

## A265974: TE AHI KAA ROA RNZ

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### Project Description:

"The philosophy of Te Ahi Kaa is to reflect the diversity of Māori in the past, present and future. While bilingual in delivery, the programme incorporates Māori practices and values in its content, format and presentation.

Mana Tangata: Tawhirimatea Williams:

Māori educator Tawhirimatea Williams talks to Te Ahi Kaa about his teaching career that has spanned more than fifty years.

When a school principal's job was advertised in the teacher's college publication The Gazette, Tawhirimatea jumped at the chance to apply. The job was in Ruatoki, and Tawhiri says it was an opportunity to learn the Māori language.

"I had always been on to her [his wife Kaa Williams] to teach me Māori, but I was never ever successful because I didn't listen very well, I thought very well I'm going to either Ruatahuna or Ruatoki."

In 1977, he began his tenure as principal of Te Kura o Ruatoki but he had to win over the confidence of the Tuhoe People first. A meeting was called by the local tribal committee, Te Kōmiti o Runa.

"These two big people came to get us one, well, her name was Gigantor or Gi, named after a character on TV. The other person was Tuhitaare Nohotima. He was twice the size of Gigantor... We got to the marae and the place was full of Tuhoe people wanting to see who is this fella Tawhirimatea Williams, how did he get a job amongst us?"

At the time Tawhirimatea knew little te reo and asked his wife Kaa to teach him to do a whaikōrero. During the formal speeches on the marae, Tawhirimatea recalls one of the Kaumatua (elders) had cautioned him to pay heed to the traditional knowledge of Tuhoe and that he held the mana of the iwi in his hands as the schools new principal.

He jokingly recalls.

""I taku taenga ki reira, pango katoa aku makawe, I te putanga mai o te whārua kua penei ke te

ahua.""

Upon my arrival there I had dark hair, when I left my hair was like this (grey).

Tawhirimatea took the advice and words of caution seriously.

He says he had the arrogance to believe that he could run the first Māori Medium school in the country with minimal Māori language.

"That was a huge learning curve, I was there for nineteen years, for me it was a treasure, that valley". Local elders John Rangihau, Te Uru McGarvey, Rangipuke Tari and Te Kaari Waaka had mentored him in his role as Principal.

"In the fullness of time it became my determination to become a fluent speaker of Māori and Tuhoe enabled me to do that. I took on their language, I have a whakapapa that puts me right in Ruatoki." In 1996 Tawhirimatea's uncle the Bishop of Aotearoa Whakahuihui Vercoe (1928-2007) asked him and his wife Kaa to move to Auckland to take up a job teaching the Māori language at St Johns Theological School. They both agreed and worked there for a few years.

Te Wananga Takiura o Nga Kura Kaupapa o Aotearoa started off as the Māori studies department under Auckland Teachers Training College. Tuki Nepia was at the helm of the department from 1990 until her death in 1998, that same year Tawhirimatea became the Principal or Kaitiaki Huhua. In 2000 it became a private teaching training institution for Māori language teachers, the language environment is total immersion.

Te Wānanga Takiura is located in central Royal Oak in Auckland, there are one-year Rumaki Reo programmes and degree or diploma courses in Teaching Kura Kaupapa Māori. Tawhiri has been at the helm for 19 years, Kaa is a Senior Lecturer.

In 2015 Tawhirimatea was made a member of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to Māori, this year he and his wife Kaa were recipients of the Ta Kingi Ihaka award for lifetime contribution.

#### A Career as a Teacher

Tawhirimatea's mum died when he was two years old. Raised by his grandmother he attended Omarumutu Native school, from there he moved to Tokomaru Bay where his dad worked as a school teacher, and later attended Whangaparaoa school where his dad was the Principal.

During his college year, he attended Auckland's Mount Albert Grammar school which he described as a daunting experience because there were mostly Pākeha students are few Māori. He left in 1959 and enrolled at The University of Auckland, it was there that he met Bill Tawhai, Pat Hohepa, Toby Rikihana and Ranginui Walker.

"I was bought up to believe that the English language and the English way of life was the way to go, it provided bread and butter, it provided a roof over your house, your Māori language did nothing for you until I was at Auckland University and thought hey there's another side to me that I haven't looked at in depth."

Following University Tawhirimatea who had met his wife Kaa at University worked in at Te Whetu school a timber village in South Waikato between Putaruru and Tokoroa with a roll of 36 kids. He was the Principal at Kawhia District District High School and had a two-year stint as Principal at Patea Area School.

From:

<http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/teahikaa/audio/2018618532/mana-tangata-tawhirimatea-v>

#### Project Links

- [https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1j6\\_xry6OfLrdBkXeYZA8NTLCZwf-jr5DHlpGwAONLYY/edit#gid=](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1j6_xry6OfLrdBkXeYZA8NTLCZwf-jr5DHlpGwAONLYY/edit#gid=)

## Project Labels

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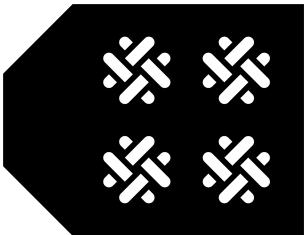


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