

## New Zealand Certificate in Whānau Ora Graduation

### Te Tomairangi Marae Invercargill

Thursday 5 July

Helen Leahy, Pouārahi, Te Pūtahitanga o Te Waipounamu

I want to acknowledge the honour bestowed on me by Marg Maniapoto; by Raewyn Bourne – the Executive Manager of Manaaki Ora Trust by Mere Kereti – in allowing me the gift of being able to offer our collective and hearty congratulations to the twenty graduates we celebrate today.

It is wonderful to be here, in the warmth of Murihiku, to be part of this very special, indeed this historic day.

They say that time is not measured by clocks but by moments.

This moment is particularly magical; indeed it is the Matariki moment.

Today as we gather, it is the perfect time to observe the rising of Matariki in the phase of the moon known as Tangaroa, the moon of plenty.

The stars of Matariki twinkling above in the night sky, immerse us within our environment. Matariki loves to gather the people together, and to connect them with our environment. We bathe in the abundance of

- Waitī – fresh water,
- Waitā – the sea,
- Waipuna-ā-raki– welcomes the winter sky waters in all its forms
- Tupuānuku – everything that grows within soil,
- Tupuāraki – everything that grows above ground,
- Ururaki – the winds.
- Pōhutukawa holds tight to our memories of treasured people who have passed on. She encourages us to take time to remember them, and to acknowledge their impact on our lives.
- Hiwaiteraki the star associated with granting our wishes and realising our aspirations for the coming year; She encourages us to hold firm to our goals, and seek out opportunities to see them realised.

It is not, however, just about the timeliness of this moment that makes today so special.

It is the sense of place – this place – Tomairangi Marae.

I love the history that is associated with this whare – and in particular the miraculous story of the carving. In the fire of 1998 the only salvageable part of the whare was the carving though in a very poor state. The whānau were told by Te Papa to apply cans of lacquer. After 80 coats applied nightly, two at a time, the carving not

only restored but "pushed outward". It had been carved into the wood (indented) but after the coats hardened and protruded to its current form. It also went from red/brown to black. It tells a story of creation, of new life, of abundance.

---

Right time – right place – right people.

Today we celebrate the top twenty – those who are in the front row, the forwards who make up the first row in the scrum; those in the front of the kapa haka lines; closest to the stage in the VIP seats.

We celebrate you – the first twenty tauira to graduate in the New Zealand Certificate in Whānau Ora. As the front runner for Whānau Ora you give expression to the whakatauki:

‘Whakatika te aho tapu, ko tera te oranga o te iwi Māori’

**Make right the sacred thread, from there comes the wellness of Maori people**

Te aho tapu, the first and main thread of the korowai, weaves the whenu and aho of the korowai together. It creates the design by which the fuller cloak can be woven.

And so all of you, together, have led the way – in designing a framework for whanaungatanga; you have illustrated the expression of manaakitanga; you have personified rangatiratanga; you have exemplified pukengatanga – and in doing so you are Whānau Ora.

Through theory and practice, you have taken Te Tiriti o Waitangi into your conscious ways of being – how does it impact upon your understanding of our modern society, how does Treaty justice guide you in taking to heart the significance of mana motuhake?

In being te aho tapu – the first graduates to emerge with the Certificate in Whānau Ora – you become trailblazers for living, learning and leading us all about whānau centred practice.

You have taken a pledge of legacy – that is you have gained a stronger understanding of to appreciate, engage and promote the value of a Whānau Ora approach. An approach which helps us everyday to engage in the lessons of life.

I want to share an example from last night’s bedtime story to illustrate this.

Last night my nine year old son chose the book, ‘How Maui found his father and the magic jawbone’. It’s the story of the ever-entrepreneurial Maui-tikitiki-a-Taranga, outwitting his mother – transforming into a kereru to find his father.

As I closed the last page, I asked him, what did you think about that story?

After a while he replied, “it was confusing”.

Upon further searching, my son told me that he didn’t understand why the people had thrown stones at the kereru. He told me that the kereru had a mauri, just like the people, and it wasn’t right that these creatures were treated in this way.

We talked about other ways that Maui could have shown his existence – revealed himself to his father – other than disguising himself as a pigeon – and different approaches that the people could have made rather than the acts of violence.

From this discussion, he moved to musing that there should be a law against stoning kereru, and how it would be hard to trust the people again – but that we should at least give them a second chance.

After that he wasn’t quite so forgiving – they should be locked up in jail for twenty months he thought - and at that point I thought it was a good time to say goodnight.

The point of this story is that taking a whānau centred approach is about engaging with our tamariki every day about models of justice; about reflective practice – finding strategies to deal with anger that don’t involve violence, talking about kaupapa Māori, about mana and mauri, and how to focus on strengths.

Earlier in that day, I’d had another conversation with my girls – who are 18 and 19 years old.

They’ve spent the last two days glued to their laptops, linking in to the secondary school kapa haka competitions in Palmerston North.

They shared with me the themes that kept emerging out of the various brackets. A focus on nga poropiti - Aperehama Taonui – the prophet of Rangitane — Mere Rikiriki, Hori Enoka Mareikura.

There were waiata tangi dedicated to suicide; to the mate – including reference to Talei Morrison and the impact she made not just on kapa haka but in her influence with the smear your mea cervical screening campaign.

There were items lamenting the demise of the Maori Party; a haka calling on Kelvin Davis to take a different approach to justice than simply rebuilding and growing prisons.

---

Whānau Ora is in all of these waiata; all of these bedtime stories.

Whānau Ora is about models of hauora; the cycles of life, the dynamics of whanaungatanga.

Whānau Ora is NOT provider ora – it is not about services or programmes, inputs and activities, workplans and terminology, clients and caseloads. It is about an approach to life that supersedes all of that.

It is – if you like – the new dawn that greets us today; the splendour of a Matariki midnight; the promise of Puaka.

The wanaka you have experienced have led you to a unique positioning to be equipped to enable all our whānau to benefit from the multitude of immense opportunities.

Puaka Matariki is the time when we come together to share stories, pass on knowledge and learning, and plan for the year ahead. It is about planting new crops, making new connections, strengthening relationships.

I recently read an article in the New York Times which revealed that loneliness can impair health in a distinct variety of ways. It can raise the levels of stress which in turn can increase the risk of heart disease, arthritis, Type 2 diabetes, dementia and even suicide attempts.

In our own research across the 144 whānau entities who promote and uphold Whānau Ora through investment from Te Pūtahitanga o Te Waipounamu – as well as through the narratives and stories of our amazing Nav Nation – we have seen evidence of the harmful impacts of loneliness as having an even more significant effect on wellbeing than some of the more commonly known indicators of ill-health.

What you have learn through this Certificate Course is a powerful source of knowledge to support whānau to know their community, to be health literate, to place priority on communication.

At the base of what you have learnt over the series of wananga has been the precious value of healthy and constructive relationships within and across whānau – those you work with, those of your own.

Whether it be from the world view of Ngati Kahungunu, Ngati Rarotonga, of Te Atihaunui a Paparangi, of Ngati Porou, Ngai Tahu, or Ngapuhi – your iwi diversity provides a distinctive source of expertise and experience to strengthen your interactions with whānau.

But through and across all your hapu and iwi nations, together, all together, you are united through the concept of whānau.

Whānau connections enable support, reciprocity, accountability to each other. It's about a collective obligation and responsibility to care for your own. Whānau Ora is given life through belonging to an intergenerational ecosystem that includes te reo, tikanga, marae, tupuna as taonga to guide our everyday life.

Today then- is your day – it is our day – our time together to celebrate you all as the front-runners, the trail-blazers that will be champions of hope for Whānau Ora.

Our Navigator Co-ordinator, Pari Hunt, will present each of you with a pōtae to keep you warm and protected from the elements, but also to let everyone know that you have been capped with the Whānau Ora Certificate.

You now have the privilege and the responsibility to share your new learning with others – to talk about whānau centred transformation on Tātai Whetu; to be strengths-based in your korero; to be aspirational and optimistic in your engagements with whānau.

You will be Ambassadors for change – working with your managers and your peers in defining and demonstrating the full scope of ORA.

And your most important site of transformation will be in your own whānau home – walking your talk – being mana-enhancing in thought and in action – being the change you want to be.

I am so proud – and so excited – by this Matariki Moment – and the wonderful potential you all offer for a whānau centred future for us all.

This is your time – like the heart pounding outwards of our beautiful Koro Mohi – your belief in Whānau Ora must be seen and heard in all that you do. Over eighty days and nights you have been applying the right lacquer – now it is time to be seen.

Congratulations on this very special achievement – thank you for your sacrifice – and my special tribute to your own whānau – your loved ones who have waited at home while you travel on this journey of learning.

Their dedication and commitment in supporting you has truly made this a whānau centred project that I am certain will make enduring change for you all.