Autumn
2025

Adult & Community Education Newsletter

Supporting Settlement

Communication is an essential part of daily life. From daily tasks like visiting the supermarket, booking an appointment with a GP or medical practitioner or dropping children at school, through to securing employment and the ongoing interaction required to perform in a role, we all need to communicate.

The inability to communicate effectively with communities where you live can lead to social exclusion, economic disadvantage and restricted access to important resources and information. Communication is fundamental to the existence and survival of individuals, groups, societies and nations, and a shared language is the most common tool for communication. For refugees and immigrants arriving in a new country the language barrier can often seem the hardest mountain to climb.

English Language Partners (ELP) has 21 centres nationwide teaching English for work and everyday life in New Zealand. Their commitment is to help new Kiwis learn the English they need to participate and live independent lives.

Luke Scowcroft manages the Nelson and Marlborough branches of ELP and looks after a passionate team of individuals committed to working with refugees and migrants to help break down the language barriers and assist with assimilation into a new society and new way of life.

Most of the people who ELP work with in the Nelson/Marlborough region are former refugees and migrants from either Myanmar or Colombia. Myanmar has 115 living indigenous languages and one extinct language, so even though refugees are emigrating from the same country, they may not be able to communicate amongst themselves effectively. In the Nelson region Luke says they have refugees who are Chin, Karen, Chin Hakha and Zomi among others, and each of these groups has a very distinct culture and often a different religion.

The Myanmar community is well established in the region as Nelson has been welcoming refugees from Myanmar for many years.

"A lot of the learners that we work with are older people who have come to New Zealand as part of the Family Reunification Programme. Many have very low levels of literacy and numeracy and often this will be their first time learning to read and write, with many learners only completing the equivalent of a primary school education in Myanmar."

Contents

Whakataukī

He waka eke noa

A canoe which we are all in with no exception

Luke says that during the 2024/25 year, the region will welcome 95 former refugees to Nelson and 80 to Blenheim through the Refugee Quota programme alone, with the majority from Myanmar, including Rohingya people.

Blenheim is already home to a number of Rohingya people, many of whom fled (and continue to flee) Myanmar due to the Rohingya genocide. With their citizenship revoked in their home country, they are now considered stateless.

"Immigration New Zealand considers the settlement process very carefully and takes account of issues like employment opportunities and availability of support services as well as existing communities. In addition, we have great support for our work programme from the Nelson City Council who not only provide additional funding but also assist with the provision of support that is geared towards establishing social connection, which is a huge contributor in the development of language skills." The Council provides venues for lessons and other settlement activities.

"Our team doesn't just teach numeracy and literacy, we also work with refugees to help with a variety of settlement tasks, such as understanding correspondence, civil participation support with things like navigating the election voting process and assisting with meeting administrative and legislative requirements, like filling in census forms if required," Luke says. "We also run a class in the community centre for mothers with preschoolers and we provide a babysitting service three times a week so that parents can have time to get together and practise language skills."

A key initiative in terms of learner success for ELP in Nelson has been the integration of migrants into the learning experience, not just as students, but as tutors, supporters and teachers.

Luke says they have employed two women from the Chin community to help with childcare during lessons and they are now a valued part of the team. In addition, they have employed three cultural language assistants who help with lesson delivery using the learners' first language. An example of this philosophy is the employment of Surat Alam (you can read more about his journey in this issue of the newsletter), who assists with delivery of summer classes designed to provide a boost of intense learning for students before the main learning term starts, and who continues to work in class with learners throughout the year.

"These employees have all been through our language programme," Luke says. "For us it's a way of providing further, tangible support, and for our team members it's a way that they can give back to their communities, which is hugely important for many of our learners."

Luke says a large number of the Colombian immigrants who have settled in the region have found work in the Marlborough wine growing sector and ELP works with WineWorks Marlborough to deliver English courses for their staff.

"Colombian immigrants generally have higher literacy and numeracy skills when they arrive in the country, and they don't tend to have cultural and religious restrictions that can impact employment opportunities in the wine sector. They are also often younger than our refugees from Myanmar and able to work in a more physical role."

ELP offers intensive ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) classes three to four times a week in a range of locations around Nelson and Marlborough.

"We also offer IELTS (International English Language Testing System) support for refugees and immigrants planning on undertaking higher education," Luke says.

The IELTS academic test assesses English-language proficiency at an academic level to determine whether individuals are proficient to study at either undergraduate or postgraduate level, or to work in a professional setting. ELP in Nelson offers two hours of free online training a week to assist individuals reach the required level. They have also joined forces with REAP Marlborough to assist migrants to get their driver's licence, with ELP providing support for the theory exam and REAP then providing free driving lessons for the practical component.

Luke says the refugee and immigrant community has brought richness and diversity to the community and there is a great deal to celebrate.

"At the moment we are planning for the Nelson multi-cultural festival in March. There will be food trucks, dancing and other cultural celebrations. Several of our Colombian graduates will be providing one of the food trucks, a small business that they have established in the region. Last November we also hosted a celebration of learning where some stars from the local Mako rugby team and the Whakatū Girls Rugby Trust gave our learners a taste of rugby skills before sharing a lunch and performances from our learners. It was a great event and fabulous celebration of the diversity in our community and the very special contribution our immigrant community makes to that."

Surat Alam

Surat Alam and his wife have been in Blenheim for two years. Surat is Rohingya and originally from Myanmar, although he left there as a 17-year-old and sought refuge in Malaysia. After just one week in Blenheim, Surat started English lessons with English Language Partners. He had absolutely no English when he arrived in Aotearoa but has become an excellent speaker.

Surat says he wanted to learn English as quickly as possible so he could get ahead, settle in and communicate with his new community.

"Like most people in the Rohingya community I had never been to school before as we are not allowed to attend school in Myanmar. Most Rohingya people have no education at all. When I was in Myanmar I was unable to work and spent time fishing with my father.

"My teachers from English Language Partners used a range of teaching methods to help us learn English, including visits to key places outside the classroom so we could learn simple everyday words and our teachers would bring items from home into the classroom to help with translation and learning."

Surat is now working with English Language Partners three days a week and acts as a translator in the classroom. In addition to that he works a night shift at local firm Talleys and assists the local branch of Red Cross by providing translation services.

"I wanted to give something back to my community and working with English Language Partners helps me to help others learn English. Once they have that skill, they can go on to get work and settle in more easily."

Muliagatele Danny Leaoasava'ii.

Fighting for a Cause

There's a quiet learning revolution going on in South Auckland. At the heart of this movement is a vibrant community hub designed to equip young Pacific and Māori – especially those Not in Employment, Education or Training, and school leavers – with the skills and confidence to shape their own futures.

The establishment of The Cause Collective's South Auckland Creative & Tech Hub (SACTH) three years ago has been a game changer in developing and providing opportunities for young people in South Auckland to explore and access technology and to upskill for employment in the tech sector.

Muliagatele Danny Leaoasava'ii, better known as Brotha D, is the Creative Lead at The Cause Collective and the driving force behind the SACTH initiative. Brought on board to tackle the deeper issues preventing young Pacific and Māori talent from breaking into the creative and tech industries, he's working to shift the narrative in a sector where Pasifika make up just 4.4% and Māori only 4.8% of tech roles.

Danny's approach focuses on three key actions: raising awareness among young people about the vast opportunities in tech, mobilising both youth and their families to seize these opportunities, and creating clear, accessible pathways into the industry.

One of the standout SACTH initiatives is the Grass Roots technology course, a six-week programme designed to bridge

the digital divide. It provides youth with access to computers and tech equipment that may not be readily available at home, giving them a crucial first step into the world of technology.

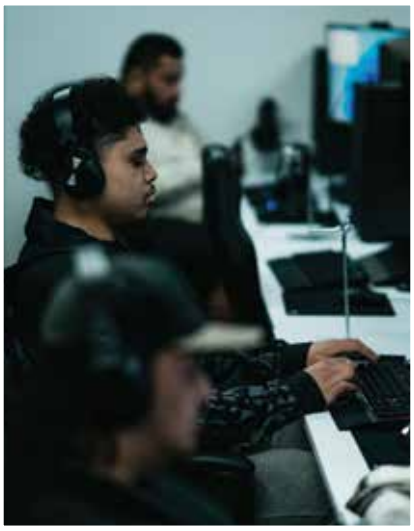
"We started our programme in late 2023, and to date we have had close to 100 young people through our Grass Roots Tech programme," Danny says. "From there we were able to create a learning pipeline of young Māori and Pasifika to start more formal qualifications at Media Design School. Twelve graduates of the Grass Roots Tech programme have since gone on to undertake a Level 4 NZQA qualification."

Every programme at the hub is delivered by experienced Pasifika education providers and tech professionals who understand both the industry and the community they serve. The learners – young people aged 16 to 24 who are outside the mainstream education system – find a supportive environment where they can explore new skills and opportunities.

The Cause Collective is focused on addressing the root causes of why young Pacific and Māori struggle to enter the tech and creative industries, while SACTH plays a key role in exposing them to opportunities and inspiring them to take the next step in their tech journey. "They get a taste of what's possible," says Danny, "and that spark of curiosity often turns into a real drive to pursue further opportunities."

Danny says a crucial element of The Cause Collective's approach is its pastoral care model, ensuring that young people aren't just given opportunities but are fully supported to succeed. A dedicated six-person team at The Cause Collective provides a holistic support system, addressing the many challenges learners face and offering specialist guidance to keep them on track.

"Pastoral care is our point of difference for many of these kids. Our youth workers have lived experience in South Auckland, so they know what young people are experiencing in their lives. Many of our learners go back home to their families and friends and they talk about what they have been doing and how they have been supported and looked after. Our retention rate for young people starting on our programmes is around 90%, which is a great statistic."



Rewa Pearson.

SACTH has also taken its mission on the road with a mobile tech trailer, reaching even more young people where they are. Last year alone, more than 2,500 youth engaged with the trailer, exploring technology and discovering new opportunities in the creative and tech industries.

"This initial visit can often be the start of their tech journey," Danny says. "We put our young people at the forefront of the experience, which can often be the difference between staying in the learning space or deciding to give up. We give young people the confidence to know that they have something special to offer and help them to define and refine that."

One inspiring success story is Rewa Pearson, a graduate of SACTH. His journey began by chance – while playing basketball at the local courts, he struck up a conversation with Caleb, a pastoral care worker at The Cause Collective.

"Rewa was really interested in what we were doing, so we invited him to check out SACTH," Caleb recalls.

That invitation turned out to be life changing. Rewa completed the six-week Grass Roots Tech programme, sparking his passion for digital creativity. He then completed formal studies at Media Design School, where he earned an NZQA Level 4 qualification and then enrolled in one of The Cause Collective's other youth offerings, the eight-week Get Ready Work Ready programme, obtaining both his driver's and forklift licences.

With his growing skillset, The Cause Collective secured Rewa an internship at a marketing agency. Caleb accompanied him on his first day to ensure a smooth transition, but thanks to SACTH's real-world approach to learning, Rewa had the confidence and knowledge to excel from the start.

Now he's taking his ambitions even further – studying for a degree in gaming technology, proving that with the right support and opportunities young people can transform their futures.

Beyond SACTH, The Cause Collective also runs the Get Ready Work Ready initiative, equipping young people with the skills and qualifications needed to step into the workforce or further education. Last year, more than 130 young people completed the programme, with more than half transitioning into employment, education, or training.

The Cause Collective is a proudly Pacific organisation with a leadership approach, values, philosophies, policies and operating procedures reflective of Pacific cultural contexts. The Ngā Vaka o Kāiga Tapu – Pacific conceptual frameworks – guide culture and practice and the organisation has three key goals:

1. Healthy and Thriving Families and Communities
2. Building Intergenerational Wealth
3. Strengthening Identity, Social Cohesion and Wellbeing.

The Bench

From the 10–16 April Nelson|Whakatū will resound with the noise and inspiration of Nelson Jewellery Week (NJW) as makers, wearers and viewers get to experience all facets of this universal form of adornment. Supported by the Arts Council Nelson, NJW will feature a comprehensive range of courses, from making knotted floral brooches to ring day to making jewellery in the kitchen. The week-long event will explore everything you might want to know about jewellery.

For many people in the Nelson region, their journey of exploration commenced well before Nelson Jewellery Week, with jewellery-making proving a draw card for many venturing into the ACE sector.

Kay van Dyk, founder of The Bench in Nelson, is a contemporary art jeweller and teacher with more than 20 years' experience teaching Adult Community Education jewellery classes. In 2002 Kay started teaching evening classes at the Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology (NMIT), which then led to her tutoring Object Design on the NMIT Bachelor of Arts and Media programme. In 2024 when ACE sector funding was no longer available for the community classes, Kay established her own teaching school – The Bench School for Jewellery – an endeavour that is grounded in her passion for teaching, creating and inspiring others to make.

Kay says she's not usually a risk-taker, so starting out on her new endeavour was a leap of faith, but something she had an absolute passion for.

"An opportunity came up to rent space in a friend's building that includes two other art and gallery spaces, so it provided the perfect venue. The space is amazingly calm with great light, and it enables me to offer a range of jewellery-making courses suited to a wide range of people."

Kay runs one-day courses, night classes and weekend courses for learners to explore their individual passions.

"I am not the holder of the knowledge. This is very much a community asset and when I meet other artisans who are keen to share their skill, I bring them in to share that expertise with others," she says.

"What makes this special is the wide variety of learners that we have on courses. Jewellery making really does bring a community together. We will have a group of family members who come together to experience the opportunity of learning a new skill, or a group of friends wanting to experience learning together. While traditionally our demographic has been women, we are beginning to get more men attending classes and recently we had a 75-year-old man come along who wanted to join a group activity."

Costs for a one-day course at The Bench cover materials and tutor time, with precious metals able to be purchased from the workshop in the 20 hours classes. Sometimes

learners bring along their own materials to use, including family heirlooms that might need a revamp or repair. One of the stranger items brought to class was the gold from a grandmother's teeth, the mouth being the traditional place for people to store and secure their wealth.

Learner feedback is extraordinarily positive, with jewellery making bringing a huge sense of satisfaction when objects are complete. It's also a very visible demonstration of learning and skill.

Kay's classes are very hands on. She gives a demonstration of technique at the start of the class then leaves people to apply their learning as they go along.

"I like to teach in small chunks so that learners can take a step-by-step approach to their activities. I'll give an overview at the beginning of the session and then it's largely up to people to explore their own creativity, with me there to provide expert advice if needed. I also like to deliver learning in a range of ways to meet all adult learning needs, so technique will be available in writing, via demonstration and also active participation for kinesthetic learners."

Hui Fono and Annual ACE Sector Conference 2025

10–12 June 2025
Ōtautahi, Christchurch

Tēnā kōutou katoa, Tālofa lava, Kia orana, Mālō e lelei, Fakaalofa lahi atu, Namaste, Mālō ni, Fakatalofa atu, Halo ola keta, Mauri and warm Pasifika greetings to you.

In 2025 we will be taking a new approach to Hui Fono and the ACE Conference. Both events will be held consecutively in Ōtautahi (Christchurch). The bringing together of our signature events will be premised on the whakatauki, *he waka eke noa* – we are all in this together, and the programme will combine adult learning principles with an indigenous education paradigm. Both events will be held at the Rydges Latimer and share a theme and scaffolding programme.

The theme will be **AI | AI – Bridging Artificial and Ancestral Intelligence**, bringing together educators, technologists and community leaders to explore the intersections of modern AI and ancestral wisdom. Our goal is to foster a rich dialogue that honours Indigenous knowledge while embracing innovative applications of artificial intelligence in community and educational contexts.

By connecting these two realms, we aim to develop educational practices that respect and celebrate the past, while also paving the way toward a future rooted in collaboration, creativity, and cultural integrity.

Visit our website (https://www.aceaotearoa.org.nz/events/ace-conference) for regular updates on the Hui Fono programme and the Conference programme as we confirm speakers and ako (workshop) sessions.

Hui Fono, 10 June

We are pleased to announce the return of Nohorua Hawaikirangi Parata as MC and facilitator. We also welcome back Pale Sauni. It is an honour to introduce him as our opening keynote speaker, sharing his wisdom and insights on the theme Grounded in Ancestral Intelligence.

Other confirmed speakers include Nina Oberg Humphries, co-founder of Tagata Moana Trust in Christchurch, which delivers STEM programmes for the community, Kiwibank Technology and Data Governance Analyst and founder of Tokelau in Tech, Tracey Savelio, and Dr Linitā Manua'tu, Trustee for the Centre for Pacific Languages.

We will be offering a discount to registered Hui Fono participants who wish to stay and attend the ACE Conference from 10–12 June. A discount code will be provided on request following successful registration for Hui Fono. Contact us for more information.

Registrations to Hui Fono are now open. You can register online at aceaotearoa.org.nz/events

In addition to the subsidised registration fee, we are offering financial assistance with travel and accommodation. Priority will be given to community educators and staff with limited professional development budgets. The Terms and conditions require approved applicants to make their own travel and accommodation arrangements and be reimbursed for costs on submission of receipts. You can access the financial assistance application on the ACE Aotearoa website at aceaotearoa.org.nz/events

ACE Sector Conference, 10–12 June

We are pleased to announce that Te Ataahia Hurihanganui is returning to facilitate our conference programme. The ACE Conference opening keynote speaker will be Dr Karaitiana Taiuru of Taiuru & Associates and member of AI Forum NZ, AI Data and Emerging Tech Governance, who will share his insights on data sovereignty. In the ako space (facilitated workshops), Jade Tang-Taylor, designer, innovator, collaborator and educator will share SImpact, an AI tool for non-profit organisations and communities to share their stories of doing good.

Registrations for the ACE Conference are now open. You can register online at aceaotearoa.org.nz/events

In addition to the subsidised registration fee, we are offering financial assistance with travel and accommodation. Priority will be given to community educators and staff with limited professional development budgets. The Terms and conditions require approved applicants to make their own travel and accommodation arrangements and be reimbursed for costs on submission of receipts. You can access the financial assistance application on the ACE Aotearoa website at aceaotearoa.org.nz/events

We hope you can join us to explore this year's exciting theme and learning space which we look forward to sharing with you.

A Walk Along the Rainbow

For the past 40 years Papakura Support and Counselling Services has been providing a range of valuable support assistance to their community. While the agency started out as a Women's Refuge, staff soon identified that community concerns were not just focussed on women, but on families and their desire to meet a wider range of needs within their South Auckland community. It was at that point the agency branched out to offer an expanded range of services, introducing counselling support and personal development workshops, including anger management, self-esteem and parenting courses.

The centre has six permanent staff and contracts tutors to deliver in specialised areas. Funding for most services is provided through the Ministry of Social Development and Oranga Tamariki, with up to 500 people from the Franklin and Papakura districts accessing services each year.

Centre values include:
Aroha, Hope, Respect, Empathy and Manaakitanga.

And the mission statement is:
We aim to create a safe place where opportunities of healing and growth are nurtured to enable healthy choices and realise dreams.

Silver Kilivia is the Community and Cultural Relationships Manager and he says their focus is on providing people with the tools and skills to enable them to identify and then access the resources they need to continue with their personal growth.

"The parenting courses that we run include a two-hour session once a week for six weeks. They are usually small group sessions with a maximum of eight people. In our parenting courses we provide the tools to help keep family units strong through the teaching and sharing of communication skills and using role play to help navigate issues successfully. Our workshops are slightly different to the traditional delivery of learning in that we explore different perspectives on intervention with the kaupapa set by the participants.

"We also run a course called 'Liking who I am' which is all about developing self-esteem. Learners are supported to explore self-confidence, self-assertiveness and communication, alongside a range of other tools," Silver says.

During 2023, the service identified the need to offer community-based support for whānau of Rainbow rangatahi in South Auckland and successfully applied for a small professional development grant from ACE Aotearoa.

"We wanted to deliver a series of workshops that would bridge knowledge gaps between rangatahi in the Rainbow community and their whānau. We knew from feedback that there were whānau who were struggling to manage their relationships with their children in the Rainbow Community and there was very little, if any, other support or learning channels for them."

Silver says the workshops offered a blended approach, providing both educational and support modules to address this sometimes-challenging journey.

"Topics we covered included grief and loss, reducing barriers, gender minority theory, legal rights, coming out or disclosing, safety and risk, and pronouns, among other topics. We know that whānau support is one of the strongest protective factors for Rainbow young people and the workshops we delivered equipped parents and caregivers with the tools to process their experiences and communicate appropriately. We provided a safe environment for people to engage and discuss with their peers and with relevant content."

Workshops were held weekly for six weeks and enabled parents and caregivers to explore and articulate their journey as a parent/caregiver of a Rainbow young person. The workshops were facilitated by a Rainbow Safe facilitator and there were about seven people on each course.

"I want to stress that this was not a case of whānau who were unaccepting of their children's choice, but rather about providing a safe space for them to reshape their thoughts based on facts and education," says Silver.

He confirmed that this workshop topic is a massive and very specialised area to navigate and, as a small provider, the ACE grant enabled them to connect with the most qualified people and resources. At each session kai was served which helped to connect people through the sharing of a meal.

"We would like to be able to run the course again in the future, but we will need to secure more funding," Silver says. "It took us a long time to get to a space where we could deliver on the project competently and it would be a shame to lose that expertise. However, the current climate is hard from a funding point of view, as many other providers in the sector will be aware."

Feedback from parents who attended was very positive, with several mentioning that many people are forced to navigate this journey without support. Others said, "Thank you for allowing us to meet face to face in South Auckland without the need to travel into the city," and "Thank you for offering us a space to voice, discuss and unpack our feelings."

Defining and Measuring Social Capital

The ACE Aotearoa network is a significant contributor to the achievement of social capital – the 'glue' that holds societies together. Social capital and social wellbeing are inextricably linked to keeping our societies strong and well-functioning. Each day the sector delivers that glue, making a difference to the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of New Zealanders as well as to our wider communities.

The OECD defines social capital as "networks, together with shared norms, values and understandings which facilitate cooperation within or among groups", with higher levels of social capital associated with better outcomes in health, education, employment and civic engagement. Social capital is inclusive of culture and cultural practices and sits alongside three other forms of capital:

- **Natural capital = environmental stocks and systems that generate benefits for people, including ecosystem services, raw materials, and a stable climate**
- **Human capital = the health and skills of the population**
- **Economic capital = financial goods, physical infrastructure and technology.**

While we can define social capital and we can be clear about the contribution it makes to human capital (the health and skills of our community), what is harder to define and measure is the contribution this work makes to economic capital.

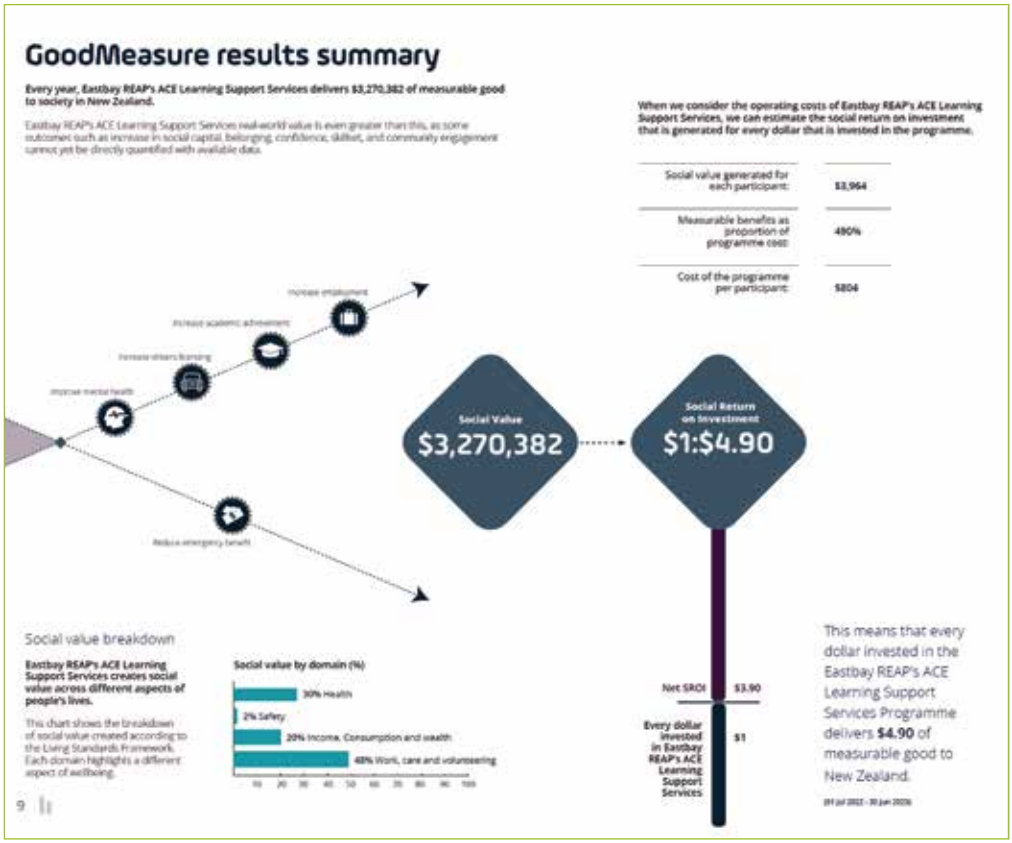
During 2023 Eastbay REAP undertook Social Return on Investment research with ImpactLab to better define the difference made by their learner-centric approach. ImpactLab uses GoodMeasure methodology to support organisations to understand their social value and empower them to further understand their data, people and impact stories. The GoodMeasure methodology draws on publicly available data, academic research and an organisation's own data to estimate social value and a social return on investment.

Eastbay REAP is one of 13 REAPs throughout the country that provide, supplement and complement lifelong learning opportunities. Eastbay REAP works across the Eastern Bay of Plenty from Ruatāhuna, to Matatā, to Cape Runaway. In the ACE context, the REAP provides a suite of learning and support services, including digital/computing, budgeting, parenting, te reo māori me ōna tikanga, employability, pathway planning, sustainability, and driver licensing. The aim is to increase learner engagement, foundation skills, confidence, future pathways and social cohesion in rural communities.

CEO of Eastbay REAP Dr Ryan Morrison says they embarked on the ImpactLab piece of work to fulfil their ongoing commitment to "checking themselves".

"As an organisation we are constantly checking ourselves around the real good we are delivering. We have always taken a very proactive approach to ensure we are making a difference. We wanted to engage with an external party to provide some critical reflection around our data and reporting to communities. Performance reporting is incredibly important, and we have always tended to be ahead of the curve in terms of telling that particular story."

Ryan says their strategic plan is very clear in relation to purpose, priorities and outcomes. "We see education as the fundamental human right that unlocks all others. But we needed ways to effectively measure our results. That's where ImpactLab and the GoodMeasure methodology were able to help demonstrate the value we add. Their measurement clearly shows the proven gap between what might have happened and what actually did happen with



the intervention of ACE learning opportunities. The intervention demonstrates that doing things in a targeted way helped achieve a suite of definable outcomes."

ImpactLab has expressed a series of GoodMeasure outcomes that directly contribute to social value calculations. These include an improvement in mental health, an increase in academic achievement, employment and driver licensing, and a reduction in the need for the emergency benefit. Additional outcomes that were not included in the return on investment calculations (and so are additional benefit on top of the published amounts) include an increase in self-esteem, confidence, sense of belonging and personal skill set.

Using these criteria, results in 2023 showed that the Eastbay REAP's tailored learner-centric approach returned $4.90 for every $1.00 spent – that's more than $3m of social return in just one year of ACE delivery, reaching far above the national average. Specifically, Eastbay REAP's ACE Learning Support Services delivered $3,270,382 of measurable good to society in New Zealand during 2023.

Ryan says that this result is a conservative output. "The ImpactLab work is still in the early phases of development and the measurement analysis does not include aspects such as social cohesion and confidence, which are proven dimensions that were not able to be measured.

"Further, the results don't take account of the intergenerational connection, which is core to the lifelong learning model of all REAPs. We know that when we get it right for adults, we help break the cycle for future generations. Our next phase will include a measure of the impact on early childhood and the "knock on" effect of working with the children of our ACE learners during the first 2,000 days of their lives."

Our people

Obituary

Dame Iritana Tawhiwhirangi

He maimai aroha tēnei ki a Kahurangi Iritana Tāwhiwhirangi.
E te māreikura e tangi tōnu ana ngā roimata aroha. E moe.

On Saturday 1 February 2025, Dame Iritana Tawhiwhirangi, a founder of the Kōhanga Reo movement, passed away aged 95. Her funeral service was held on Friday 7 February before she was laid to rest at the Porourangi Tawhiwhirangi Urupa alongside her late husband Porourangi Tawhiwhirangi and her two children Tangopahika (Boy) and Heni Whakamaungarangi.

Dame Iritana was born at Wharekāhika on the East Coast, a descendant of Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Kahungunu and Ngāpuhi.

She was a life member of the Māori Women's Welfare League, a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit and was made a Dame Companion in 2009 for services to Māori education.

Whānau said in a tribute that they were deeply proud of all her work and accomplishments, particularly raising her children and mokopuna.

"She did all of this without her late husband by her side, while leading, contributing and supporting Māori development through kaupapa such as Te Kōhanga Reo, Māori Women's Welfare League, Tu Tangata and many other kaupapa.

"She had high expectations and demanded the best for, and of, Māoridom. She worked tirelessly to strengthen whānau, and she was adamant that whānau knew what was best for them and that they only needed to be empowered and enabled to do so.

"She challenged the status quo and pushed for better outcomes for whānau. She gave her life to the greater cause, ensuring Māoridom achieved independence and self-determination with a flourishing reo. Her passion was the development of whānau, community and iwi."

Dame Iritana began teaching in the 1940s and became a welfare officer in Ruatōria, developing playcentres on the East Coast. The first Kōhanga Reo was opened in April 1982 in Wainuiomata and the Secretary for Māori Affairs at the time, Kara Puketapu, engaged Dame Iritana to promote Kōhanga Reo throughout the country. At its peak, Kōhanga Reo had more than 300 active centres throughout the country.

In 2010 Dame Iritana told Waka Huia her greatest wish was that the movement was carried by all Māori.

"There is a mutual ground where Māori and Pākehā can meet to resolve past issues; there are benefits there for us all but first we have the massive task of unifying our people," she said.

The Insignia of a Dame Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to Māori education was awarded to Dame Iritana in 2010. She was also awarded an Honorary Doctor of Literature from Victoria University of Wellington, 2007 and received the Te Tohu Tiketike a Te Waka Toi award for Māori artists from Creative New Zealand in 2008.

At the age of 83, Dame Iritana opened the ACE Sector Conference in 2013. The theme was Hāpori Tu Rangatira: Confident Communities. This theme was a reflection of her life's work, and we were incredibly privileged to have her as our keynote speaker.

ACE Aotearoa co-chairs Kathryn Hazlewood (Tangata Tiriti Co-Chair) and Jay Rupapera (Tangata Whenua Co-Chair) said that Dame Iritana was an incredible and effective advocate who achieved phenomenal results in the learning sector. Her unstinting contribution enabled the development of strong partnerships that facilitated the growth of successful co-governance leadership in many sectors.

New Years Honors Recognition

Rangimahora Reddy – King's Service Medal

Rangimahora Reddy (Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Maniapoto, Waikato, Ngāti Rangiwewehi, Rangitāne) was awarded the **King's Service Medal** in the 2025 New Year Honours.

Rangimahora is widely recognised for her work at the Rauawaawa Kaumātua Charitable Trust in Hamilton.

The culturally focused charity provides health and wellbeing, housing, welfare, education and recreational services for kaumātua. During her leadership, Rangimahora has pioneered kaumātua-centred programmes, including national and regional wellbeing events, commenced the revitalisation of Rauawaawa's Te Puna o Te Ora facility into New Zealand's first dementia and age-friendly, kaumātua-led and digitally enabled community hub.

Another achievement was the establishment of the Rauawaawa Enterprise for Kaumātua Aspirations (REKA), a social enterprise that produced Māori-designed cookie cutters to assist kaumātua with dementia.

She has also contributed to projects aimed at supporting kaumātua health through cultural practices, fostering intergenerational knowledge transfer and social connections, and promoting housing and social enterprise models.

Rangimahora was a recipient of the Hamilton Civic Award in 2018 and is also a previous winner of the Age Concern New Zealand Huia Award.

Michael Leslie Burton (Mike) Styles – Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM)

Mike Styles, literacy, numeracy and dyslexia practitioner and Chief Executive of Dyslexia Consulting, was awarded the **Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM)** in the New Zealand Honours List for services to people with dyslexia and education.

This award recognises Mike's contributions to increasing knowledge about dyslexia and advocating for better support for those with the learning difficulty. For more than 20 years Mike has been a leading voice in promoting awareness and understanding of dyslexia across New Zealand and he has been a driving force behind numerous initiatives aimed at improving dyslexia education and support systems.

Mike has delivered workshops, seminars and speaking engagements at local, national and international levels. He led a major national research project to investigate how dyslexia impacts learners in tertiary education and developed a support programme for tertiary learners. He led a team from government agencies and education organisations to implement the Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark, with many tertiary education organisations adopting the standards since its launch. He co-established the Dyslexia/Neurodiversity Community of Practice in 2021, a forum of more than 300 educators who support learners with dyslexia.

Circle of Knowledge: Engaging Strategies for Teaching and Learning

ACE Aotearoa has been awarded an Ako Aotearoa Research and Innovation grant to enable study into the efficacy of Teaching and Learning Circles (TLC) within the adult learning environment. Specifically, the research will investigate how the implementation of TLCs in adult and community education influences teaching and learning practices, including identification of perceived benefits and challenges as well as impacts on learner outcomes.

The eight-month research project will be led by Dr Cherie Chu-Fuluifaga, a highly accomplished and respected researcher with expertise in Pacific education and the experiences of underrepresented learners. Her previous research projects have focused on identifying and promoting effective strategies to support the educational success and wellbeing of Pacific learners in Aotearoa New Zealand for Ako Aotearoa. Dr Fuluifaga will be supported by ACE Aotearoa Sector Capability Manager, Tai Samaeli and Teaching Standards Advisor, Jennifer Leahy. Cherie will lead the research component of the project while Jennifer and Tai are facilitating the workshops. The two sites selected to pilot the Teaching and Learning Circles are Far North REAP and Hagley Adult Literacy Centre.

The research supports the ACE Aotearoa philosophy of enhancing educational experiences through innovative and reflective teaching strategies and collaborative learning approaches.

TLCs serve as a cooperative and reflective platform that enables and facilitates educators to engage in professional development to enhance teaching practices by providing a supportive space to share experiences, exchange ideas and reflect on their teaching methods. From this collaborative concept starting point, we anticipate that our educators will feel more confident about the adoption of more innovative teaching strategies and classroom techniques. These will also be shared more widely amongst educators with a shared vision.

TLCs are acknowledged for promotion of continuous professional growth. They allow educators to expand their knowledge, gain new insights and deepen their understanding of effective teaching methods. This environment then encourages peer learning and mentorship, facilitating educators' learning from each other's experiences and expertise.

ACE Aotearoa and Ako Aotearoa expect to see some progressive outcomes from the TLCs, including improvements in teaching practices as educators adopt innovative strategies and refine their classroom management techniques through shared experiences and collaborative reflection. The project will also likely lead to significant professional growth among educators as they gain new insights and deepen their understanding of effective pedagogical methods via peer mentorship and continuous development opportunities.

We will report on the research project as we progress through the various research phases, says ACE Chief Executive Officer | Kaiwhakahaere Matua, Hannah Pia Baral.

"This is an exciting opportunity not just for the researchers involved in the project, but also for the dedicated teams that deliver adult learning programmes across Aotearoa and our akonga who look to us to ensure delivery at the highest levels of professionalism. This will enable the exploration of new models of best practice delivery, all of which are focused on better outcomes for akonga. We are excited about the potential of this project and we look forward to sharing outcomes with the wider ACE sector," Hannah says.

Board Talk

In this issue of Board Talk, we got to spend some time with new Board member Dr Fehoko to ask him about his drivers and motivation and what he wants to achieve during his time on the ACE Aotearoa Board.

Dr Edmond Fehoko

Dr Fehoko (Tongan) was elected to the Board of ACE Aotearoa at the 2024 Annual General Meeting. He holds a PhD in Public Health from AUT University and is currently a Senior Lecturer in Human Nutrition and Associate Dean Pacific in the Division of Sciences at the University of Otago.

He was motivated to put his name forward for election by a desire to ensure that we have a strong Pacific voice and lens in the governance space and that the ACE Aotearoa relationship with Pacific communities and providers is strong with good representation at all levels of the organisation. Not only will Edmond contribute at Board level in terms of strategic development, he also anticipates that his contribution and comprehensive knowledge in the ACE space will trickle down to the wider team and contribute to strategic thinking and delivery.

Edmond is also driven by a desire to grow the number of Pacific members in the sector and to have a dedicated Pacific action plan that is specifically designed to meet the needs of, and resonate with, these communities.

He paid tribute to the work of previous Board member Pale Sauni and the work he has completed over several years, not just on the Board of ACE Aotearoa, but as a strong contributor to the sector. He expects to build on these foundations and go deeper into new spaces and environments. An example of this is a desire to strengthen the relationship with Pacific communities and providers in regions such as Southland and some rural areas who may not have previously had a significant exposure to ACE Aotearoa.

Edmond is already engaging with many of these groups on a day-to-day basis with his current work and will now add his ACE Aotearoa hat to the mix during conversations.

"It is a particularly challenging time for many organisations. I want ACE Aotearoa to help ensure that we have a Pacific lens on when it comes to delivery within Indigenous communities. It's important that we stand strong and unified. We have communities that rely heavily on us to not give up on them and to continue to provide supplementary sites of learning."

Next month Board Talk will engage further with our second new Board member Anne Troy.

ACE News

ACE Aotearoa Annual Awards 2025

Nominations are open for the ACE Aotearoa Annual Awards 2025. These prestigious awards recognise excellence in teaching, ACE programmes, and leadership within the sector and are an opportunity for you to acknowledge your colleagues and the wonderful work they do.

The Awards are one of the highlights of the ACE calendar and are presented at our conference dinner. Award recipients receive complimentary travel, accommodation and registration to attend the conference.

We encourage you to begin thinking about nominating someone in your team or wider ACE community, a programme you are proud of, or a person who has demonstrated leadership through contributions to governance, management, research or innovation. We have streamlined our process for 2025 so that once you have provided some information about your nominee, we will do the rest.

Nomination forms are available for download at *https://www.aceaotearoa.org.nz/events/ace-aotearoa-annual-awards*

A new online nomination form is also available.

You can check out our 2024 Awards recipients at *https://www.aceaotearoa.org.nz/news-and-resources/news/adult-and-community-education-aotearoa-annual-awards-2024*

Nominations for 2025 close on March 31 and will be considered by an external panel of judges.

We look forward to receiving your nominations.

Noticeboard

Stay up with the Play!

Membership of ACE Aotearoa offers significant benefits. You have access to our carefully curated and well-thought-through suite of courses that are ACE focused. You receive regular updates on the sector and initiatives that are changing the way we work; you can attend the annual ACE conference and your support helps us to deliver the advocacy and policy advice that keeps our sector strong. The cost of membership is extremely affordable and your support enables us to support you. You might also want to share membership benefits with other organisations and encourage them to join our movement.

To join please visit our website *https://www.aceaotearoa.org.nz/who-we-are/membership*