



Te Waka Kura: A Te Ao Māori Framework for Workforce Planning and Development in Te Matau a Māui-Hawke's Bay

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Executive Summary & Introduction

This slide deck presents the key findings, analysis, and recommendations from the Te Waka Kura report — a culturally grounded response to mainstream workforce planning that often excludes Māori realities. Commissioned as part of Phase 2 of the Hawke's Bay Regional Workforce Plan, this work draws on engagement with whānau, hapū, and marae across Te Matau-a-Māui. The purpose is to introduce a bicultural, bicentric framework informed by mātauranga Māori to guide more inclusive and enduring workforce strategies in the region and beyond.

The report covers:

- Recommendations for improvement in current workforce planning models (particularly OPM and McKinsey models)
- The importance of integrating Te Ao Māori and intergenerational sustainability
- Analysis of key themes from Phase 1 and Mātauranga Māori reflections
- Co-design principles rooted in whakapapa and regional identity
- Development and explanation of the Te Waka Kura framework
- Practical recommendations and next steps for implementation

Executive Summary Highlights:

- Existing workforce models are insufficient for Māori because they lack cultural integrity, regional flexibility, and long-term vision.
- Te Waka Kura responds with a waka-based framework grounded in values such as kaitiakitanga, manaakitanga, and rangatiratanga.
- The framework adds to existing workforce planning models: collective wellbeing, whānau-centric planning, and cultural safety.
- Implementation requires Māori leadership, data sovereignty, and sector-wide commitment to co-design.
- Regional adaptability and validation are essential for the success and integrity of the model.

Purpose and Strategic Intent

Why Te Waka Kura?

- Māori have long been underrepresented in mainstream workforce strategies and overrepresented in insecure, low-paid work. The absence of cultural perspectives in national and regional workforce plans contributes to this inequity. Te Waka Kura seeks to address these imbalances through a transformative, culturally anchored approach.
- This framework aims to embed values such as whakapapa, oranga, and manaakitanga at the heart of workforce development, shifting away from transactional and output-driven models to ones centred in collective wellbeing.
- It is not simply about adding Māori values into existing systems — it is about reshaping the system itself to be bicultural, bicentric, and future-focused, ensuring that Māori aspirations are not only recognised but led by Māori.

Strategic Intent: To develop a culturally grounded, regionally specific, and nationally adaptable workforce framework that draws from mātauranga Māori and intergenerational leadership. Te Waka Kura is designed to reflect the lived realities of whānau, hapū, and iwi, guiding how we navigate a more inclusive, just, and enduring future of work.

Foundations of the Framework – Whakapapa of Takitimu and Ngāti Kahungunu

- Te Waka Kura draws inspiration from the ancestral journey of the Takitimu waka — a sacred vessel of wisdom, planning, and leadership. While Takitimu provides cultural grounding and symbolic strength, Te Waka Kura is its own waka — built for the present, guided by ancestral values but responsive to today's workforce realities.
- Tamatea's lineage continues through Rongokako and Kahungunu, who brought diplomacy, kinship, and stewardship into the evolving identity of Ngāti Kahungunu. The values they embodied — whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, and rangatiratanga — provide the cultural compass for Te Waka Kura.
- This whakapapa reminds us that workforce development is not a new concept for Māori. It has always existed in the transmission of knowledge, the care for whenua, and the nurturing of people and skills across generations.
- By anchoring this framework in whakapapa, Te Waka Kura restores a sense of continuity, dignity, and purpose to planning — drawing strength from ancestral wisdom while looking ahead to future generations.

Phase 1 Recap

Phase 1 Highlights

- Western-centric workforce models (McKinsey, OPM) dominate planning but lack meaningful cultural integration.
- Existing systems focus on transactional, short-term metrics like job placement, failing to address Māori concepts of oranga and whakapapa.
- There is insufficient recognition of Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations, with limited engagement of iwi and hapū in the decision-making process.
- Existing planning models do not adapt well to regional or iwi-specific contexts, overlooking the diversity of Māori knowledge and needs.

Identified Opportunities:

- A call was made for a new model rooted in mātauranga Māori, co-designed with Māori, and adaptable to regional and iwi-specific contexts. This would ensure authenticity, relevance, and impact for Māori communities.
- Phase 1 concluded that a regionally-led, culturally anchored model was essential — a model that integrates tikanga, te reo Māori, and the principles of whanaungatanga and rangatiratanga.

Key Principles

- Mātauranga Māori should be central in all phases of workforce planning, including design, delivery, assessment, and review.
- True partnership means enabling whānau, hapū, and iwi to co-lead rather than just consult, ensuring decisions reflect lived realities.
- Planning models must be responsive to regional variation and local expressions of tikanga, rather than imposing one-size-fits-all solutions.
- Long-term planning must include mokopuna-focused thinking, honouring future generations as key stakeholders.
- Success needs to be redefined to prioritise oranga, belonging, and cultural identity alongside employment outcomes.

Te Haumako — Strategic Alignment

Te Haumako: Fertile Ground for Transformation

- Te Haumako, developed by Muka Tangata, provides a foundational reference for transforming workforce strategies across the food and fibre sector. It affirms that Māori must be seen not just as participants in the workforce but as leaders, designers, and decision-makers.
- The strategy places emphasis on culturally grounded learning, values-based education, and equitable pathways that reflect the unique aspirations of Māori. It sets expectations for culturally safe training environments and calls for a genuine partnership with iwi/hapū.
- Te Haumako recognises the value of mātauranga Māori, regional leadership, and whānau-first approaches as central to successful education-to-employment transitions.
- Te Waka Kura builds upon and complements Te Haumako by offering a values-led structure that can be practically applied to regional workforce planning. Where Te Haumako defines strategic intent, Te Waka Kura offers the architecture to implement it.
- Together, they form a unified response — calling for workforce transformation that is sustainable, Māori-led, and regionally responsive, setting a precedent for how all sectors might work with Māori in future.

Key Findings from the Report- Critical Insights Shaping Te Waka Kura

- Current workforce models do not reflect Māori realities — mainstream frameworks focus on short-term economic gain and overlook collective wellbeing.
- Mātauranga Māori is undervalued — traditional knowledge systems and cultural identity are missing from policy and planning.
- Whānau-centred planning is essential — Māori define success collectively, not individually.
- Regional variation must be respected — tikanga, reo, and lived experience differ across rohe and cannot be generalised.
- Systemic inequities persist — underrepresentation in leadership, insecure work conditions, and lack of cultural safety continue to disadvantage Māori.
- Partnership must be authentic — co-design, not consultation, is needed to honour Te Tiriti and ensure Māori voices are heard and upheld.

Current Workforce Climate

Key Trends in Aotearoa (2024–2025):

- Unemployment remains disproportionately high for Māori, particularly among rangatahi and in rural communities. Structural barriers continue to prevent equitable access to quality training and employment.
- Economic disruption caused by climate change, digitisation, and automation is accelerating, with Māori communities often the most impacted and least resourced to adapt.
- Disconnection between qualifications and real-world employment remains a critical issue — with many Māori overqualified for roles they hold or excluded from opportunities due to lack of ‘fit’ in monocultural systems.

Te Matau a Māui- A Snapshot:

- High Māori Population: Māori comprise 28.6% of Hawke’s Bay’s population (2023 Census), well above the national average of 17.8%.
- Disproportionate Unemployment: Māori unemployment in the region is estimated at 8.7% in early 2025, compared to the general rate of 3.7%. For rangatahi aged 15–24, unemployment remains more than twice that of Pākehā.
- Geographic Barriers: Rurality, transport limitations, digital exclusion, and inconsistent service delivery disproportionately affect Māori access to training and work.
- Deep Connection to Key Sectors: Māori are integral to Hawke’s Bay’s backbone industries—agriculture, horticulture, forestry, fisheries, and food processing—as workers, landowners, and investors.
- Growing Māori Asset Base: Māori collectives own over 50% of national aquaculture, with increasing investment in premium apple varieties, vineyards, and export infrastructure in Hawke’s Bay.
- Overrepresentation in Precarious Work: Despite sectoral contributions, Māori remain concentrated in low-wage, seasonal, and high-risk jobs like meat processing and fruit picking.
- Education Pipeline Challenges: Over 12,000 Māori ākonga were enrolled in regional education in 2023, but retention and achievement rates still lag behind national averages.
- Culturally Responsive Initiatives: Programmes like Te Toka Māori and Pasifika Trades Training offer wraparound support—but need greater scale and reach.
- Identity-Affirming Education is Key: Embedding mātauranga Māori in training enhances identity, confidence, and skill—especially in cultural sectors like regenerative agriculture, tourism, and hauora.
- Plan for Intergenerational Resilience: True workforce transformation must prepare mokopuna to lead tomorrow’s economy, not just fill current vacancies.

State of the Māori Economy:

- With the Māori economy surpassing \$32 billion, Māori continue to be key contributors to Aotearoa's economic resilience. Ownership of whenua, innovation in food and fibre sectors, and the growth of Māori enterprises position iwi and hapū as economic leaders.
- However, the potential of this economy remains under-leveraged in workforce planning frameworks. Barriers to access, systemic discrimination, and the undervaluing of cultural and traditional knowledge limit Māori participation and advancement.

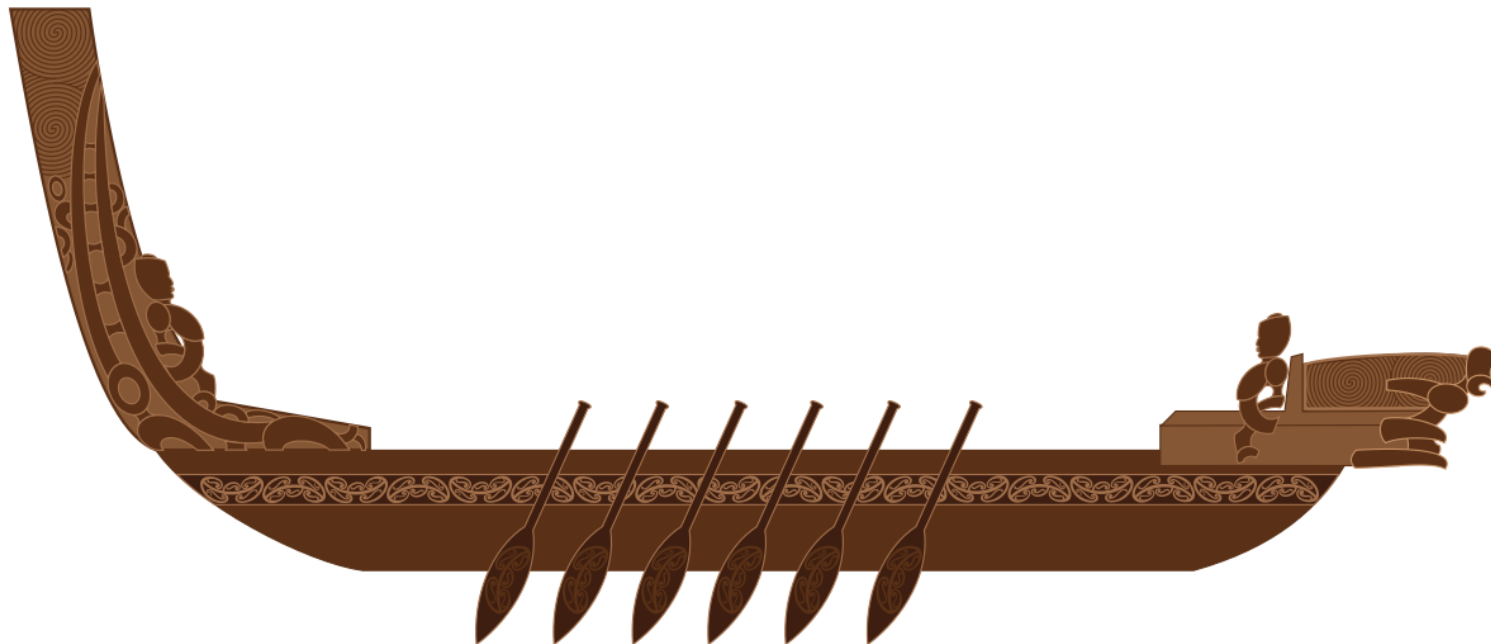
Enduring Systemic Barriers:

- Colonial legacies persist in the education-to-employment pipeline. Māori are less likely to access high-wage roles, leadership positions, or long-term employment security.
- Workforce institutions often operate on Western norms, ignoring or undervaluing relational leadership, collective wellbeing, and tikanga-based practices.
- Te Waka Kura acknowledges these challenges and offers an integrated, culturally affirming model for transforming both the structure and values of workforce systems.



Te Waka Kura Overview

- Te Waka Kura is not simply a workforce model — it's a values-based navigation system rooted in whakapapa and designed for transformation. While it honours the whakapapa of Takitimu, Te Waka Kura charts its own course — a modern waka shaped by the needs of this generation, designed to serve future ones.
- Inspired by the metaphor of the waka, the framework brings together strategy, structure, and values to guide decision-making.
- Waka represents collective purpose, movement, and navigation — a shared journey toward a thriving future.
- Kura signifies sacred knowledge, learning, and treasured values — carrying the mauri of hapū and marae.
- Emphasises Māori leadership and oranga as core outcomes, challenging deficit-based models with one grounded in strength, identity, and sustainability.



<p>Te Taurapa: Kaitiakitanga (Stewardship and Sustainability)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guardianship of people, knowledge, and resources across generations; • Responsibility to protect whenua, taiao, and whakapapa; • Planning for long-term intergenerational outcomes; and • Anchoring workforce strategy in sustainability and balance. 	<p>Role in the Waka: The guide. Without a steady hand at the stern, the waka cannot stay on course or navigate through challenge.</p> <p>Workforce Meaning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embeds long-term sustainability in planning, beyond short-term employment cycles. • Acknowledges Māori responsibility to future generations — mokopuna and whenua alike. • Planning isn't just economic — it's cultural, environmental, and spiritual. <p>Examples of Application:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training in land-based industries that integrate mātauranga Māori, such as regenerative farming or rongoā Māori. • Workforce investment strategies that factor in environmental justice and papakāinga development. • Planning frameworks that address climate resilience, whenua restoration, and succession of land-related skills. <p>OPM/McKinsey Alignment: OPM focuses on workforce demand forecasting. Te Waka Kura integrates that with intergenerational forecasting and ecological resilience. McKinsey prioritises structure — here, te taurapa is the values-based structure that sustains the entire system.</p>
<p>Ngā Hoe: Manaakitanga (Support and Care)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active expression of collective care and responsibility; • Providing practical and emotional support in workforce systems; • Uplifting others through mentoring, guidance, and whānau-based support; and • Ensuring safe, inclusive, culturally grounded learning and working environments. 	<p>Role in the Waka: The propulsion — without paddles, the waka goes nowhere.</p> <p>Workforce Meaning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognises the importance of wraparound supports, not just technical training. • Addresses social determinants of success: transport, housing, mental health, and cultural inclusion. • Care is a system function, not a side service. <p>Examples of Application:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designing employment pathways that include whānau navigators, kaiārahi, and pastoral support. • Requiring that publicly funded training providers deliver cultural safety programmes. • Reducing barriers to participation: transport vouchers, child care stipends, whānau-based delivery.

	<p>OPM/McKinsey Alignment: OPM focuses on worker readiness — Te Waka Kura expands this by recognising life readiness. McKinsey speaks to “shared values”; manaakitanga is a lived value expressed through systemic care.</p>
<p>Te Kōhiwi (The Heart of the Waka): Whanaungatanga</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centrality of relationships to Māori wellbeing and decision-making; • Collective accountability and shared success; • Trust-based partnerships with iwi, hapū, whānau, and providers; and • Recognising the value of connection over individual achievement. 	<p>Role in the Waka: The centre of connection — the beating heart that binds the crew.</p> <p>Workforce Meaning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision-making is relational, not transactional. • Success is measured collectively — by whānau, hapū, and iwi outcomes. • Planning includes time for kōrero, relationship-building, and collective consent. <p>Examples of Application:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing governance groups that include kaumātua, hapū reps, and rangatahi. • Co-designing career pathways with iwi, hapū, industry, and education partners, not just employers. • Embedding whakawhānau into hiring, onboarding, and mentoring processes. <p>OPM/McKinsey Alignment: Where McKinsey focuses on “skills” and “systems,” whanaungatanga emphasises networks and obligations — people over processes. OPM tracks labour market movement; Te Waka Kura tracks collective movement toward shared goals.</p>
<p>The Navigation System: Mātauranga Māori</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Māori knowledge systems guide direction and decision-making; • Integration of ancestral wisdom with future-focused innovation; • Valuing oral traditions, spiritual insight, and environmental awareness; and • Ensuring curriculum and evaluation are grounded in kaupapa Māori. 	<p>Role in the Waka: Provides direction, insight, and understanding of knowledge.</p> <p>Workforce Meaning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge isn’t neutral. Mātauranga Māori brings cultural legitimacy and strategic clarity. • Workforce planning includes traditional knowledge alongside technical forecasting. • Indigenous evaluation models centre lived experience and narrative, not just metrics. <p>Examples of Application:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using maramataka to guide seasonal workforce rhythms in agriculture or kai gathering. • Developing iwi/hapū-led micro credentials in carving, navigation, healing, and māra kai. • Applying kaupapa Māori evaluation methods to measure success by ora, mana, and community trust. <p>OPM/McKinsey Alignment: Where OPM uses quantitative modelling, mātauranga provides contextual, ethical, and ancestral insight. McKinsey talks about “style” — Mātauranga Māori is not style; it is the strategic compass.</p>

<p>Te Rangatira: Rangatiratanga (Leadership and Authority)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Māori self-determination in planning, funding, and decision-making; • Leadership as a form of service, mana-enhancement, and vision; • Empowering iwi/hapū-led governance and rangatahi succession pathways; and • Holding space for Māori voices to lead, not just participate. 	<p>Role in the Waka: The steerer. Holds accountability, leads with vision, and keeps the waka aligned.</p> <p>Workforce Meaning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Māori must lead strategy, not just be consulted after decisions are made. • Leadership is about mana-enhancement, not authority. • Rangatiratanga in workforce planning includes budget control, decision veto, and narrative sovereignty. <p>Examples of Application:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating co-governance structures for workforce planning that are iwi or hapū led. • Establishing regional Māori workforce hubs that determine their own development priorities. • Investing in rangatahi leadership and internship pipelines for Māori in trades and sectors. <p>OPM/McKinsey Alignment: Both models highlight leadership, but Te Waka Kura demands self-determination, not top-down management. Rangatiratanga reframes who holds the pen — and the purse — in planning.</p>
<p>Te Taihu-The Destination: Oranga (Holistic Wellbeing)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A thriving future defined by more than employment; • Cultural, spiritual, mental, and physical wellbeing for individuals and whānau; • Whānau ora as a planning outcome, not just an afterthought; and • Prosperity measured in identity, connection, and future security. 	<p>Role in the Waka: The destination. The future we are paddling toward.</p> <p>Workforce Meaning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The goal isn't just "a job." It's a meaningful life — culturally, economically, spiritually. • Workforce systems must enable whānau ora, not just productivity. • Measures of success must include identity, mana, and hauora. <p>Examples of Application:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding models that reward retention and wellbeing outcomes, not just completions. • Using mokopuna-focused planning to guide long-term investments in skills and sustainability. <p>OPM/McKinsey Alignment: OPM and McKinsey focus on organisational performance. Oranga focuses on community flourishing — a different definition of success.</p>

Cultural Shift from Existing Models

Theme	Traditional Models (e.g. OPM/McKinsey)	Te Waka Kura Integration
Planning Perspective	Linear, performance-based	Cyclical, values-based, guided by whakapapa
Definition of Success	Employment, productivity	Oranga, belonging, intergenerational wellbeing
Decision Making	Centralised, top-down	Consensus-based, iwi/hapū-led
Role of Culture	Token inclusion	Culturally foundational and guiding
Engagement	Minimal or retrospective consultation	Co-design from conception to delivery

Regional and National Variation

- Mātauranga Māori is expressed differently across rohe; successful models must be place-based, not generic.
- Iwi and hapū must lead the adaptation of the framework to reflect their own whakapapa, tikanga, reo, and priorities.
- One national model must accommodate multiple expressions of rangatiratanga, grounded in localised leadership and validation.

Whakataukī: *“He piko he taniwha — at every bend, a guardian.”*

Every region brings its own wisdom and context to shape Te Waka Kura.

Stakeholder Voices

Insights from Engagement:

- *“Don’t just consult us — co-create with us.”*
- Rangatahi want leadership that looks like them and represents their identity.
- Cultural safety must be a non-negotiable standard across education and employment environments.
- Success is not an individual journey — whānau, hapū, and iwi success must be prioritised in all metrics.

Key Themes from Hui and Wānanga:

- Workforce strategies must be whānau-inclusive and reflect the relational nature of Māori communities.
- Solutions must address not only economic outcomes but spiritual, cultural, and emotional wellbeing.

- The role of iwi and hapū cannot be substituted — regional identity and leadership must guide regional solutions.

Implementation Recommendations (Overview)

1. Embed Māori Leadership and Co-Design

- Iwi/hapū governance embedded in all workforce planning and review processes.
- Establish permanent co-design structures in education, industry, and policy sectors.

2. Align Education with Mātauranga Māori

- Build qualifications that centre mātauranga, te reo, tikanga.
- Recognise the authority of Māori knowledge holders (e.g. tohunga, kaumātua) as educators.

3. Establish Culturally Safe Pathways

- Provide kaiārahi and holistic support services in all workforce training.
- Introduce accountability standards for cultural competency in providers and employers.

4. Address Systemic Inequities

- Develop a Māori Workforce Equity Index to track access, retention, and advancement.
- Introduce restorative strategies for those affected by exclusionary systems and policies.

5. Build Strategic and Local Partnerships

- Support iwi-led regional collaborations across industries, educators, and community.
- Build a national Māori Workforce Development Network to coordinate learning and action.

6. Localise the Framework

- Fund and support regional adaptation of Te Waka Kura through toolkits, wānanga, and pilots.
- Ensure local validation of any implementation plans by mana whenua.

7. Measure What Matters

- Use Māori-designed success indicators such as whakapapa strength, oranga, and belonging.
- Uphold Māori data sovereignty principles in all research, monitoring, and evaluation



Conclusion

Te Waka Kura is more than a framework — it is a movement grounded in whakapapa, driven by vision, and built for transformation. It calls for a new way of thinking, planning, and delivering workforce systems where Māori identity, wellbeing, and leadership are not just included, but fundamental. It draws inspiration from the sacred voyage of Takitimu, yet it stands as a distinct waka of its own — shaped by today's conditions and aspirations, and designed to move forward with cultural and strategic clarity.

This is not about fixing a broken model — it is about adding to existing models that reflect the cultural, spiritual, and economic aspirations of our people. It reminds us that the journey to equitable outcomes starts with mana-enhancing engagement and ends with mokopuna flourishing in their own time.

Te Waka Kura centres oranga as the destination — a thriving future that goes beyond productivity to embrace whānau wellbeing, cultural connection, and long-term sustainability.

The call to action is clear: we must shift from systems that manage Māori to systems led by Māori. This requires courage, resourcing, and unwavering commitment to co-governance, cultural safety, and regional leadership.

Let us paddle together — not because we are the same, but because we share a destination. Let this be the kaupapa that carries us forward.

Te Waka Kura — The Future We Navigate Together

- A framework to reclaim, reimagine, and rebuild workforce systems with Māori at the centre.
- It honours the past, speaks to the present, and paddles toward a future where oranga guides every decision.
- Offers the tools to move from extractive systems to regenerative ones — grounded in whakapapa, guided by mātauranga, and built for mokopuna futures.

Let this be the journey where we paddle as one — He waka eke noa.

NGĀ MIHI WHAKAMUTUNGA

He mihi maioha, he mihi whakamiha ki ngā hapū, ngā marae, me ngā whānau katoa o Te Matau-a-Māui i tuku mai i ō koutou whakaaro, i ō koutou kōrero, me te mātauranga tuku iho. Nā koutou tēnei waka i whakaara, i whakakaha, i whakatere hoki. E kore e taea te whakatinana o Te Waka Kura mehemea kāore koutou i tae mai ki te tautoko. Nō reira, he mihi tino nui ki a koutou katoa – ka maumahara tonu mātou ki tēnei koha rangatira.

We offer our heartfelt thanks to the hapū, marae, and whānau of Te Matau-a-Māui who generously shared their whakaaro, kōrero, and intergenerational knowledge. It is through your insights and contributions that this waka was uplifted, strengthened, and set in motion. The realisation of *Te Waka Kura* would not have been possible without your support. We will forever honour this noble gift you have given.

We'd also like to give a special acknowledgement to mana whenua who whakapapa to the following marae, as well as the organisations and businesses whose contributions helped shape and strengthen this kaupapa:

- Omahu Marae
- Te Awhina Marae
- Rūnanga Marae
- Muka Tangata
- Omahu Parata Ltd
- Wharerangi Trust

Your kōrero, your wairua, and your mātauranga are woven into every part of this waka — and will continue to guide its journey into the future.