

TĒNEI AU TE KORONGA

Growing Māori postgraduate research excellence

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Abstract

Te Koronga is a Māori research excellence rōpū that Professor Anne-Marie Jackson and Dr Hauiti Hakopa founded at the University of Otago. The year 2023 marks the 10th anniversary of Te Koronga. Over the past 10 years, Te Koronga has been successfully supporting and producing excellent Māori researchers. A collective of current Te Koronga taura, many of whom have contributed to other articles in this issue, have written this concluding article of the Te Koronga MAI Special Issue. We are unapologetically proud to be Te Koronga. Why? Because in the academy, where we were reminded often that our way of thinking did not matter, our knowledge did not matter, our whakapapa did not matter and our research did not matter, we found a place where it did, a place where our whakapapa, whānau and mātauranga are the very foundation. As taura of Te Koronga, we wanted to share some of that story.

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Keywords

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Introduction

It's 2013. I'm walking through the Otago campus, dressed in a puffer jacket and trackpants watching the condensation in every exhale of breath while also trying to maintain my balance to avoid the icy tiles of the path. I begin to think to myself, What I am going to say today? What mahi did I even complete? Or even attempt? My writing is terrible. They're going to tell me to do it again. I finally get to the infamous red door at Union Court. My heart starts to race a little faster as I slowly climb the narrow stairs to the first floor. I get to the top of the stairs, take a deep breath and knock on the slightly opened office door. "Come in." I enter the office. Anne-Marie Jackson is sitting at her desk facing towards the door, while Hauiti Hakopa has to turn around because his desk is facing towards the window. It's crazy what a nervous wreck I would be before the hui, yet as soon as you're in their presence that all goes away and you're having a kōrero about the most random things for the first 10 minutes before you even get into the mahi-related talk. Maybe that was on purpose, to settle our nerves. But that was them. That was how they engaged. They genuinely wanted to know how you had been and what you had been up to. So simple, right? Yet unheard of in the academic realm we students were so used to. We talked goals, kaupapa, aspirations. What is it that you want to do? What are you passionate about? The dream team of Anne-Marie Jackson and Hauiti Hakopa had this ability to somehow make you figure out your potential without telling you themselves. It's one of their superpowers, like precognition. They know what you're capable of before you know it. They know your infamous "golden thread" before you even begin to write your thesis. It wasn't long after those individual one-on-one hui that we all saw that foundation that both Anne-Marie and Hauiti set would soon become something so much bigger—something much more impactful for the future of Māori academia and Māori research within and outside the institution.

From my perspective, as a taura of Te Koronga, I can only imagine the kōrero and wānanga that went on between Anne-Marie Jackson, Hauiti Hakopa, Dr Samantha Jackson and Brendan Flack that eventually led to the conception of such a groundbreaking kaupapa. There is no doubt in my mind that what began in Room 118 of the now demolished Union Court at the University of Otago every Monday morning 9–11am in 2013

was well planned, intentional and nothing short of what was to become of Te Koronga, as a Centre of Indigenous Science, in 2023. This article sets out to share some of that story from the taura perspective. We reflect on our postgraduate journey and how Te Koronga has been the whānau, the support system and the kaupapa we needed to thrive as Māori researchers.

Methods

The methods used for this research included holding a thought space wānanga where eight taura shared kōrero about our journey in Te Koronga and our aspirations for Te Koronga as we become a Centre of Indigenous Science in 2023. As taura of Te Koronga, we have all experienced our own unique journey as a Māori postgraduate researcher, or a non-Māori taura advancing Māori aspirations, within the institution. This article aims to share insights and lived experiences from present taura of Te Koronga ranging from the honours level to doctorate, including our journey to Te Koronga and why Te Koronga is so important to our postgraduate research journey.

The eight taura involved in the thought space wānanga were:

- Honours taura Nick Parata, *He Hauora te Taonga—Exploring Kī o Rahi as a Tool to Assess Components of Fitness*
- Master's taura Tasha Burton, *Kī o Rahi he Taonga Tuku Iho—Kī o Rahi Is a Cherished Treasure*
- Master's taura Rawiri Ratahi, *Te Whai Wawewawe a Māui Tikitiki a Taranga*
- Master's taura Te Kahurangi Skelton, *Taranaki Tua Tinitini—Exploring Climate Change in Taranaki*
- Doctoral taura Ben Hanara, *Ruku Kai Piki Mai*
- Doctoral taura Terina Raureti, *Kauora—A Theory and Praxis of Swimming for Māori*
- Doctoral taura Ngahuia Mita, *Tairāwhiti Waka, Tairāwhiti Tāngata—Examining Tairāwhiti Voyaging Philosophies*
- Doctoral taura Chelsea Cunningham, *Toko Mauri—Understanding Whānau Well-being through Connection to Whakapapa*.

This article is structured through our Te Koronga karakia, which is written below. We have chosen to use our karakia because, as described in the

introduction, this is one of the foundations for Te Koronga as a kaupapa and is therefore where we draw many of our inspirations from as taura.

Tēnei au Te Koronga

Tēnei au te koronga
 He hiringa nōu e Ruatau
 ki ēnei taura, ki ēnei pia
 Tō ake nei au i te tatau o taku whare
 Ko Te Rangikaupapa, tatau o Tāwhirirangi
 i te pūmotomoto o te kauwhanga o Te Toi o ngā
 Rangi
 E Pawa Tutakina i tauru nui, i tauru atamai o
 wharekura
 Kapikapi tō aro, kapi te ngātata, te ngātoro, te
 piere, te tatau o tēnei whare
 E tū iho nei
 Nā tō aro, nā tō pia

E Rehua, mā Ruatau ē

*Here I am with an ardent desire, a perseverance
 equal to thine, O Rehua!
 Give to these pupils, to these acolytes [all
 knowledge]
 I close the door of my house, like Te
 Rangikaupapa, door of the Tawhirirangi
 That opens up through the plane of Te Toi o ngā
 Rangi
 O Pawa! Shut close Tauru nui [main entrance],
 and Tauru atamai of wharekura
 Cover, cover up thy way, cover the cracks, The
 apertures, the tiny cracks, with the door of this
 house
 By thy ardent learner, by thy acolyte, O Rehua!
 And Ruatau!*

The origins of Te Koronga are found in the above karakia. This is the first verse of the karakia from the teachings of Te Matorohanga and Nepia Pohuhu, priests of Te Rawheoro whare wānanga on the East Coast that was written and translated by Whatahoro (Whatahoro & Smith, 1913). The name Te Koronga is found and recited in the first line. The word koronga refers to a purpose, intention or aspiration. Te Koronga is about us as taura, disciples of higher knowledge, the purpose, intention and aspiration of our tīpuna. Our purpose in Te Koronga as Māori researchers is to uplift mauri ora within our respective communities by working and researching alongside whānau, hapū and iwi across Aotearoa New Zealand (Jackson et al., 2015).

We spent much time learning and reciting this verse of the karakia in the beginnings of Te Koronga. Hauiti preferred we learn by ear first, and it was not until we could recite it ourselves that we could then write it down. Many of us would have a recording of Hauiti replaying through our headphones so we could practise outside of Te Koronga Mondays or our Karakia Tuesday time slot. As time has progressed, we have learned more of the karakia, extending our knowledge. Tuākana of Te Koronga also contribute to leading and teaching the karakia to our tēina, and we have kept the same practice as Hauiti—we recite line by line and taura repeat it. Our karakia is the true ngako of Te Koronga. We think about our first Te Koronga room, named “Tēnei au”, every Monday at 9am. We begin with “Tēnei au Te Koronga...”. When we hand in our dissertations and theses all the way to our graduation speeches, we recite “Tēnei au...”. The strength of this karakia is almost impossible to put into words because it is something you experience. We now have taura who live and study across the motu or who have returned home to undertake and complete their research—a much different space and environment from our Te Koronga space in Dunedin. This is why the karakia is our ngako—because no matter where we are, we can all recite this karakia and still carry the essence of the kaupapa that is Te Koronga.

One of our tuākana, Ngahuia Mita, talks about how you never forget the first time you recite this first verse of the Te Koronga karakia from memory. It is more of a feeling. At first, you might surprise yourself and then you realise “this is where I am supposed to be”. This karakia aligns with the kaupapa of Te Koronga perfectly, which is why we hold it so close and with so much value as taura.

He hiringa—The inspiration

The second line of the first verse recites “he hiringa nōu e Ruatau”, urging persistence like Ruatau’s is required despite the difficulty in attaining knowledge. Phillips et al. (2022) also explain that “He Hiringa reflects both the body of higher knowledge as well as the class of student who absorbs and is given that knowledge” (p. 3). To be like Ruatau is the inspiration; therefore, this section discusses what inspired taura of Te Koronga to pursue higher knowledge in postgraduate research.

For some of us in Te Koronga, postgraduate study was not something we thought was possible. However, in reality, looking back and then going through this experience as one of the first taura of



FIGURE 1 Te Koronga celebrating our fifth birthday in 2019

Te Koronga, seeing Te Koronga grow rapidly over the past 10 years, one of the issues was the lack of representation. “You can’t be what you can’t see.” Te Koronga began within the School of Physical Education, Sport and Exercise Sciences at the University of Otago, where Professor Anne-Marie Jackson was an academic staff member. She carried on the legacy of many other great Indigenous scholars before her, such as Dr Nālani Wilson Hokowhitu, Dr Ihirangi Heke, Emeritus Professor Les Williams, Professor Brendan Hokowhitu and Professor Dame Farah Palmer. As physical education students at the time, we were not exposed to Māori students pursuing postgraduate study. We were also not seeing postgraduate research as something we were interested in or passionate about. Māori representation is extremely important, not just by taura but by staff as well.

This is where all of the taura of Te Koronga agree on how pivotal Māori academic staff have been in all of our journeys at the University of Otago. At the time Te Koronga was established

in 2013, Anne-Marie Jackson was the only Māori staff member within the department, and one of a small number in the Division of Sciences. This underrepresentation of Māori staff does not only exist within the University of Otago but throughout Aotearoa. Māori constitute only 4.8% of academics across the eight universities in the country (McAllister et al., 2019; Naepi, 2019). The same disparities and representation issues exist for Māori students pursuing postgraduate research, as you can see in data from the 2018 census shown in Table 1.

Although Table 1 shows that Māori postgraduate student numbers are low, it should be noted that Māori make up 13% of all domestic university students and that 26% of those are studying at postgraduate level (Te Pōkai Tara, 2022). Another highlight is that we have seen a 53% increase in Māori doctoral students since 2012 (Te Pōkai Tara, 2022), which is positive. It is important to highlight our success within Te Koronga in postgraduate degree completions as well. As of

TABLE 1 Percentage of Māori students enrolled in degree levels in 2006, 2013 and 2018

Degree	2006 (%)	2013 (%)	2018(%)
Bachelor’s/Level 7	5.5	7.5	8.4
Postgraduate/Honours	0.8	1.3	2.4
Master’s	0.7	1.0	1.3
Doctorate	0.1	0.2	0.2

Source: Adapted from Stats NZ (2020).

December 2022, Te Koronga has had 45 summer internships (7 currently ongoing), 7 honours completions, 1 graduate diploma completion, 10 postgraduate diploma completions, 11 master's completions (1 currently ongoing) and 2 PhD completions (2 recently submitted, 5 ongoing).

These kinds of accomplishments have a starting point, and as mentioned earlier, this article is written from the perspective of the taurua; therefore, this is a story of our beginnings. This article began with an account of what a typical weekly supervision hui was like before Te Koronga Mondays, where we now come together as a collective to start our week from 9 until 11am. However, to understand how many of us even got to the point of attending these, we reflect on the inspiration that occurred before that.

How did we get here? Many of the tuākana instantly mentioned undergraduate Māori papers that Professor Anne-Marie Jackson, Dr Hauiti Hakopa and, more recently, Dr Chanel Phillips and Dr Jeremy Hapeta have taught within the existing degrees in the Division of Science.

These papers are, in most cases, our first experience and exposure to things Māori within our degrees. The Māori physical education and health paper was the first experience of being lectured by Anne-Marie Jackson. Her way of teaching, her ability to build a strong rapport with students and, of course, the kaupapa of her paper and her passion changed many of our pathways and exposed

us to what we really wanted to do and what we wanted to explore. For example, Terina explains:

I think that paper was the first time I did an assignment and really cared about it. Even my friends were like, “Whoa, you’ve been working on this all semester. This is really cool. Go you.”

Although we loved our degree and we loved what we were doing, many of us were yet to achieve excellence in what we thought was our purpose—that was, until our Māori physical education and health papers. As Chelsea explains:

I got my first A in Māori PE and health. Meeting Anne-Marie and realising that my passion was very whānau centred, I really wanted to do stuff with my whānau and also for myself.

Ben had a similar experience:

I was battling through the standard PE papers and then it was Anne-Marie’s paper. I got my first A, and then any other assignment from there that I could relate to te ao Māori I did and my assignments were getting better and better, because I was writing about things I knew about and already had in me.

Ngahuia shared that she attended the Māori physical education and health noho marae before she became a student in the class the following



FIGURE 2 PHSE 104 Marae Noho at Arai te Uru, 2019

year. That experience alone made her want to not only take the paper the following year but undertake an independent research study paper focusing on the Horouta waka. She reflects on that paper:

I did an essay about the Horouta waka. I remember sitting in Te Tumu [Māori studies department] and tracing my whakapapa back to Paoa, who is the captain of the waka, and just that for me was massive and really just set up the rest of the mahi that I've done and full circle back to right now and then up to going to get a captain's ticket to be like Paoa embodied—you know that's full circle.

Te Koronga did not just grow in taura or in Māori postgraduate excellence, we grew in Māori representation. When you add this to what Anne-Marie and Hauiti were already doing to an exceptionally high standard, the taura capacity grew even more quickly. Nick reflects on this well:

My first introduction was a Māori PE and health paper, back in 2019. That was my first introduction into a Māori space and that I remember having Anne-Marie and then the tuākana came along to the noho [marae] and I remember after that I was like, "Oh, my god. This is a space I really want to connect more with."

Te Kahurangi also shares her thoughts on the importance of the presence and representation of tuākana:

I came [into Te Koronga] because I did the Māori PE and health paper, I was in awe, fan girling hard. I never saw myself reflected in the academy, you guys [the Te Koronga tuākana] at noho, beautiful, loving it. You just see yourself reflected back at you from your tuākana. You see them excelling, doing excellent mahi, but then they've got similar stories and makes it all approachable and easier.

Representation is so important, and it has always been an underlying kaupapa of Te Koronga. As Anne-Marie states "this kaupapa is aspirational for our communities and taiohi. There might be a student, kid, or whānau member who sees us, and they can see themselves standing right where we are, to normalise excellence" (University of Otago, 2022).

Although it sounds simple, these papers that people like us teach provides us with a spark to want to continue postgraduate studies with like-minded taura who are just as driven and

passionate as us. Reflecting back on "he hiringa nōu e Ruatau", we must not only want to pursue higher knowledge, but also understand the expectations and persistence required to attain said knowledge. This is something we are all capable of and have the potential to acquire, yet sometimes we need an example, such as the leaders and tuākana in front of us.

Te kauwhanga o Te Toi o ngā Rangi

Te kauwhanga refers to the sacred passageway Tāne had to go through to reach the uppermost heaven, Te Toi o ngā Rangi. By understanding Tāne's feat of ascending the heavens to acquire the kete wānanga, by entering each pūmotomoto of the heavens, one after the other. It is important to note the support Tāne had on his quest, such as his brother Tawhirimātea and the Titi whānau, or wind whānau, while facing challenges from the likes of his other brother, Whiro te Tipua, and Te Tini o Poto, a whānau of various insects. Just as Tāne needed his whānau to get to and through te kauwhanga, we too need a whānau—a strong system as we strive for academic excellence. This is where Danny Poa's role as the Kaitiaki Kaupapa in Te Koronga was critical to our success, by ensuring that our community connections and the whānau kaupapa were always at the forefront. Whānau has always been the foundational layer of Te Koronga and a key factor in our success both individually and as a whānau. Whānau sits at the forefront of our mahi and research. From our communities we have had the pleasure to work alongside our kaumātua and kuia, our aunties and uncles of Te Koronga, and our immediate whānau. As the older tuākana of Te Koronga, we always acknowledge Cessy, who passed in 2019. She was our Nani of Te Koronga and kept everything running very smoothly behind the scenes.

Community

Community connections and relationships have been a strong focus for Te Koronga since the beginning. Undertaking research and writing a dissertation or thesis is one thing, but building a strong relationship with those who are a part of that, which for us is whānau or Māori communities, is an absolute must. For us as students, this understanding and learning came from being a part of leading and supporting our noho marae within the undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, as well as supporting community noho marae. As researchers undertaking Māori research, having these kinds of opportunities to gain this experience was an important part of the academic aspect of

postgraduate studies. Chelsea explains further by reflecting on her whānau wānanga for her PhD:

Anne-Marie allowing that opportunity for me to lead out on the organisation of the noho was huge. There's no way I would have had the confidence I had to do my whānau wānanga without that experience. It's not just organisation—it's health and safety, preparing for every possibility, knowing how to cater for kai, how to transport, how to book things so everything runs smoothly and safely—the things you never learn in a classroom.

Terina also spoke on the importance of the Te Koronga direction when it came to community engagement:

All the mahi Te Koronga does gives us that [experience & skill], even that grounding in Karitāne, making us work in the communities, all that stuff that isn't just writing, is what gives us that juice to be better people for our people.

There are so many aspects of being a researcher, especially a Māori researcher working with Māori communities, that require much more than being able to produce a body of work in written form. We still acknowledge the importance of the writing and our academic work, such as this Special

Issue. For us, without our whānau, without our communities, the research does not have the same value; therefore, their contribution, their needs and their mana have to always be met.

Tuākana-tēina

As already mentioned, the tuākana-tēina relationship has been important for taurira who are coming through Te Koronga. Tuākana are present at many of the noho marae, often leading kaupapa throughout the weekend, so taurira can see people like them and whakawhanaunga with them. The Physical Education Māori Association (PEMA) has also been influential. PEMA is a student-led kaupapa for Māori students enrolled in physical education. Many taurira of Te Koronga both past and present have been representatives on PEMA throughout the years, opening more opportunities to share our journeys with other taurira. As Rawiri explains:

When I first got into PEMA this guy [Ben—a current Te Koronga PhD student] was tumuaki tuarua. That's where it started. I had no academic ambitions whatsoever, but as the years progressed and I stayed on PEMA, we helped out at noho marae. That was where I got my first experience of you all, what you all get up to, how you operate, and I was like whoa. That's where I felt most comfortable, in that environment with you all.



FIGURE 3 End of year Whānau Fit celebrations, 2016

We have also had other kaupapa, such as Whānau Fit, which was led by Terina, a weekly fitness session that incorporated te ao Māori and te reo Māori into exercise. Tash shares her experience:

I think Whānau Fit was a really big thing for me. I really tied that to Te Koronga. It was a way to, because I was pretty shy and didn't talk much, but I could go play and that was a way of interacting.

Te Whānau o Te Koronga

As Te Koronga has grown, so too has our kaupapa, goals and aspirations. Because of this, many of us have returned home, physically leaving what was once our safe research environment, where we could go and see staff of Te Koronga. Although it was an anxious time for many of us returning home, those of us who have gone home now know that we have the ability, skillset and purpose to do so. Moreover, we have found ways to stay connected and continue to support one another from wherever we may be.

Those of us off-campus connect via Zoom every Monday 9–11am. We have still been on hand for the other students who are on the road to submission, simply because we know how important it is, not only for us, but for the kaupapa of Te Koronga, to continue to be whānau driven in the pursuit of academic excellence. Ben,

who is currently halfway through his PhD, along with Terina, who completed her PhD this year, returned to Ōtaki, where they now both live with their son, Taiaroa, shares how Te Koronga:

It's a place, it's a people, we follow wherever the kaupapa goes, but at the same time we take our own branches to our own corners of the world. We take it to Ōtaki, to Taranaki, to Kahungunu. It's a people, not a place, not screens and desks and offices. The times I've been here we've had an office, we haven't had an office, we've been on Zoom now we've got an office, so it doesn't really matter. We're a collective, and as long as there are students, Te Koronga is going to exist.

Ngahuia, who began and completed her PhD in Te Tairāwhiti, expands on Ben's kōrero explaining:

This idea of Te Whare o Te Koronga, you can understand that as a physical whare, but as we all know, it isn't actually ... it's that karakia, Tēnei au, that's Te Whare o Te Koronga and it's the unseen and that invisible thread, without end that links us all together. "Tēnei au Te Koronga" is the ngako, it's that embodied knowing, opening up to your tīpuna and knowing that you're both capable and worthy of excellence because that's what your tīpuna are.



FIGURE 4 Te Koronga Monday via Zoom

Whānau and the way we support one another simply by showing up is a big reason why Te Koronga has been so successful in producing young Māori researchers. Further to this, the aspirations that surround our understanding of whānau are applied to our own research. We take this fundamental aspect with us into our communities we work alongside. Our relationships with our communities do not end with the research; rather, they are the start of a forever whānau.

Conclusion

As we reflect on the past 10 years, replaying memorable moments, we feel like spectators who have had the best seats in the house. It is now the start of 2023, Te Koronga will become part of the Centre of Indigenous Science and we have our first Te Koronga professor. In the months ahead, we will witness Anne-Marie Jackson's inaugural professorial lecture, Ngahuia Mita and Terina Raureti will be graduating with doctorates, Tash Burton with her master's and Nick Parata his honours. Importantly, Tash and Nick will be the first students supervised by Dr Chanel Phillips to graduate (and Chanel was the very first Te Koronga PhD graduate)! Among all the chaos that comes with postgraduate studies, these are the moments that we are reminded of how incredibly privileged we are to be a part of such a great kaupapa and whānau. Over the past 10 years, we have moved from Anne-Marie's office to Room 118 in Union Court, to the small library, to the "Tēnei au" room in the School of Physical Education, to Zoom, separated from the School of Physical Education, Sport and Exercise Science because of systemic racism, moved to the College of Education as a safe haven, to now having our own whare that we will soon open. At the 2022 Te Koronga research symposium, Professor Linda Smith said, "Excellence requires the growth of others, the reciprocation"—the very epitome of a kaupapa that has been instilled in us from day one. Te Koronga has never been just about our personal academic journey. We all have taken on the responsibility to continue to reciprocate this whether that be with tauira, our whānau or our communities. That is the very essence of Te Koronga and is key to the ongoing kaupapa of Māori research excellence within the academy. From beginning to end: Tēnei au Te Koronga.

Glossary

hapū	subtribe
hui	meeting
iwi	tribe
kai	food
kaitiaki	guardian
karakia	prayer
kaumātua	elders
kaupapa	purpose, subject, programme
kauwhanga	sacred passageway
kete wānanga	knowledge basket
kōrero	to speak, discussion
kuia	female elders
mahi	work
mana	honour, respect
mātauranga	Māori knowledge
mauri ora	knowing who we are
motu	country
ngako	essence
noho marae	overnight stay at ancestral meeting house
rōpū	group
pūmotomoto	passageway
taiohi	youth
tauira	student/s
te ao Māori	Māori worldview
te reo Māori	the Māori language
teina/tēina	younger sibling/s
tīpuna	ancestors
tuakana/tuākana	older sibling/s
tumuaki tuarua	deputy principal
waka	canoe
wānanga	to meet, discuss
whakapapa	lineage
whakawhanaunga	have a relationship, get to know one another, family, extended family
whānau	place of higher learning
whare wānanga	

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