

Learner and staff personas



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About the learner and staff personas and journey maps

This collection of 20 learner and seven staff personas aims to enable and support Te Pūkenga and people working in vocational education and learning to strengthen a learner-centred culture. They reflect many of the common voices presented in the *Te Rito Insights from Learners and Staff reports*¹ based on our *Ākonga at the Centre* research (Te Pūkenga 2021). Achieving equity for underserved learners has been the guiding principle of this research. It has also been central to the design and approach of the project through to the presentation of the findings and associated resources.

A persona is a fictional character based on research, commonly used in human-centred design to ensure that consumer needs, aspirations and motivations are met as solutions are designed. Personas are used fairly widely to help decision-makers better empathise and understand different experiences and perspectives to ensure their needs are able to be served. Personas can result in unintended consequences, particularly when they represent people in deficit ways that produce unhelpful narratives. This can be especially harmful in the case of underserved groups.

To avoid common pitfalls of deficit framing our underserved communities, we have used the same approach as our *Te Rito* reports by combining Design Thinking and Critical Bicultural methodologies. To further avoid deficit theorising, we engaged Kaupapa Māori researchers who have reviewed the language and approach we have taken.

The personas aim to support equity and express narratives of the many technical barriers and enablers experienced by learners. They also highlight the wider connection to whānau, hapū, and the community context. Although the personas will resonate with many of our underserved learners, they are not real people and therefore, we have avoided 'naming' them. We wanted to highlight the often-unnoticed strengths and resilience we heard and observed of our learners, and have named the personas by these qualities. To show the personas through a different medium, each story has been further interpreted by artist Pip Hartley with individual patterns in each symbolic rito.

By showing the barriers that need to be removed to achieve equity and the aspirations and enablers to success, these personas will help our network to put ākonga at the centre of everyday decisions, at every level of our mahi.

***On behalf of our Te Pūkenga whānau, ngā mihi.
Hāpaitia te ara tika ka pūmau ai te
rangatiratanga mō ngā uri whakaheke.***

¹ See the Te Pūkenga website for our *Te Rito Insights from Learners and Staff Reports* (tepukenga.ac.nz)



Empathise

Improve

Ideate

How to use these personas

In our letter of expectation, Minister of Education, Hon Chris Hipkins requires that 'every conversation, every decision you make needs to pause and ask the question "what will this actually mean for students, trainees, apprentices and employers and their communities?"' These learner and staff personas, together with employer personas, learner voice and partnerships, can guide the design of new programmes or experiences and enhance reflective practice.

Empathy

It can be difficult when your life experiences are different to those you are serving. Personas can be used to close the empathy gap, to imagine walking in the shoes of others and to envision how you could connect with them as they are likely to be in your Te Pūkenga whānau.

Ideas

Consider the aspirations and motivations of those in your Te Pūkenga whānau. Use this insight to enhance ako, manaakitanga and whanaungatanga. Draw on your new understanding to dream of new possibilities and to brainstorm ideas that can remove barriers and scale enablers.

Improve

Check in with the personas to see if the ideas you have, the improvements you are making, speak to motivations and aspirations of those you are serving. Check that barriers you intended to remove are gone, or if new barriers have been accidentally added. Use these personas to reflect on and develop your practice, no matter what contribution you make in your role to ākongā success.

Using these personas with care

The experiences and stories shared by learners and staff are a taonga gifted to us. In using these personas we need to take care that we are using them to address barriers in the system, not to frame our learners, or their communities, in deficit ways. Be careful not to stereotype our learners or encourage a false sense of security that we now 'know' learners. It is important to appreciate that there is a great deal of depth and breadth of experiences and perspectives that sit behind these 'oversimplified' characters. The stories we curate in each persona are only the tip of the iceberg in terms of all the lived experiences that contribute to each persona. We have no intention for these personas to replace your best practice around seeking to understand by 'learning from' your learners directly, as opposed to 'learning about' them. These personas are a guide to improve equity and further enable meaningful impact on the outcomes and experiences of the learners we serve.

Limitations

We acknowledge these personas do not represent all staff and learners. What they do represent are the common voices heard through the stories shared by 315 participants during 45 focus groups held with learners (primarily those underserved by the system) and the staff who support them across Aotearoa.

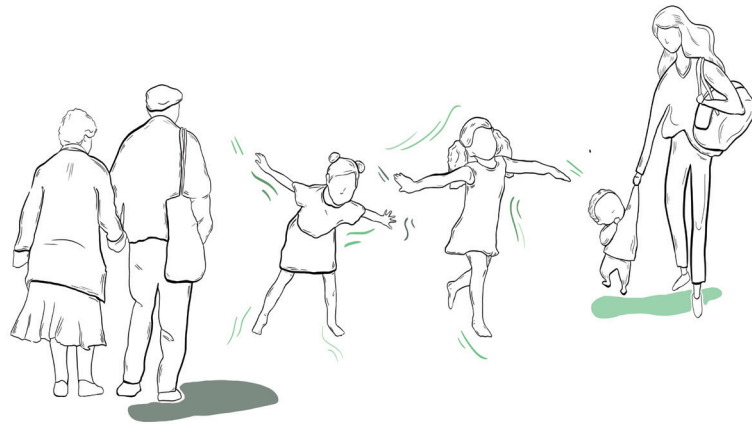
Questions and feedback

The Te Pūkenga Learner Journey & Experience team would appreciate being sent any questions or feedback you may have with regard to using these personas. Please go to the Te Pūkenga website. tepukenza.ac.nz²

²<https://xn--tepukenza-szb.ac.nz/our-pathway/learner-journey-and-experience/>

Compliance with Ethical Standards Ethical approval Full ethical approval to undertake the focus group research in this publication was gained from Wintec's Human Ethics in Research Group on 28/9/2020

Creating a legacy for my whānau



My whānau are a big reason I am here and they are the reason I continue.

Before I can commit to study, there is so much for me to sort out... Studylink, part-time work, childcare, setting up whānau support, a budget, housing and kids. I have to invest so much time planning, so I need a timetable that works around childcare hours and lots of really clear information early, and I need it not to change.

For study to really work for me, it needs to fit around my life... at the moment it is more like I have to fit around study. If my kids are sick I have to miss class and catching up is hard. I need my tutor to understand my life commitments and provide clear guidance about learning and assessments.

I need learning/ lessons that are recorded, flexible deadlines, peer support and the necessities of life, like money and kai provided. I know this is hard work now, but I am motivated to continue, for the future of my whānau and my community.

My motivations

My whānau are a big reason I am here and they are the reason I continue. It is hard work juggling life and learning, but I keep going. My whānau, my peers, my supportive tutors, are all helping me to "get to the end"

Success for me...

Being able to study and to do well is success, but it is only success if first I can juggle all that I need to do for my whānau. Everything I do is because of them. I study so that I can provide a good environment for them now and to create a legacy for my whānau and others who will follow behind me.


 Coming in with a child on my hip was recognised when I came in


 The scheduling suited me as a mum; one class a week worked for me. It's closer to home too.


 My tutors were so supportive when I got pregnant - they supported me to keep studying


 Being able to see the pathway and do one step at a time is really important.


 For 3 years I watched the course go by and weighing up my options; i.e. who will look after my kid.


 Timetabling has a massive influence on what you are able to do.


 First days were all a bit daunting. Being 27 - most of my peers are quite young.


 Kai during learning is important.


 Scary bit for me. Husband works away a lot and I have to organise day-care.



Realising my strength

I need something like education to help me be the best person I can be. You may not know it but I live with a mental health condition, often living in silence, without diagnosis, in fear of being judged. I carry scars from being mis treated and even though I can hide many of them, there are times when my resilience is really tested. My condition has on occasion, held me back from my potential as I haven't always known where to find help. The assistance received from my peers and whānau, support workers and tutors is helpful. When anxiety enters my thinking, what

helps is regular conversations with trained staff and counsellors who can give me strategies that empower me, help me develop health plans and follow-up with me to help keep me on track. I do struggle - sometimes daily - but I also know that experiencing success in my education is part of my healing.

My motivations

Feeling empowered through guidance and strategies to keep on track. Knowing that my voice and opinions are valid motivates me to keep learning.



I feel empowered when people believe in me.

Success for me...

Believing in myself and feeling valued and confident in my capabilities. When I have a clear pathway to success that is well supported and people believe in me. I, in turn, believe in myself and this supports my success.

I'm my biggest critic, thinking of all the reasons not to go into study.

Depression, not sleeping. Again, having to keep it all hidden as society judges you and discriminates against you.

The only thing that helped was receiving support from others. [Some helped me] fill out forms, reassuring me about the things I felt concerned, worried and anxious about and providing positive reassurance to believe in myself.

My anxiety stopped me from going to class for the first week.

Sometimes it takes days or weeks to recover, especially if a negative experience leaves me feeling self-conscious, rejected or depressed.

The first step is building a trusting relationship to overcome anxiety.

Challenges include waking up in the morning. I typically sleep 12 hours. It is still hard.

I was hiding a lot of trauma, anxiety etc. going into study about my past situation, particularly with my family. This led to counselling, which led to being tested for autism.



Passionate apprentice



I'm driven by learning skills that match my passion.

I am doing an apprenticeship because I'll be set for life, I have whānau doing it and I like the idea of earning while I learn, 'hands-on'. Opening my books after work is tough though, with all kinds of distractions around me. I appreciate the extra support offered by Training Advisors but I need my boss to give me time off to study and jobs where I can keep learning new skills; not just the irrelevant, boring tasks that don't motivate me. I also need them to look after me when the tradies are stuck in their ways, non-helpful, unprofessional and sexist. I'll learn by being trusted and put in charge of tasks so if my boss won't provide

the right guidance and support, I'll reach out to mentors/workmates because I appreciate the skills they can share. I want to be treated as a professional when I complete, be competent at any tasks I'm given and, one day, pass on my knowledge to my own apprentices.

My motivations

I want to do something more active, applied and physical. I've got whānau in the trades and I can see that an apprenticeship is an opportunity to learn more and expand on what I already know; to produce quality work that I am proud of.

Apprentices can work and earn money and come from all walks of life [and continue to] support family, etc, which is quite an enabler.

Someone helping out in the early days. They lent me their own gear. Also having an approachable and experienced person in the company.

I have time during worktime that my boss gives me to do study.

Having quality mentors in the workplace. Both technically & also morally. A good moral mentor makes me want to listen.

It can be a bit tricky trying to do study that work has allocated for you. With so many distractions around you and ...that feeling of being lost.

As an apprentice I shouldn't be spending so much time doing low level entry jobs that aren't relevant.

Learning off average tradesmen that have ---- attitude.

It would be good if the employer was co ordinating opportunities to learn and practice what I am currently learning.

Success for me...
 Doing an apprenticeship where I know I'll have the tools to shape my reality, whether that be as an owner/operator, being known for quality, better than 'standard', passing on the trade to my own apprentices or simply competent at any tasks and duties asked of me. I want to make a living out of my passion.



Pioneering a new horizon

I am the 'first' in my whānau and I am breaking new ground. Because I chose vocational education over other whānau norms, I have to build their trust in my decision and this is an extra load.

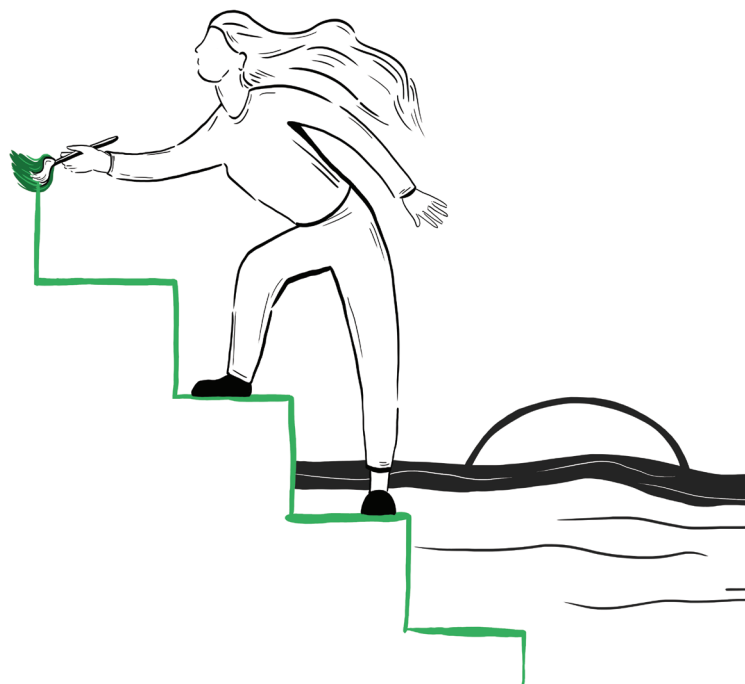
There are a lot of barriers... I doubt myself, and I have loads of other responsibilities. Sometimes I can be made to feel dumb, then I count myself out and become unsure how I will juggle

everything...so I need services that support me and my autonomy.

When others believe in me, I believe in myself and I am free to dream of a different future.

My motivations

I am pioneering new ground. I have a goal, so despite the barriers I face, I am motivated to do this for me, for my kids and future generations.



I am pioneering new ground for myself and my whānau.

Success for me...

Not just being 'the first' to give vocational education a go, success is overcoming doubt and achieving my goal to make a difference to my whānau and in my future job.

I was told that I would make a good Nurse one day. Every time my supervisor saw me she would say "there goes my future Nurse". No one had ever said that to me before.

I started doing the programme. The whole cohort was amazing. I got to meet other people and hear their 'whys'.

Sometimes having some people providing encouragement really helps to keep you going.

The institute has opened up doors for me. There's plenty of opportunity here to be successful

No one in my family had been to tertiary - I hadn't thought about it.

Let's just say that my parents never wanted me to finish school and ...that one day I was going to leave them and move on to a different part of the world to study and become something that I've always dreamed of.

I found it very scary as a 1st generation student. I didn't know how to navigate my way.

The lecturers change... you get to know them and then they leave.

He kākano ahau i ruia mai i Rangiātea



I'm a seed from Rangiātea. My potential is unlimited.

I am grounded in te reo and Te Ao Māori. It's been a bit of a culture shock coming into a very Pākehā environment. There have been many barriers, not knowing what to expect, using just English... I almost quit on the second day! But I persevered; I wouldn't have survived without having whānau alongside me. Learning kanohi ki te kanohi is a big help – these have all been normal at kura. I have to trust this place, and that's hard when I'm taught differently about Te Ao Māori by Pākehā for instance. But the support I've found has given me confidence, has helped keep me going when I've felt

misunderstood and haven't been allowed to relate my own thoughts and feelings from my world. Seeing others' perspectives in my new, extended whānau helps too; it really adds to and validates my thinking. It can be a lonely journey, but I know I have lots to offer and it will be worth it in the end.

My motivations

I am motivated by my aspirations and the aspirations that others have for me. My motivation is maintained by having my values and knowledge normalised and realised as a strength.

Success for me...

Achieving my goals, I have career aspirations and want to showcase my value wherever I go.

Everyone shares different perspectives and that really helps validate my thinking.

Sometimes having some people providing encouragement really helps to keep you going.

Support gave me confidence.

We are an extended whānau.

It was hard for me to come into a Pākehā environment. I nearly quit on my first day, actually it was my second day. We went straight into stock markets on day two. I'd never thought about that.

For us one of our classes had a lot to do with Te Ao Māori and having a Pākehā tutor was quite hard.

You're not always allowed by our tutors to put your own feelings, thoughts into an answer.

Sometimes it feels like a lonely journey but it's a worth it journey.



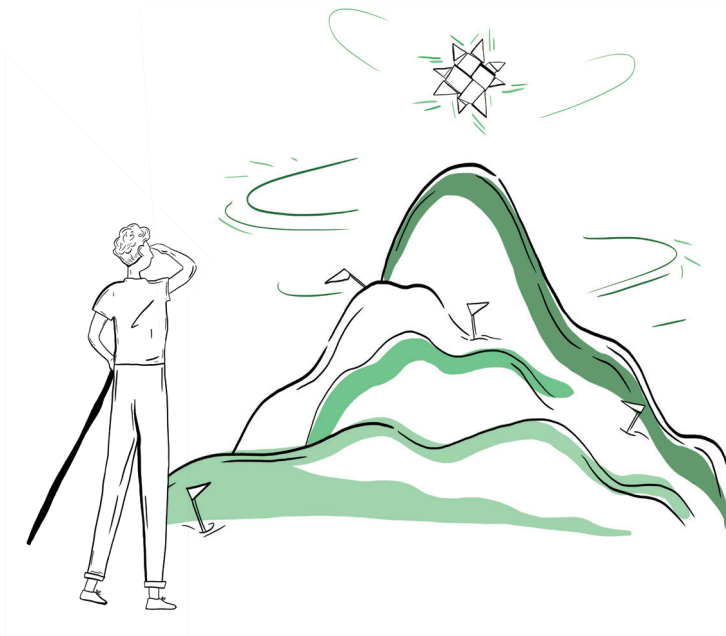
Charting a new course

Today, I am strong... I've experienced and learned a lot in my life. I've been to some dark places but mentors who have come into my life have been like the zenith star Rēhua (Antares) to me; showing me the way and sparking hope and positive action, leading to me enrolling in vocational education. My experiences of education in the past have not been positive but I'm back. The first days were a shock and even now at times I get worried about ghosts from my past coming back to haunt me. Supportive staff, whānau and role models that I can relate to, that's what has got me through. I am able to learn and apply skills I am

learning with confidence. What I really like is the positive affirmation I get from my tutors; seeing that they want me to succeed makes me believe in myself. This makes a huge difference and each day I am here, I am charting a new course in the journey for me and my children.

My motivations

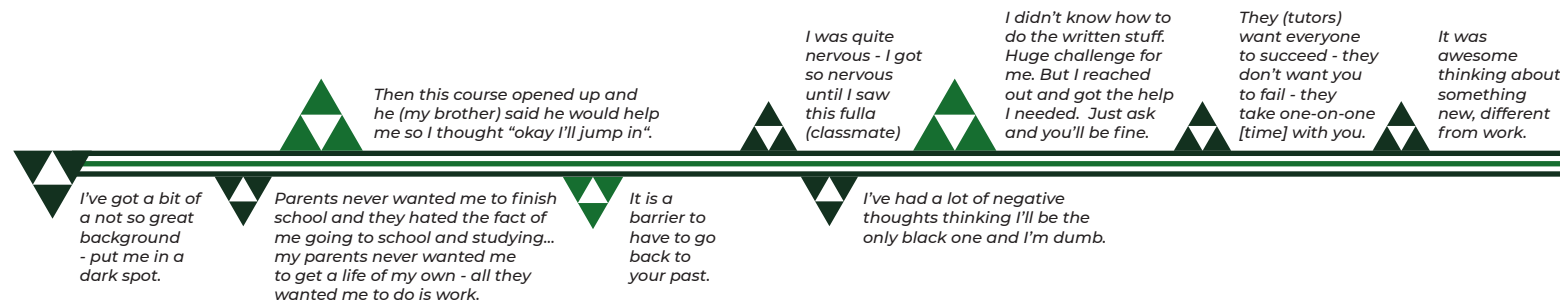
I am motivated now by my potential to help others. There have been times in my life when that has not been the case. Reflections on my past motivate me to do better. I know I have more to offer to myself and my whānau.



Reflections on my past motivate me to do better

Success for me...

Reaching a place where my past is not a barrier. I have been encouraged by those around me that have already developed their own sense of achievement. I want that personal success for myself and my whānau.



Titiro ki tua



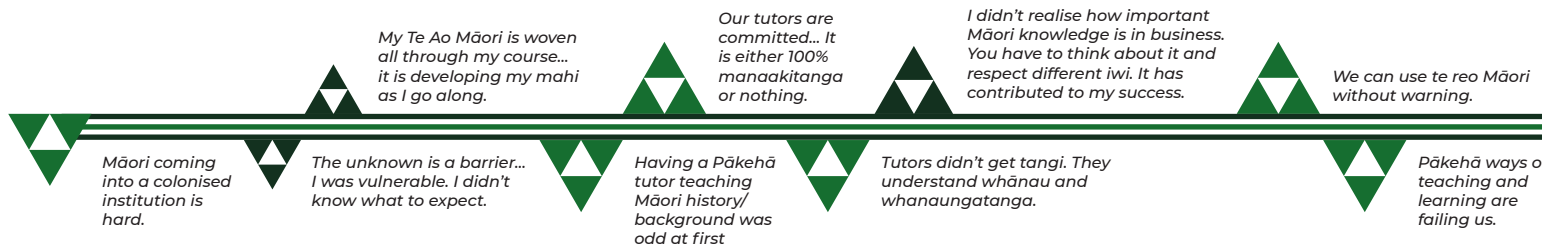
I thrive when I can see and feel my values and culture reflected here

I'm already successful and rich in my whānau, hapū and whenua, and I'm studying to be able to contribute to the goals of my people, not to be colonised. I am proud of who I am and my culture and I need to be able to see people like me thriving in this environment to trust it. I thrive when I can see and feel my values reflected here like when whanaungatanga is fostered with both my peers and my tutors and manaakitanga is practiced. I need to know tikanga Māori is normal and understood, so I'm not embarrassed to let tutors know about tangi. I want mātauranga Māori to be woven all through

my courses, to be able to hear and use te reo and to be taught by Māori so I can state what I believe and not be grilled by others for my difference. I'm doing this for my whānau, to enable them to be the best, so seven generations from now can prosper in a fully bicultural Aotearoa.

My motivations

Seeing, hearing, feeling Te Ao Māori while gaining new skills, perspectives and experiences. The future. A bicultural Aotearoa where Māori are prospering now and seven generations from now.



Success for me...

When my whānau thrives through my achievements. The qualification is secondary to maintaining and growing my Māori identity and having the skills to contribute to my whānau and sometimes even my hapū and/or iwi success.



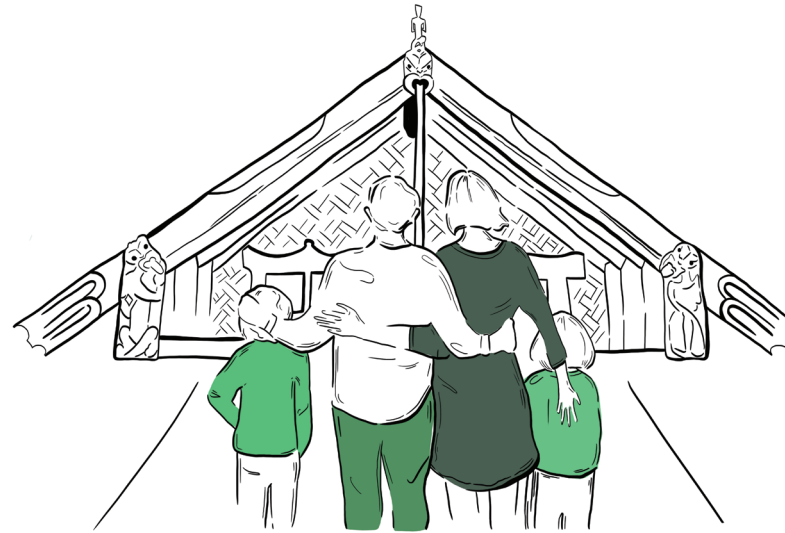
Community and whānau driven

My whānau and community are the reason I am here and I am richer for these connections. It doesn't mean my journey has been an easy one, whānau dynamics can sometimes be a barrier. There is a lot to sort out like childcare and finances, there should be more free programmes, grants and access to technology. I have spent a lot of time on my marae and I am wondering why I can't get this recognised. I'm a natural tuakana, taking on parental and mentoring roles. Others look up to me and it is hard

when I see them struggle, although I know that with adversity comes strength. I rely on the support I get from my partner and my community and the vision I have to make a real difference in the future.

My motivations

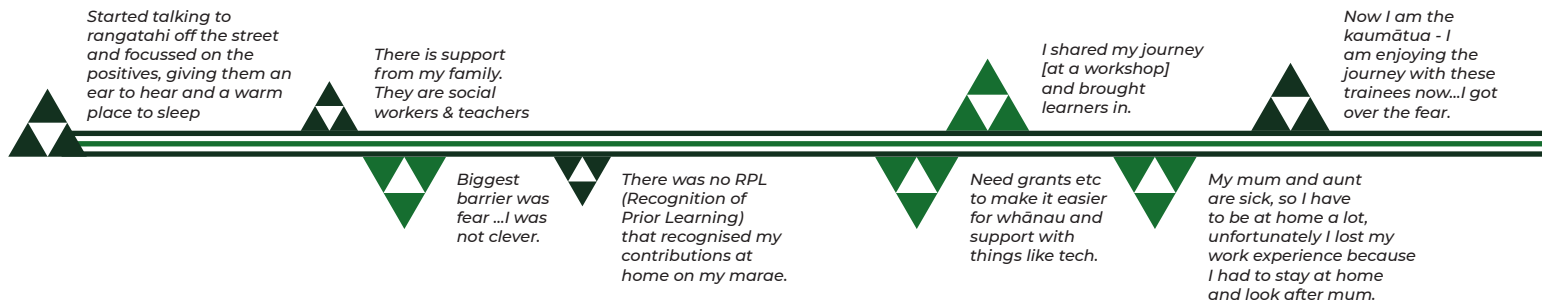
My whānau and community are my purpose and my drive. This means that in my learning what I look for is manaakitanga, whanaungatanga and tuakana-teina, being part of a tight community, caring for and encouraging each other.



My whānau and community are the reason I'm here

Success for me...

I am successful already because of my whānau, my hapū and my whenua. My success grows as I support my people to achieve more for themselves and the collective (our community).



Determined and enabled



A learning environment that feeds my abilities gives me confidence to learn

Success for me...

Developing resilience and confidence while achieving my goals. Building a network of friends along the way shows me that I am successful.

Having limited mobility is something I have learnt to live with, but living with the stigma is not easy. This means that when I enrolled, I didn't disclose my limitations and I was hesitant to go to the disability centre for help. I tell others to prepare before they start, get familiar with spaces and learning, get connected to the disability support, get a reader/writer early. Something I wish others realised is how much longer it takes for me... getting ready, finding ramps, waiting for elevators and opening heavy doors all takes longer. I feel like some tutors misunderstand me, it takes me longer to type assignments, longer correcting typing mistakes and yet I have the same

deadlines as anyone else. This means long days and late nights and catching up. Having a reader/ writer has been great - there are new technologies that can help too - and some of the tutors have spent the time to walk me through things at my pace. The disability centre has connected me to support and I have made great friends along the way. What I really want, is to not be seen as disabled, but that the environment and systems are seen for how they exclude me.

My motivations

Motivation for me comes from the new things I am learning, the confidence I am building and learning how much I have to offer others.

This is my first time ever getting Bs and As when previously it's been Ds and Es. So it's very gratifying. That's down to the support now available.

They put me on to the disability centres. That made enrolment easier.

The tutors have helped by walking me through things, and making email contact occasionally.

For me access is the biggest problem, it is neither easy or convenient for me to get up and dressed and be ready.

Not wanting to disclose wasn't to do with privacy or embarrassment. I wanted to do something without people giving special allowances for the fact I am in a wheelchair.

The time slot decided if I would get a notetaker or not. Too short and I wouldn't get one.

I'm really fatigued from staying up all night on assignments and I get sick from that. I've told tutors but they don't give an extension or care how it gets done.

I'm always getting stuck in lifts.. Consistently have to ask people to hold the door. Other learners use lifts who don't need it. All the waiting is annoying.



Inspired to follow a path

I know I have a future full of possibilities and I'll bet you can't tell that I have a 'not so great' background. It all started when I got into this programme where all the obstacles are removed, the fees are covered, the gear is provided, there are staff that come to you and offer support, you know like access to technology, kai, study tips, encouragement, they really care.

My tutor is chill too - he gives me a second chance if I miss an assessment, he understands if I have to come in late and even if my work

is not so good he gives me positive affirmation... I'm not used to that...and he meets us half way which is really motivating for me.

My motivations

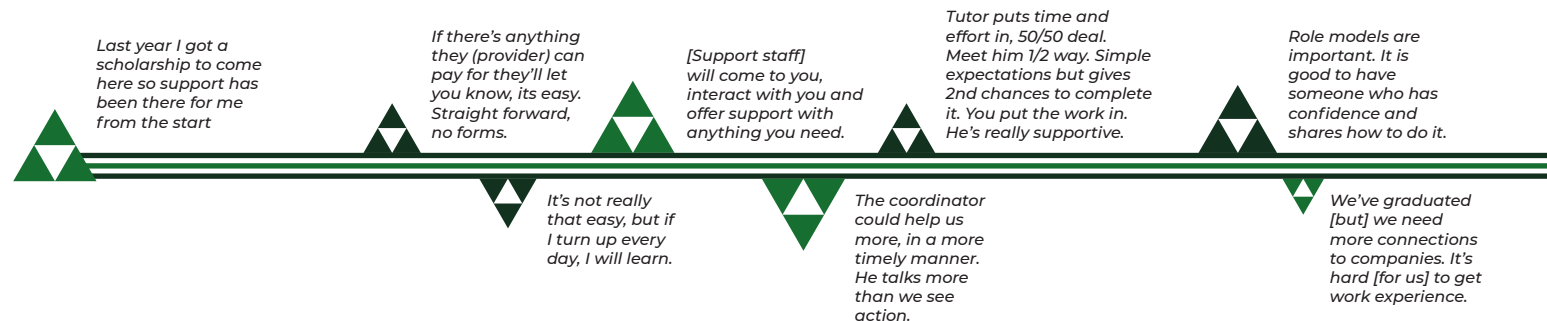
My whānau are a big reason I am here and they are the reason I continue. It is hard work juggling life and learning, but I keep going. My whānau, my peers, my supportive tutors, are all helping me to "get to the end".



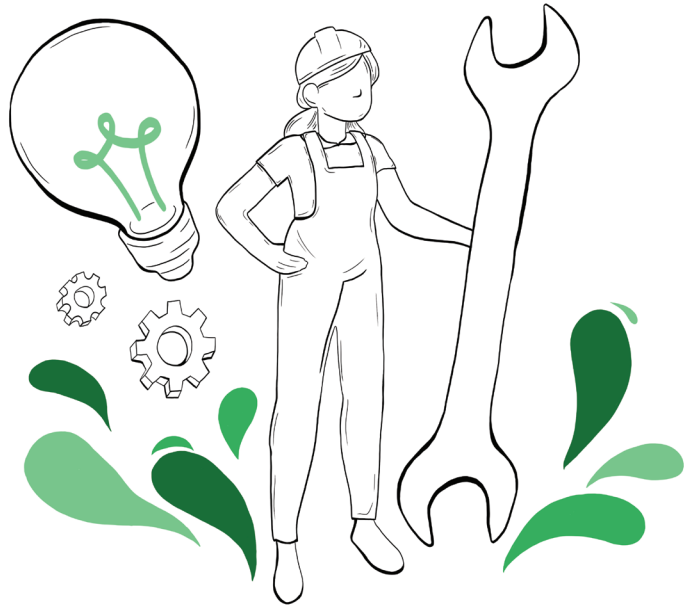
I'm being helped to see new possibilities for myself and others

Success for me...

Overcoming my own 'demons' to achieve my goals... There are lots of small successes along the way that I am learning to appreciate too. Like, learning something new, gaining confidence in myself, seeing new possibilities for my life, supporting my whānau and inspiring others.



Breaking the mould



I'm inspiring other females to get into trades

I've never been one to pass up a challenge, so even though I couldn't see any other females in the pictures, I still chose a trade. I was excited in my pre-trade, learning on the tools, but most of the others were males, so it was hard. When it came to getting an apprenticeship, employers were a bit uncertain of taking me on, and when I started, all eyes were on me. I was the only female on site, the others watched everything I did and that made me pretty nervous. It's not easy when you hear the comments made... I have to be staunch... hold my tongue and try and build relationships.

It was awesome when I came across this Instagram page where other females in trades were sharing their experiences; it's great having others to share the challenges with. Now as I start to train others, I want to be a good boss and I want to inspire other females to get into trades.

My motivations

I like being active and the skills I am learning are useful, but my biggest motivation comes from the relationships I have built with other females along the way and inspiring more girls to pick up a trade.

Separated out paperwork and study to divide time well.

I made connections with other females by Instagram.

Able to talk to each other (women) about challenges.

We need more connections through school. Our teacher helps us a lot but there is a big gap between companies and schools.

Would be helpful to see other females doing it. When I was applying there was no inspiration for me. I could not see a woman doing it.

Boss said he'd never hired a girl before.

Some of the men still struggled with women on a building site even though we are good builders. Tried to work out of sight. Just wanted to get on and do it without being watched.

Success for me...

Having an employer willing to take me on and acknowledge my work, that was success at the start but now success is also about inspiring more girls and women to get into trades.



Best of me

High school was stressful for me, but thanks to encouragement from others, I had the courage to apply for a supported learning course. There were limited spots though, and waiting to hear if I was accepted was a nervous time, but then meeting others in my class was a highlight.

Practical learning and work experience was fun and an understanding tutor who gets what life is like for me has helped. Assessments at

high school were hard, but in my course we have lots of time to prepare so I have started to achieve success and this has given me a new confidence in life.

My motivations

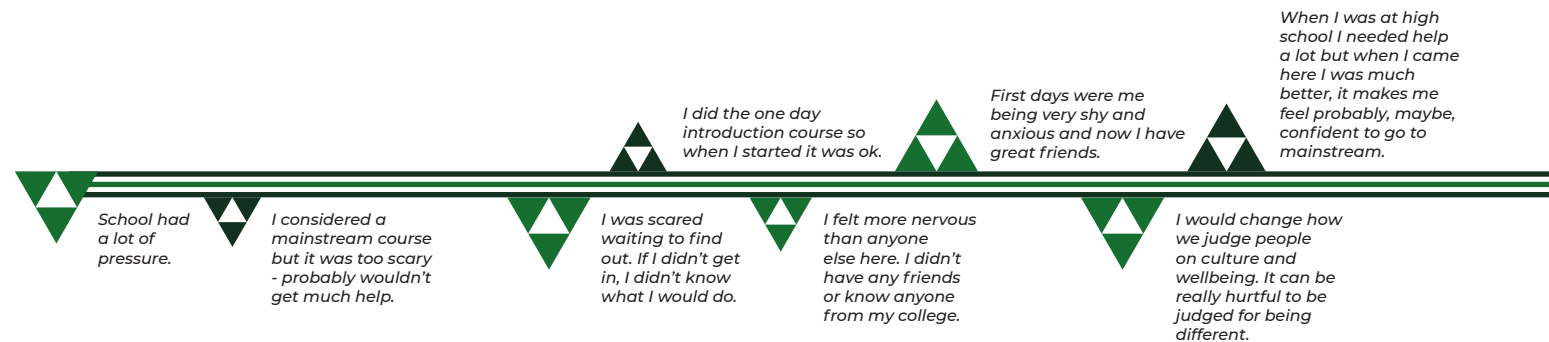
Encouragement from others and making new friends is motivating. Getting practical, well organised learning and knowing I have support to overcome challenges really motivates me to keep going.



Knowing I have support to overcome challenges really motivates me

Success for me...

Having lots of new and challenging experiences to learn, grow and achieve my goals. Trying my best and not giving up even when things go wrong.



Realising a love of learning



I'm exploring pathways for my life after school

I came to vocational education because I love learning, but I didn't thrive at high school, maybe it was the way of learning. I didn't know the options, what I would be good at or what I might enjoy. I got to try out gateway and trades academy - it is good to explore.

Now that I am in vocational education I have started to enjoy connections with support staff and trainers and the practical way of learning

and what's cool is that I am starting to find what I want to do for the rest of my life.

My motivations

I want to learn about something I really enjoy, something that will get me out of school and into a job I love and if I can get a scholarship... well that's going to help.

Success for me...

Getting up each day and doing what I love, so I am looking to find the pathway to a life. Not a job.

(Was) at high school when "A" came in to talk to us. Got to do enrolment and meet people through him.

I came to polytech because I love learning. School was not my thing. My mum and dad gave me options: Army, Tertiary Ed, Work.

We got pretty good connections with Matua and Whaea. We went on a trip down the East Coast with them on a school trip. It was mean as.

It's chill. They won't force us to do our work. You do it at your own cost. What you put in is what you get out.

This course - helped us be a lot more confident to go on with tertiary studies.

(Careers Advisors:) if you are not a good student you are guided 'that' way - to alternative education.

By the time I left school I felt like I was worthless, stupid, rejected, and my ideas, opinions and views about anything were not important.

We get an info overload in 3 days - who/what/ where - it can be overwhelming.

Sometimes it feels like a lonely journey but it's a worth it journey.



New opportunities and career

I aspire to have a job I love and I know I have the courage to take the leap. It was not an easy move; this change was going to mean income and time sacrifices and I had to convince myself that I am not too old to make the change.

The first weeks were a shock; new online systems, information overload, juggling whānau responsibilities and readings... it took me a while to figure everything out. What really helps me is learning from industry experts, especially when they take the time to understand me as a whole and all the experience I bring.

I enjoy the practical learning and when I am super busy online is good. I can now see doors opening up for me, new directions and new opportunities for me and my whānau.

My motivations

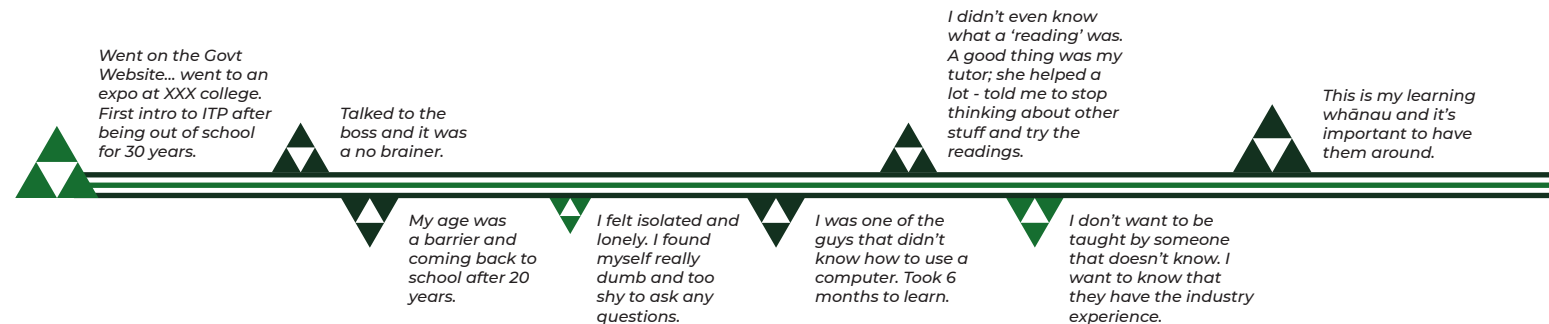
After a long time waiting, I am courageous and motivated to make this change; not just so I can do what I enjoy, but so my whānau can move forward with me.



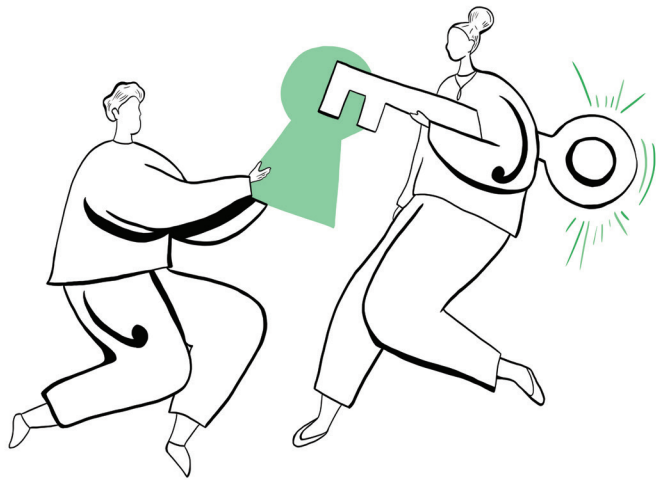
Making a career change, for myself and my whānau

Success for me...

Taking this new direction while juggling my whānau responsibilities well so that I can move into a job that I really enjoy.



Understanding my strengths



Having my strengths understood gives me new freedom to be who I am

Success for me...

Working hard towards academic achievement to realise my full potential.

I know my potential... but others didn't see it, so at High school my learning wasn't catered for and the bullying was a strain. Without the resources and teaching that I needed, learning would often be delayed and I would get behind. At school, I was told that I 'wasn't able' and I was 'too dumb' to study. If it wasn't for a friend, a whānau member or the school counsellor - those supportive few that encouraged me, I would not be here now. I still face some challenges like accessibility, poor health and stretched finances and even though my learning is still not fully catered for, I get better support here than what I experienced at high school. I ticked the box at enrolment to say that I had a disability, but the support

isn't instantaneous. Beginning study is scary at first, but making friends and finding support from my peers is important and it helps. Some academic things, I'm really good at - like assignments or verbal submissions... but I might not do as well during exam time. Even though there have been struggles, my tertiary education, the friends I have met, the support and experiences I have had, have given me a new freedom to be who I am.

My motivations

Doing the right kind of learning that helps me understand what my strengths are, gives me the confidence to advocate for myself and create stable pathways for my children.

School told me I was too dumb to study - dyslexic. (Sub) told me I could start entry level and move (my) way up.

When I was given a student teacher aide, she met me half way. She wasn't just a tutor - it was nice knowing that she was learning too.

[Enablers for me] Having coffee and a sink to wash my hands in as I have OCD and knowing where everything is. My Mum also goes here too - parent in walking distance - good for H & S (Health & Safety)

Peer support is very important. We are a really tight group. Working together makes it all easier

My whole high school career was quite hard - I got bullied & formed eating disorders, family drama, still continuing to this day.

They should come to you when you identify a disability on enrolment. I found it strange. I had a writer at school and when I mentioned my disability when I enrolled, I heard nothing. We have support but don't use it.

I would do well at internals but exams (I) crash and burn.

The support for academic learning is in place but needs improving



Can't hold me down

I feel more confident now I know what I want to do. I have had a few goes at tertiary education. It's taken a few goes to be clear about what career suits me and to have the confidence and parts of my life in order so I can focus on learning. It has been a struggle. On the positive side, each time I have another go, I am getting closer to success. One challenge... I've failed before, so I think I could fail again, and the barriers don't make it easy, like the funding challenges due to my multiple attempts - or my age - and my previous learning isn't always recognised when it could be. I am grateful to be

surrounded by my colleagues, my whānau and tutors who support me to stay on track, so I can realise what I have started.

My motivations

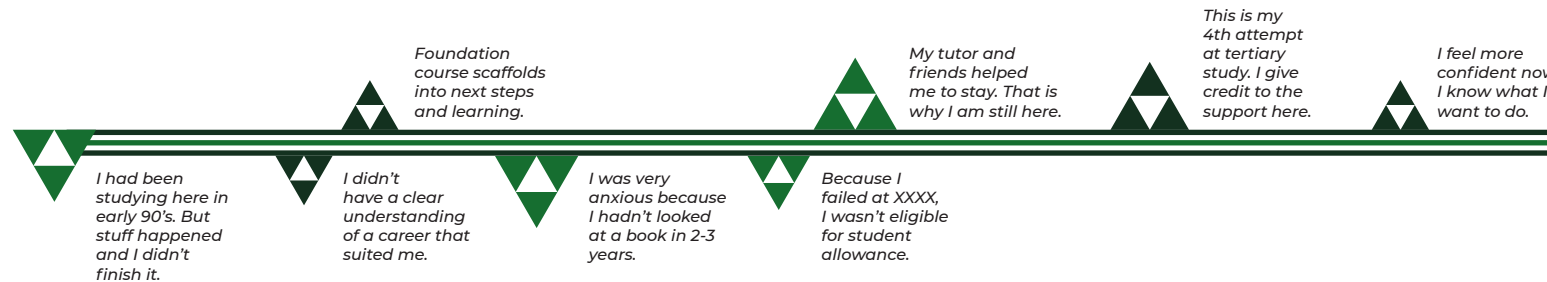
I really want to study something that gives me purpose. By studying something I really want to do, I am more confident I'll complete the programme. I'll be qualified for work I like doing and paid better. I know too that my whānau will benefit from the commitment I am making.



Studying something I really want to do makes all the difference

Success for me...

Exceeding my own expectations by completing a qualification in a job that I can make a difference in.



Re-writing my story



I'm learning that I am capable and I can succeed

I have clear goals to re-write my story. I have come to tertiary learning through my community support programme, but it's been daunting. To get in the door, I had to expose my past and fit within Studylink criteria. The battle with anxiety is one I am overcoming, along with getting used to the amount of reading and learning. I am learning to rewire my self-talk and be kinder to myself... but honestly, sometimes it feels easier to just walk away. There is just no way I would still be here without the support I have

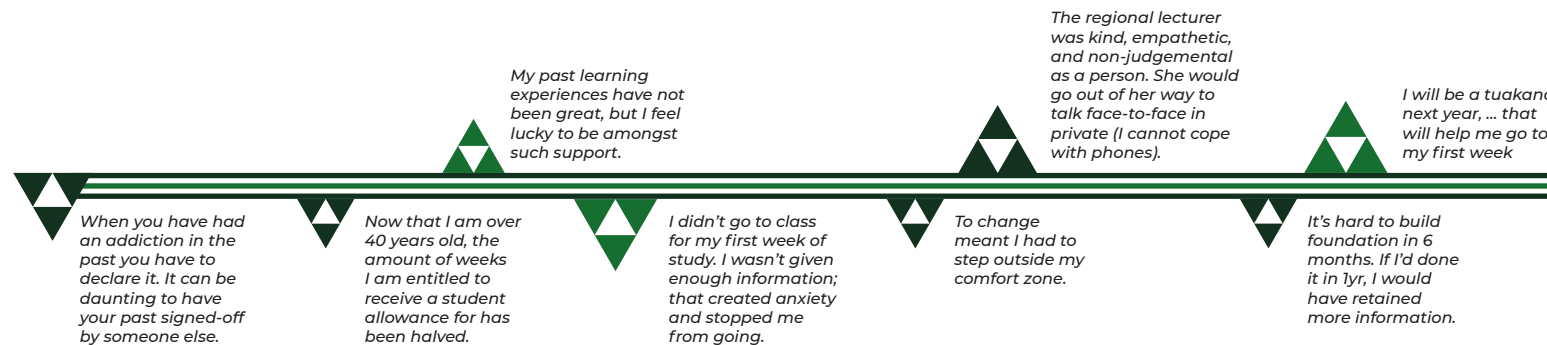
received from my community support programme and the trainers who are kind and non-judgemental. They want me to succeed and with their help I will stay focused on my goal.

My motivations

I want to change my life... this is not about getting a qualification, that would be cool, but actually it is more about reaching my goals and being where I need to be that day.

Success for me...

Re-writing my story and learning that I am capable and I can succeed.



International learner

I picked New Zealand to study because it is a safe place and a beautiful environment and I wanted to learn 'the NZ way'. It was hard starting from scratch though, I had no whānau here, I was homesick and the language was a real barrier. It took me time to get used to how fast the tutors speak but I am very glad for all the support I get, and to be honest, I am worried about losing this support if things go national. I really like how in New Zealand you offer lots of practical learning, this helps build my confidence, unlike online learning which is harder for me with the language barrier. I have met a couple of employers through

my study, which has been good, but now that I am getting towards the end of it I am worried about getting a job... it is hard to compete, but I'm grateful for the haven that NZ has offered me and the growth, the skills and the advancement I have experienced.

My motivations

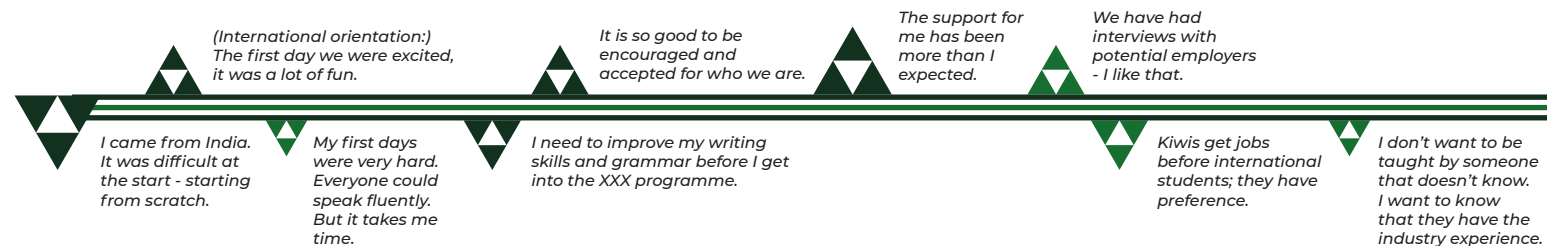
I am motivated to work hard and learn the New Zealand way. When I have finished study I want to get a good job.



I'm grateful for the haven that NZ has offered me to learn within.

Success for me...

Starts with my experience here; my relationships while I learn and not letting barriers get in my way. I came to NZ because I want to get a good job and to advance professionally as I meet my dreams.



Young and motivated apprentice



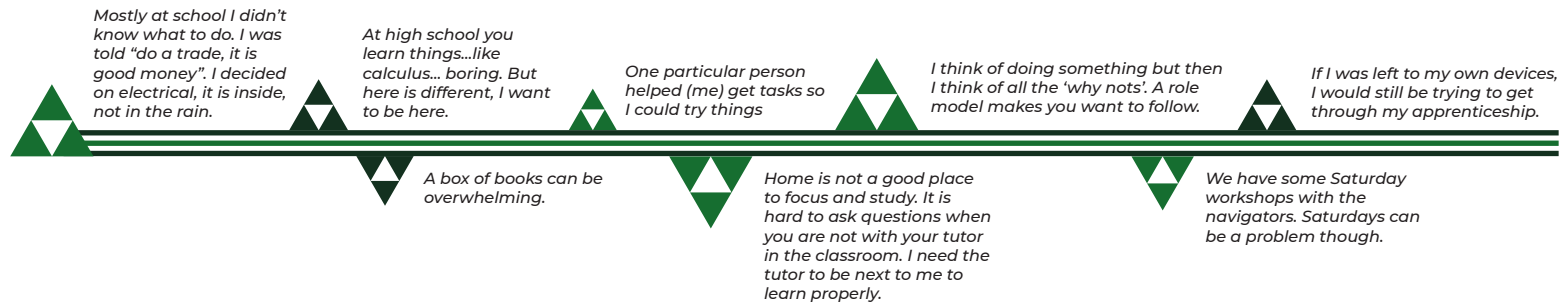
I'm going hard doing something physical

I always wanted to do something physical, so an apprenticeship works for me, much better than school, or Uni. There are lots of trades to choose, good money to be made and school gave me the hookup. It is different to school though; I have to think about paying my way and a box of books to get through can be overwhelming, but the Training Advisor's support and help keep me on track. Saturday study workshops can be a problem – I've got a life too! On the job, I'm glad when there's support like the mentors and role models who share how to do stuff and will answer my questions, but

when my boss forgets I'm supposed to learn new things and gives me the same thing everyday... I don't like that. My mates... my whānau, we've all got the same dreams: making money, helping our parents, making our families proud, that's success to me.

My motivations

I'm motivated to do something physical and getting tasters through school in the trades has helped me decide to follow an apprenticeship. I want others like me to think it's a path for them too.



Success for me...

Being happy and eager to get up in the morning, to go to work and do something I enjoy. If I do that then I know I will go hard to complete my apprenticeship, inspire others and be in a position to help my whānau.



Realising I'm a leader

I knew I had good skills, after years of working, I just needed the paper to prove it, so I decided it is time to get a qualification. I had to overcome the voices in my head saying 'the young brains will show you up' and balancing the life commitments outside of work and training was tricky.

I really enjoyed the learning that directly related to my work although this was not always possible as the focus tends to be on the customer and the jobs that need to be done. The support and

encouragement from my employer and trainers and support network has seen me overcome fear, expand my thinking and made me feel more confident.

The seed has been planted and I now have this desire to keep learning and move into leadership.

My motivations

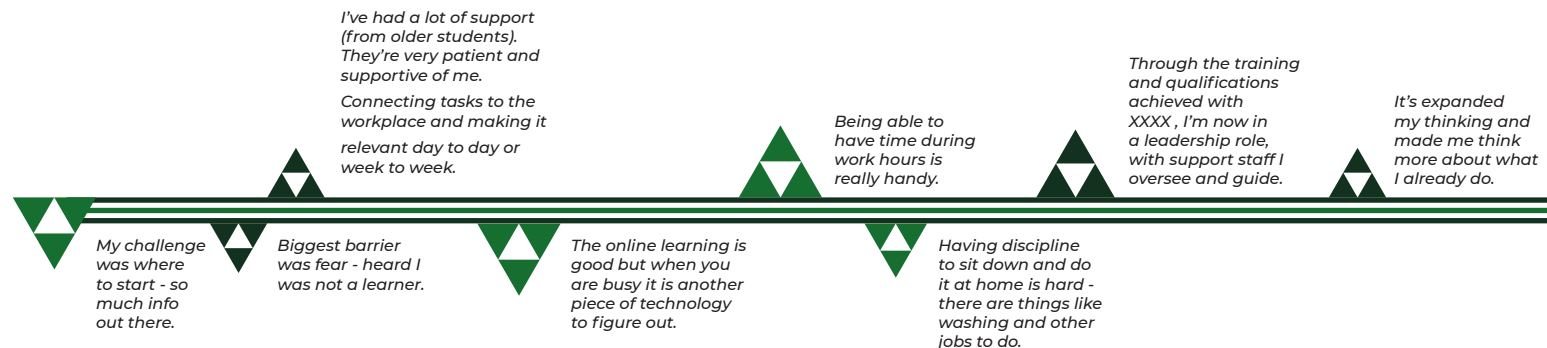
I am motivated to have the piece of paper to prove the skills I have gained through the years and the pay rise that will come with it.



I have the desire to keep learning and move into leadership

Success for me...

Having all of my skills recognised and developed and the confidence to step into new roles.



Thriving as Māori



I am proud of my identity and how I am a part of bringing alive the aspirations of our Māori learners and communities. This is not just a day job for me, it is a life purpose that I constantly live out, but it is certainly a challenge. It is hard to see the values you live, manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, the tikanga of pōwhiri, being unsupported, especially when you know this is what a sense of belonging for our ākonga can depend on. It is tiring to fight the battle with management to justify even basic things like kai for

wānanga. I want to see Māori learners succeed and get a job at the end of it, but it is heart-breaking. Too often our ākonga are going into trades because there is nothing else and then when tutors are not cut out to provide the cultural support and care needed, they leave. To thrive here, we need the learning experiences of ākonga to reflect our cultural norms, we need more Māori staff at all levels of the organisation and we need to feel empowered by being Māori. It shouldn't need to feel like hard work to be Māori here.

My motivations

Teaching is not just a job for me, it is a way to bring to life the aspirations of my community. When my values are reflected around me I feel like I belong and I am motivated to continue my life's purpose here.

A workforce that is representative of and responsive to Māori. We are proud of our Māori staff.

Having a Māori manager means we don't have to justify all of that anymore. Funding has increased [for wānanga expenses] from \$1500 to \$6K.

Relationships are still key. Whānau don't know your job title. They just know you're an Aunty and they can trust you too.

We strategically placed people with Iwi connections into the initiative – that worked.

Tutors – authentic – likely to pick up on issues, part of our community.

Whakawhanaungatanga (is) not nurtured. It's not being fully supported on an institutional level.

No funding for food for our wānanga. We supply food for ourselves. It's only slightly changed.

Māori learners go into trades because there is nothing else. Is this something that will be changed? What is the role of Te Pūkenga?

We have tutors that are not cut out for it [using Māori approaches] and use half a process that doesn't support learners.

Leadership – strategy-wise, we have a lot of work to do in terms of connectivity. If you don't know who can do what for a student then getting a student across the line is a struggle. These conversations don't take place at a leadership level.



Going above and beyond

I'm here for the learner but I'm doing that in an environment that is pressured - student numbers are growing and staff numbers are compromised - so my workload keeps increasing. I can't do my job properly and feel guilty about that though I have a lot of ideas on how things should be. The tutors are the key for instance; they need to be

connected to our learners and through building good relationships with them, I can play my part because that cross-team working and liaison is crucial. Really, I want less pressure and more fun in my job, because then I'd see even more learners having small wins, building confidence in their education and finding their purpose.



My motivations

Being part of the journey that sees learners discover their strength, be confident and ready for their future.

Having a diverse team is important. We have a diverse team so learners can connect and see themselves.

Peer support works - the capable learners helping the less capable.

Working well across teams enables learners. Particularly with student support/ liaison... If I can get someone else involved to support them to get the right level of support then that is better.

Tutors bring them through, we have relationships with them. Relationships are important.

Orientation, we get involved with them and we have our own orientation.

We are here for the learner, but we are doing that in an environment that is pressured.

The workload hasn't improved... but this is now about our mental health. I carry guilt, I know I can't do my job properly.

We are trying to make sure they come back and see the same person, but there are not enough staff to work with the learners.

Need to be able to do more work and follow-up. We can't do it because we are meeting with those who are just coming to us late.

I am the only person here looking after Pacific learners. It would be nice to have another person so the wrap around support is more effective.

Fostering community, nurturing growth



I draw from my own experience to connect with Māori and Pacific learners, to build on their cultural identity and create a safe space for them to grow. This often means going over and above, it can be exhausting and often goes unnoticed. Some of us now have to travel between two campuses, or are the only Pacific or Māori advisor; there's just not enough of us to get to the learners in time and help them with all the issues we know they face.

What I have noticed is not much has changed for the better. My constant challenge is to keep my learners on track to succeed even if the system presents barriers, and I often have to prioritise this over looking after myself. To do this well we need a well-resourced, diverse and strengths-based team to build trust with learners and their whānau.

My motivations

My why is to see Māori and Pacific learners find and grow in their purpose, to be self-determining and to be able to contribute to their whānau and community.

Building identity opens up the ability to learn.

We work from a strength-based model, not a deficit one.

When you walk through the door in the company of Māori support, it's harder to walk back out.

Getting buy-in from whānau at interviews so we can contact them... and community.

I prefer to use Te Reo – [it can break down] barriers. If you understand their level, e.g. a tiny bit of their language, they'll connect.

M&P don't see themselves in the people here when they come.

It worries me that some staff aren't on the waka with student support in mind.

There's been a process of "whitewashing" M&P gains. We're going from a dedicated Māori and Pacific space to a general space.

The travel (between campuses) I have to go to where they are...travel to them. It is a struggle to get to every Pacific student. One needed me, then another. I couldn't get there in time. He fell through.

Kaimahi [who aren't able to] prioritise taurua over research/PD/ resource development.

Enhancing dignity

I am very aware of what works and doesn't work in the system because I am often the 'in-between' person. I want to help and support disabled learners on their journey and at the same time support other staff as they do this too. That means I'm often interpreting student info written from a non-disabled perspective or tolerating staff and systems that don't recognise disabled needs.

Solving things like physical access issues shouldn't be a staff or student responsibility. I am resourceful in doing my job as I keep making connections between students and the services or staff they need access to. I give all I can which can be rewarding but demoralising as well, because I can only do so much when funding and staffing is limited or not factored-in.



My motivations

To continuously improve the system to be able to maintain the mana and dignity of our disabled learners and ensure they have a meaningful journey and experience. If disabled people succeed in their untapped potential then we all will succeed.

We've had several hearing impaired students and we've had interpreters [for them] and the programme was successful. There are good outcomes.

... [Support staff member] brings students to come in and talk with me about what we can put in place for them and what considerations might apply [due to disability].

When we bring a student down to support services, we know they will be looked after.

Being close to the learner [so] we can see early [when there are] conflicts in relationships. Our diverse team can see [these].

Early conversations to discuss what support might look like.

(No diagnosis) We can't do anything without an assessment which costs.

We had comment from the CE that "we can't fix the broken" and they cut foundation funding.

Signing interpreters are expensive – students worry about the cost.

Staff say "I can't have this person. This is a health and safety issue", or "You can't have disabled learners in this course".

Our wellbeing initiatives alleviate issues, but don't solve them.



Helping apprentices grow their wings



As an Industry Training Advisor (ITA) I'm the middle person. To the apprentices, I'm a teacher, facilitator, negotiator, friend, substitute parent,... all sorts depending on who I am working with. With the employers, I apply my understanding of their needs and the industry training required for someone to upskill in a trade. I appreciate that 'one size does not fit all', so I see my role as creating

and maintaining relationships that will work: real links with the employers since they are the ones who are at the job every day, and sympathetic, anytime pastoral and learning support for their apprentices. Switching learners on to what works for them, seeing individual apprentices grow their wings as they gain self-confidence and employment – that's me!

My motivations

Seeing trainees grow, gain confidence and employment; enabling them to have opportunities they might not have had in the past. I want to reinforce a positive engagement in the training process for apprentices and employers.

Understanding commitment to the apprenticeship – exciting up front, set realistic expectations, ... our communication, clarity of expectations are very important. For both apprentice and employer.

Making it clear to them where they are heading – what they are doing – a purpose, not just math etc. Learning things they want to learn, specific to their chosen trade – keeping them focussed.

Being available for them at any time so they can bounce off you and find an answer while they are working on their bookwork.

Increasing that pastoral care increases engagement especially for those with learning difficulties and Māori and Pasifika. Seeing us at the coalface, trying to re-engage them; strategic support mechanisms helps re-engagement.

That individual approach makes a huge difference to help learners achieve.

Part of my role as an advisor is to place the trainee onto the right course for them. The last thing we want is to set them up to fail.

If we hear of people who don't complete the enrolment process we go there and fix it. Employers might just need a bit of a nudge to get them over the line.

[It can sometimes be] hard to keep some employers to the agreement to [do] workplace training.

We can occasionally be the uncles/ aunts/ fathers/ mothers and a sounding board.

Homelife, learning needs, literacy/numeracy all vary – so it has to be individualised support and adapt this support for all individuals requirements



Squeezing in time to see learners grow

I want the best for my learners but the current system leaves me worrying about whether I really provide them with my best. I want time to be able to help them and give them what they need because I know relationships and whanaungatanga are critical. That said, I'm not a counsellor, nor can I manage all the barriers to my learners thriving. But, I'll give it a go, I'll hold their hand, because

they need a safe space to grow. It can be overwhelming - a workload that sees me teaching more courses, or students, but with less contact hours - and I can see that my learners can get resentful and leave. I wish the system would support me more, especially with workload, so I can put my hours where I need to and stay enthusiastic.



My motivations

Spending time with ākongā to practice whanaungatanga, meet their needs and to see them grow

Best people to promote the programme are the people teaching it.

The calibre of our staff, we connect and keep giving to our learners.

Working with family to build trust to study after hours - creating safe spaces.

We gave the learner the benefit of learning at their own pace. He has gained so much even if we don't get completion.

Relationships, relationships, relationships.

Access to tutors, not receptionists is needed and there's not enough time for relationship building

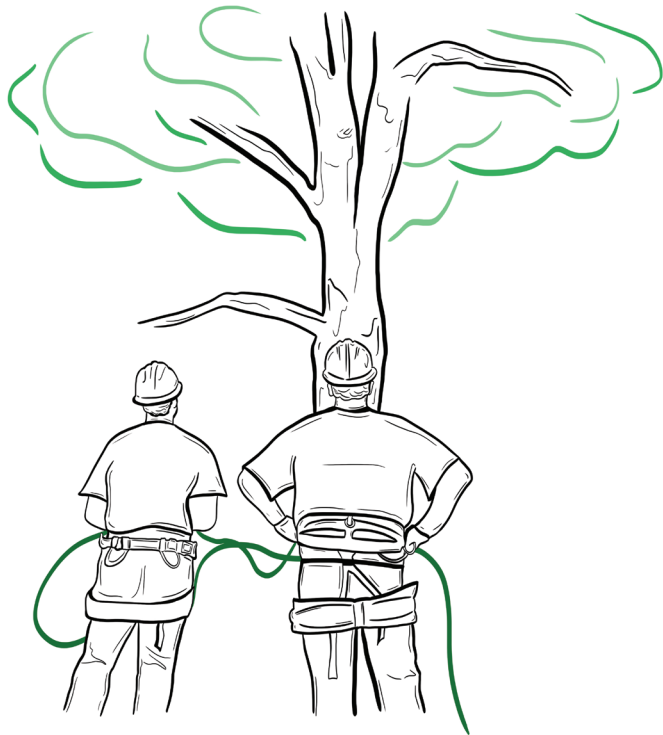
Workload is overwhelming - people are feeling hurt by it

He's had to do a lot on his own - team work and support is lacking - students miss out

We spend hours as counsellors

Teaching hours are cut to the bone - it's ridiculous

Learning to teach the expertise I have



My industry experience has contributed to my appointment as a tutor. My credentials are light in terms of teaching experience, but I believe I will work well with other teaching staff and students.

It is exciting to be a new tutor. I have a lot to look forward to. New systems and peer support mechanisms may work well for me and the students I will be teaching. I've not had a lot of time,

support or guidance, to prepare for the teaching part and I'm not sure what professional development is available to help me improve my teaching capabilities. I am confident that I have all the industry knowledge and experience to be an effective tutor eventually. But I do worry that learners may be at a disadvantage if I don't get time to learn how to be a good educator quickly.

My motivations

Bringing learners through to complete their training so they can move on to a good job in my industry.

The Peer Tutoring scheme is awesome.

I had an older tutor [mentor]. It was fantastic.

When I started working here at the polytechnic, I thought 'they have good systems'.

Ongoing professional development for tutors to ensure they keep learning

I had worked with youth through my job, sport.

No resourcing of support for new tutors.

Being a new tutor, walking into a new course with two weeks to get organised – not enough time to get organised to teach the course.

Teachers have to start straight away. They don't get time to learn how to be an educator.

'Sub' hires [subject matter experts]... They don't understand students with different needs.

It is unfair for our students when tutors come straight off the street to teach.



Contributors

Learner Journey and Experience Research Team

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Go to tepukenza.ac.nz for the following *Te Rito, Insights from Learners and Staff reports*:

- Part One – Opportunities to enhance success for all Te Pūkenga learners and Māori Learners
- Part Two – Opportunities to enhance success for Te Pūkenga Pacific learners
- Part Three – Opportunities to enhance success for Te Pūkenga Disabled learners

Publication

Rito Patterns and Backgrounds:

Pip Hartley, karangaink.co.nz

Illustrations: Rongomai Grbic-Hoskins

Layout: Dominique Smith,
dominiquesmith.myportfolio.com

About the Artists

Pip Hartley is an internationally renowned Moko artist whose indigenous studio, Karanga Ink, specialises in traditional and contemporary markings that weave the Mana of the Ancestors into unique works of art using ancient patterns and symbology derived from the Taiao.

Pip's ability to translate stories and flow with the body using exquisite detail and depth of meaning from years of research and wānanga sees her using both traditional and contemporary tools and methods.

Rongomai Grbic-Hoskins is a multi-disciplinary artist who works across visual arts, photography and illustration - both digital and analogue. Her interest in the creative arts was cultivated through her upbringing and continued with a Bachelor's in Communication Design, majoring in Communication Arts. Her inspiration for her drawings for the project comes from her experience as a Māori medium learner navigating tertiary education.

Image of Ngākau Māhaki whareniui used by kind permission of Te Noho Kotahitanga marae, Unitec

