I was on crossing duty and I had the pleasure of seeing a number of our Year 9 students leaving the school with smiles on their faces and chatting to their friends about their learning and raving about the fun they had. There was one particular boy who stood out. He was riding from school on his bicycle with a flax flower that he had made sticking up out of his backpack. The flower bobbed up and down as he rode off into the distance. This image exemplifies the pride that I saw as many of the students headed home with a puti/flower, star, whakairo/carving, or art piece that they had created. Many more of our students leave with new knowledge, skills and understanding.

Teacher reflection, following the Hui Taurima

It was really enjoyable teaching people. They actually enjoy it because it’s got significance for them, because they live around the area, and now they know why and how things happen. It was quite powerful.

Hui Taurima student leader
Overview

Nayland College had a new deputy principal with a passion for place and culturally responsive pedagogy. Based upon her research, the school initiated a Hui Taurima (festival) for Year 9 students, where they were welcomed upon the Whakatu Marae, learned local history, and then embarked on two days of learning. These were led by staff, iwi, and community experts, including senior Māori students. The success of the programme led to its becoming an annual event and to the decision of a group of committed teachers to design a TLIF project that would make place and culturally responsive pedagogy an intrinsic part of the programme for junior students. It has prompted experimentation into approaches that work for particular student groups, including learning experiences to grow the knowledge, skills, and confidence of the Hui Taurima student leaders and the wellbeing and learning engagement of younger Māori students.

Both teachers and students have had profound experiences through this journey. They have grown in their knowledge and wellbeing, in their sense of connection to their place and to others, and to their understandings about how each person’s unique history and culture contribute to the unfolding Te Tiriti partnership. The team believes that place and culturally responsive pedagogy is an approach with immense benefits for both students and staff across a wide range of settings.

The inquiry story

This inquiry involved teachers at Nayland College and Broadgreen Intermediate school and was developed with support from Ngāti Koata iwi and senior Māori students from Nayland College, along with other community experts. Its focus was on students in years 8 and 9, with a focus on Māori students, which benefits all students.

What was the focus?

In 2017, Nayland College held its inaugural Hui Taurima, a festival of learning that provided Year 9 students with opportunities to learn about their local history and stories through a cross-curricula, place and culturally responsive approach. The first day involved a pōwhiri at Whakatū Marae where Ngāti Koata kaumātua and kuia taught the students about the ancestors and stories represented on the whakairo and tukutuku panels. Students accepted a wero to spend the next two days learning about their history through selecting from a range of activities. These included activities around Pacific voyaging and traditional Māori navigation, mau rākau, traditional Māori games, whakairo, rongoa Māori, manu taratahi, kaitiakitanga, and waka ama. Students could create art works to represent their pepeha or develop books and presentations on local stories and heroes. The activities were led by staff alongside experts from the local and wider school community and by the school’s Māori student leaders. All activities were based in the local area and many incorporated visits to significant local sites.

This TLIF project was born out of the Hui Taurima, which teachers believed had great benefits, both for student wellbeing and engagement and for their own professional development. It motivated those who became part of the TLIF innovation team to want to create cross-curricular programmes that would enable students to explore their connections to their school, locality and nation; to engage more deeply in their learning; and to strengthen their hauora.
Their focus was on Māori students, and with this focus benefited all students. Colleagues at Broadgreen Intermediate School, which is also located within the Ngāti Koata rohe, also expressed a desire to be involved with this kaupapa.

The innovation team addressed the following inquiry question: “In what ways does implementing cultural and place responsive approaches build teachers’ capability to support student wellbeing and engagement?”

What did the teachers try?

The project was initiated with professional learning for teachers that included learning about four signposts that can guide a place responsive approach to curriculum:

- Being present in and with a place
- The power of story and storytelling
- Apprenticing ourselves to outdoor places
- The representation of place experiences.

The innovation team connected place and culturally responsive pedagogy with the dimensions of hauora articulated by Durie (1999). Theory was made real for them by an opportunity to participate in a place responsive wero organised by the Tāhunanui Stoke Kāhui Ako with assistance from the project’s critical friend. In a process that followed the learning in the Hui Taurima, teachers from across the Kāhui Ako attended presentations on place and culturally responsive pedagogy. They then selected from opportunities to visit local sites with teams of colleagues where they could learn about their place. Again, learning was led by iwi and other community experts and by the Hui Taurima student leaders. Learning sites included the cathedral, where there used to be a pā, the Nelson Provincial Museum, where the teachers learned about the Nelson Tenths and local land use, and Marsden Valley where the Hui Taurima student leaders led a workshop about iwi history and rongoa Māori. These experiences helped build the knowledge of the Teachers within the Kahui Ako and modelled the pedagogy for the innovation team needed to develop cross-curricular learning experiences.

The innovation team deepened their thinking about their place, culture, and history by participating in the Tuia 250 celebrations held in Waitohi (Picton) in February 2020. They stayed together, ate together, and travelled together to create the space and time for creative thinking and personal learning and growth.

The plan was to implement a place and culturally responsive curriculum for all year 8 and 9 students at Broadgreen Intermediate and Nayland College. This would begin with another Hui Taurima at Whakatū Marae, with activities constructed around the overarching theme of the kuaka (godwit) and their annual migration to Waimea Estuary. It would then continue with cross-curricular sequences of learning throughout Term 1. Data about the learning journey would be collected and analysed in Term 2, much of it through a storying (autoethnographic) approach. With the Covid-19 lockdown, the project did not, of course, unfold quite as intended.
However, a great deal of work was done. For teachers and students at Nayland College, this included the following.

- The project’s internal critical friend led a waka haerenga (waka journey) of Hui Taurima student leaders in the Abel Tasman, then a haerenga based at Te Haeta, the Ngāti Koata Cultural Centre in Anaru, French Pass. The students helped plan the journey, where they learned the history and stories of significant sites in and around Te Aumiti (French Pass) and Rangitoto ki te Tonga (Durville Island). While on the haerenga, the students gain Māori Tourism standards through demonstrating their ability to lead the learning of stories and histories at significant sites, recite pepeha, sing waiata, and engage in whaikōrero. Other opportunities for these students included attending a luncheon at the Federation of Māori Authorities Conference 2019 and meeting with Māori liaison staff from Victoria University, Wellington.

- A teacher of health and physical education used the Māori framework of pepeha to develop team culture. The students visited local awa and maunga and did active team challenges while learning about the significance of these places to Māori.

- The same teacher led an opportunity for disengaged Māori students to experience local places in the outdoors underpinned by a kaupapa Māori framework. The students worked with this teacher and another to plan a haerenga where they would hike to significant places, learning mātauranga Māori as they travelled. They followed tikanga, with students leading karakia throughout, and they shared local stories. The teachers prompted the students to explore the deeper meanings conveyed within the stories and to connect those messages to their personal experiences.

- A mathematics teacher had students construct scale models of wharenui, basing this upon Whakatu Marae. The students learned about measurement and patterns, but also about local history, tikanga Māori, the visual arts, and photography.

- A teacher re-oriented her horticulture class towards a focus on te ao Māori. This included mapping their garden and the harakeke in the school, learning the correct protocols for harvesting and weaving with harakeke, and increasingly integrating te reo and tikanga into classroom routines.

All Year 7 and 8 students at Broadgreen Intermediate had the opportunity to learn about their local significant places through a ten-week unit on Tūrangawaewae that included excursions and visits from community experts. Students and teachers inquired into topics such as:

- Familiar places and the different kinds of connections students might have to a particular place
- The possibility of a skate park at the school on land that belongs to Ngāti Koata
- What life was like for early settlers
- Land use over time
- Local environmental issues and how they are being addressed
- The Ngawhātū Orphanage Cemetery
- Landforms and stories like the legend of Te Wheke.
What happened as a result of this innovation?

The project succeeded in:

- building teachers' awareness of culture and place, Te Ao Māori, and local history and stories
- developing teachers' capability to create learning experiences that enabled students to explore Te Ao Māori and their own identity and connection to place in a rich, engaging, and challenging way
- normalising tikanga Māori at Nayland College in ways that are authentic, respectful, and inclusive
- fostering the recognition that each person has a history, culture, and stories of their own that adds value and meaning to the Te Tiriti partnership
- strengthening student's sense of identity, wellbeing, and engagement.

At the intermediate school, students’ inquiries are taught through this lens and the school’s camps are oriented towards acquiring local knowledge. At Nayland College, the Year 9 Marae visits and wero are part of the annual routine. The innovation team is being sustained and has grown in number. Its members are determined to continue their own learning. They have collaborated to design half-year modules for junior students around topics such as:

- Waka Ama and Wayfinding (Physical Education and Mathematics);
- Foraging and Fishing (Science, Rongoa Māori, and Technology);
- Ngā Toi (Te Reo Māori, Performing Arts and Social Studies); and
- Humāra (Traditional Māori Horticulture)

Staff continue to be supported with an annual noho marae at Whakatū Marae for them and their whānau. New staff now participate in Waka Haerenga where Hui Taurima student leaders share stories and iwi history. The project team has also shared the learning and findings with the school community at a Matariki Māori and Pasifika Awards night.

This inquiry has led to an improved relationship between Ngāti Koata Trust and both Broadgreen Intermediate and Nayland College. Ngāti Koata stories and histories have been told through a variety of contexts. These stories have been shared and a succession plan has been established for Ngāti Koata rangatahi. Two of the Hui Taurima student leaders have been identified as leaders in both school and iwi settings.

What did they learn?

The innovation team has learned a great deal about place and culturally responsive pedagogy. The biggest lesson is that it is the journey that matters and not the destination — the process and not the product. The team recognises that all students and teachers have their own history, culture, and stories that are woven into their relationships with each other and their place and that add value and meaning to Te Tiriti partnership. Its members believe that place and culturally responsive pedagogy is a way of working that can strengthen hauora and feelings of belonging for people of all ages and in a range of educational institutions and workplaces.
Inquiry team
This inquiry was led by Diana Maskill. Membership of the innovation team changed over the course of the project. The following teachers from Nayland College were part of the project at its end: Cristina Armstrong, Bruno Watkins, Rachael Purdie, Matt Robinson, and Jaqueline de Jong. Those from Broadgreen Intermediate School were Rebekah Shepherd and Glen Vartha.

The project had an internal critical friend, Jane Townsend, who is Nayland College’s Deputy Principal.

The team partnered with Ngāti Koata iwi as mana whenua of both schools.

The project’s external expert was Mike Brown (Auckland University of Technology).

For further information
If you would like to learn more about this project, please contact the project leader, Diana Maskill, at diana.maskill@nayland.school.nz; or Jane Townsend, the internal critical friend at jane.townsend@nayland.school.nz

Reference list


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He mea tārai e mātou te mātauranga kia rangatira ai, kia mana taurite ai ōna huanga