahi who have a sense of identity and connection, can undertake leadership in a waka ama context, and use these skills in life so that when the extremities of the world are directly facing our Rangatahi, they have the skills and knowledge, which we hope will be second nature, to face adversity and rise.

