

Te Kupenga Hauora o Tauranga Moana

He Mara Kai: A HEHA Initiative.

Theresa Wharekura, Manager, Te Kupenga Hauora

Te Kupenga Hauora o Tauranga Moana is an independent Māori health provider initiated by local Kuia who were also instrumental in establishing Kohanga Reo. They had the foresight to recognize the benefits of a culturally appropriate health service running alongside and catering largely to mokopuna attending Kohanga Reo. Since 1990, Te Kupenga Hauora has delivered services to the seventeen Kohanga reo of Ngati Ranginui, Ngaiterangi and Ngati Pukenga and to the wider community of the Western Bay of Plenty.



One of our successful projects is the Mara Kai programme, an initiative focusing on good nutrition and physical activity by supporting Kohanga to grow vegetables. The project preempted recent HEHA funded initiatives by some years and is also interwoven into Kohanga reo kaupapa.

We started small by supporting five or six kohanga who saw and were enjoying the benefits a gardening experience had on their tamariki and whanau. We provided each of these kohanga with 4 or 5 punnets of seasonal, easy to grow vegetable plants, two to three times a year. We also included information on composting, worm farming, gardening tips, and kai pai preparation. Photos and short articles of the mature gardens are now included in our quarterly newsletter which is distributed to every whanau in kohanga, Hauora, iwi in Tauranga Moana and to as many Maori organizations as possible.

Poike Kohanga Reo has always had a garden. This has largely been through the efforts of Koro Tei Walker and Nanny Rose who have taught the whanau how to grow and prepare the produce. As more Kohanga have come on board we have had a regular feature in our newsletter so whanau can see and take pride in their labour. Some whanau are experimenting



now by trying to grow watercress, riwai Maori and looking at garden structures. At least two Kohanga have had to learn to keep out hungry wildlife; like Whareroa where they lost their purapura riwai one season to cheeky pukeko. Moving their garden closer to the kaumatua flats has helped. Matakana

Figure 1. Te Kohanga Reo o Arataki with plants from Mangatawa Nursery

Kohanga had to overcome the problem of keeping out the primary schools' chickens.

In the past three years Te Kupenga has offered nutrition workshops to support both the drive toward healthier food choices and to ensure Kohanga are fully aware and understanding of the new food and beverage classifications. We were asked by the local HEHA manager to nominate a kaimahi to assist in the delivery of Maori media workshops to nga kohanga reo me nga kura kaupapa in the Western Bay of Plenty. Hoti Waikaho of Arataki TKR took on the challenge and worked alongside te Tāhuhu Mātauranga team delivering workshops in the Bay of Plenty, Waikato and Lakes DHB regions. Unfortunately, kohanga reo and Kura were either



Figure 2. Mangatawa Nursery Staff

not notified or informed too late about the workshops. Many were disadvantaged by this when funding became available for HEHA projects. Jessica Burke was appointed the HEHA Nutrition fund coordinator. She developed a rapport with Kura and kohanga alike ensuring they understood the funding criteria and the types of activities the fund was likely to support. Our health promoter helped by clarifying information so that whanau would have a good understanding of project boundaries. A kaupapa Māori panel was responsible for assessing applications to ensure a Māori perspective. As a result the number of successful applicants was quite high. Poike TKR used their funding for a greenhouse. Te Kura o Matakana entered a joint venture with the kohanga, the environmental group, Te Awanui Hauora and the Rangatahi group to grow kumara. The community is now motivated to expand this.

While Te Kupenga was preparing for Te Whare Ukaipo, (a parenting facility for Te Matatini National Kapahaka Festival), we approached Mangatawa nursery for native plants. We had originally been buying our veggie plants from commercial garden centres, but here was a local Māori business that we could support. They agreed to grow veggie plants for our Kohanga in exchange for publicity about their kaupapa. Sixteen kohanga are now growing vegetables and



Figure 3. Nga tamariki o te Kura o te Moutere o Matakana.

many Kohanga whanau are now visiting the Mangatawa nursery.

Another project that aligns well with “Mara Kai” is the Healthy Heart Award or “Manawa Toa”. This involves kohanga attending workshops on nutrition and physical activity, writing policies to support their delivery and including activities in their curriculum. The workshops are a partnership between Te Kupenga Hauora, the Heart Foundation, Sport BOP and the BOPDHB HEHA Community Fund. Kohanga already do these activities but having a Healthy Heart Award shows prospective and current parents that there is commitment to healthy practices and producing the best results for their tamariki.

What’s the next step? Government has recently stopped the Nutrition Fund and is removing all HEHA initiatives, a maddening prospect when you think of the time and effort that goes into health promotion. Everything was falling into place. Kura and kohanga are active as never before, the education environment was supported by “Mission On”; Health Promoting Schools, Fruit In Schools, and Nigs & Nags. The community was supportive and saw value in the projects. Te Kupenga will continue to support Maara Kai as the project is bigger than any changes government make. We look ahead now to fruit and rongoa Māori trees and our journey from HEHA, to HOHA and now HII HAA will continue. That’s what our kohanga want!

