

Ngā Huatau Taiohi - Nukuhau Marae

Enjoying and achieving education success as Māori is:



- **Being able to resist the negative stereotypes about being Māori**

The lies that we get told - that we can't do it. But we are strong people. When you go back to the wars that were fought, the battles that were fought, that doesn't just stay in the past. Those battles were fought for us to be here, to move forward.

My biggest success would be overcoming the barriers, the doubts, the stereotypes about me being Māori - and also the limitations of my school.

It feels good to prove other people wrong when they're stuck thinking that because we're Māori we can't achieve in an academic world, and we can only achieve in Visual Arts and nothing related to English and careers and Science and Technology. Everyone is capable of anything we set our mind to.

I'm the first. I'm the first one to make it to this point. To make it to Level 1 in my family is like: "Wow!"

Times have changed. In our school we now see our Māori students succeeding at the same level as the Pākehā students.

Just because I'm 'smart' doesn't mean that I'm not Māori. Success is being able to hold on to who we really are as Māori.

It's not so much where you come from. For me it's who you make yourself to be.

- **Being strong in your Māori cultural identity**

It's achieving academically, in sports, and in a range of different areas - but still holding on to your culture and who you are as Māori, and what it means to be Māori.

Culture's important going through education. Culture just brings it all back home.

We have a culture to be proud of. Kapa haka is amazing. It makes your blood boil. It makes your eyes open. It's just amazing.

What makes me proud to be Māori is that I can connect myself to the land and to the environment around me. That spiritual connection helps me push forward in my education and embrace it.

The learning of kapa haka, of environment, of nature; connect it to Māori and release it to the generations. That's the bigger picture that I see for the future in my life and that's what makes me proud.

There's a huge drive on excellence, but there's also a huge drive on keeping your culture alive - making it known to you and to everybody else, that you are Māori and you're proud to be Māori.

I'm a white boy. People don't expect me to be Māori, but I consider myself Māori. It's not the colour of my skin, it's my ancestors. So that's who I follow and who I want to make happy.

- **Developing and maintaining emotional and spiritual strength**

Because of my whakapapa, my tipuna, I can believe in who I am.

It's surrounding yourself in the environment that you need to be surrounded in. You don't want to be put, or you don't want to put yourself, in a negative area that's not going to help you, not going to support you, take you in the wrong direction and lead you the wrong way, when you know where to go. So you need to put yourself in that position, te haere tika (*the right path*).

Every time I feel down, I go and talk to my Nan. She gives me some advice.

Make yourself able to grow. Don't limit your thinking. Allow it to expand, and allow people to speak into your life. Listen to it and filter it, 'cause what you listen to grows in you, and you speak it. Just allow people to speak into your life so you can grow and create new paths.

A lot of young Māori have this thing in them, this whakamā. I'd like to break that shame.

- **Knowing, accepting and acknowledging the strength of working together**

Knowing that you've got somebody in your corner who wants you to succeed, makes you want to succeed.

It's mostly my whānau who tell me never to give up.

When we want to succeed, we don't only want to succeed for us. We want to succeed for our families and everyone who has been there for us. We want to make a better future.

Our whole community is behind everyone. They just want you to get out and explore the world, get an education, and then once you've reached that point, come back and just give back. That's how we've been raised to be successful - not just for yourself, but for everyone else. They want what we want, and I think that's what drives us.

- **Being able to contribute to the success of others**

As Māori, you want everyone to be there with you to help you along the way, and to help them along the way. You don't just want to succeed for yourself, but you're taking everyone with you.

I am doing it because I want to give back to my community. I think that's what our goal in life is - just to give back.

It's not the achievement itself. It's what happens afterwards - being able to provide and give back to the people who have helped and supported you along the way.

I think being there as a role model was one of the biggest things that really made me feel like I was making a difference, when they felt like they had someone to come and talk to, they could relate to. I felt really special.

Doing the best that you can do academically, still holding on to who you are as a Māori person. Not just thinking of yourself and your immediate whānau; thinking of your whole iwi, your whole rohe, all your people. Wanting to help others, but holding on to who you are.

- **Understanding that success is part of who we are**

I saw a lot of Māori beginning to want Excellences in their classes.

This year our top academic students were both Māori, and I think that it just drove us all.

I'd like for a new stereotype to be that there are Māori students achieving, and that's just what they do.

It showed everyone that it doesn't matter where you come from, you can achieve if you put the hard yards in.

As both Māori and Cook Island, in a Europeanised education system, I can confidently say that I can pass between the three worlds, and not be a stranger.

I mean, all three of us can stand on a stage and dance the hula, and be confident with ourselves. And then stand in a pōwhiri and be confident there too. I know how to do Level 1 Algebra, or write a creative writing piece that'll give me an Excellence. Those are successes that we are setting for ourselves today so that in 10 years time, maybe even sooner, that'll be normal for Māori students when they're our age.

- **Being able to build on your own experiences and the experiences of others**

Not only do our teachers help us, but our kaumātua help us learn - we should also embrace our connection with our kaumātua.

Being the only one of my family to actually make it to high school, using my siblings' failures to drive my success - that's really helped me through high school.

My grandparents always pushed my brother and me to try our hardest. They don't want us to be like them and not finish high school. My brother - he always wanted me to be better cause he didn't finish high school either. He's always wanted me to try my hardest and believe in myself - to go on to bigger things.

You really have to turn everything into a positive note. Like, you have to use your past experiences as motivation to get to where you want to be, to make your ancestors proud.

- **A success of mine**

A success of mine would have to be when I was given the opportunity to stand as a speaker at the Manu Kōrero competition for my region. I was able to stand on behalf of my family, of my school, of my region, of my iwi, of all of my ancestors. I was able to stand there proudly and say: "You know, I deserve to be here. I'm Māori!" And that's a huge success - setting that example, and being a role model for younger brothers and sisters or cousins - or anyone who wants to do those things. You know, showing them that they can do it if they just have the confidence to try.

