

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

A lot of people think being Māori is trying to work against something. But if you're Māori, you're working with your whole culture. You have your ancestors, your family, they're all behind you. Being Māori is something that will support you, not something that you have to fight against.

To be successful is not to conform to the negative stereotype that we all know is there with being a Māori student. Being successful, it's not just academically or physically but it's also the respect you get from the teachers and friends.

My older brother he sort of slacked off with school, and he knows it. He talks to me and he always says, "Don't be like me". He always pushes me to make sure I know where I am going. And like, I'm not trying to sound sad, but I don't want to do what he did.

A lot of Māori do have talent, I can see it in my cousins and all my family, but they just don't bring it out to the table. You need to put your results on the table. Don't be shy. You need to be proud of who you are as a Māori - show your talents to the people.

I think it's more about pride - showing the way for the rest of the family and for the rest of us as Māori. We just make the path bigger, not longer. And I reckon, being the oldest, I have to show my brothers and my cousins and my extended family that they can be more than what they are.

The Māori pass rate for NCEA has lifted in our school. It is lifting every year and I think the word that's been thrown around is pride, and I do carry a lot of pride in seeing that I was part of that stat.

Breaking that stereotype and those assumptions that are put on us as Māori. I don't think success for us is just academic. It's finding who we are and being happy with our wellbeing, and being able to confidently walk with te ao Māori and te ao Pākehā. (*the Māori and Pākehā worlds*). And showing them that we can do just as good as they can, and better.

When all of us Māori kids can walk into our school and be proud to wear our uniform, I think that's a good success. Not just walking in, but when you walk out of our school and we're not rushed to take our uniform off because we're proud to wear it. I reckon that's a pretty big thing.

I saw this Māori fella on the fifty-dollar note, and I asked my dad: "Who's this fella, Dad?" And he said: "Oh, that's Api (Apirana Ngata). He was the first Māori to graduate from a university." I know Api is a big inspiration for Māori, and I respect that. I want to be like that fella.

We have to push past the expectations that the world has on Māori. We have so much talent and intelligence, but it's these statistics and the kind of image that everybody else has placed on us that hold us back. There is resilience amongst us, and it's slowly coming through. And that's what success means to me as a Māori.

I was first in my family to pass Level 1 in school, and so for me I was happy as. I don't want to tell my mum yet. I want her to find out next year so she can be happy too.

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

Receiving the award this year was a big thing. It was emotional having friends and family members standing up, doing the haka tautoko (*performance in support*) because that was unheard of in our school until the past two years. Just having that made me feel proud and not so shy. It was so good.

When we have pride in being Māori and are not whakamā, you can show that you can succeed. Still have the tikanga to be humble, but you can say, "I'm proud to stand here as a Māori and receive this."

I used to be pretty bad in Year 9 and 10, but then when I joined kapa haka in Year 11, that changed me - changed who I am. I'm a better person now. Matua kind of dropped me in the deep end, made me step up and change. He just gave me a lot of opportunities and he's taught me a lot.

I wasn't really raised in a Māori way, so joining kapa haka was finding out more about my culture and learning about myself. That's success for me.

For me, just passing was a big thing, I was on top of the world. Maybe next year I can endorse with Merit or Excellence.

It's knowing who you are and being able to introduce yourself, your Māori heritage. Being proud of being Māori, being OK with yourself. You can be Māori and be an achiever. Being Māori is just amazing.

Success all comes from just being who you are. Everything all comes together, and if you are proud to be who you are, then everything else comes flowing through. So embracing being Māori is very important for me personally, and it helps a lot to know that you've got everyone behind you - your iwi, your friends, everyone like that.

People never thought that I was Māori. They just thought I was a typical white boy, and I was like: "No, it's just I'm a white Māori." And it was like: "Oh that's not a real Māori." Well it is to me.

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

Success for me is being able to support the students of our school. It's just an amazing feeling when you are able to help other people and make them want to do good.

Our school has the funding for a wharenui. It's going to go up in front of the school. I think that will be a big contributor to student success. It's something close to us, and something we as Māori students and the rest of the school will have.

I haven't really had a role model to look up to in my family, because there's nobody really that's academically successful. So, really, I want to be the first person in my family to succeed at school.

I was selected for peer support. That was fun. I enjoyed that, and that helped me with leadership skills. Then being part of the PPP (Pause Prompt Praise) programme - that was good! It also made me feel happy, because you were helping younger Māori students along the way.

Like, if you see one of us pass, that means that we can all pass. We can actually beat the stereotypes.

- **Developing discipline and maintaining emotional strength**

I didn't carry kapa haka on because I thought it was a bit too much. I wanted to focus on my schoolwork. But then I realised, sticking with kapa haka, it's what really pushed me to do everything really.

I didn't have to give up anything to do what I wanted. I just did everything.

Through kapa haka I learnt a lot of discipline, and that's paid off with my schoolwork, because you've got to be disciplined when it comes to your studies.

My dad, he always expects us to do the best that we

can in everything we do: "Don't do anything half-pai." He always talks to me and makes sure I do the best I can. So that's why I was sort of annoyed last year that I only got Merit endorsement and missed out by four credits for Excellence. Being able to say that you've succeeded means that you've tried doing everything, you haven't given up, you've tried your hardest.

I used to come to school just to see my friends. I was bored. Now, I've really changed my mind-set. I come to school and I work hard so I can get somewhere in life.

Just reading The Word when you're troubled and just finding the meaning that you need. It's really helpful.

Being happy and making sure your wellbeing is okay - your physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing. You can feel good inside and outside.

- **Experiencing the power of whanaungatanga**

When you're doing kapa haka you have a lot of connections and relationships. It means I have friends and family around me, helping me along the way to university, helping with curriculum stuff.

We're working closely with the community, with the local marae who are hosting NCEA information evenings.

To me, my biggest success in school is finding a family. Having a family within the school and finding my place within that.

It's the massive support network that I have. There's my family and then my whānau class at school. They're just always pushing me to do better and to strive for the best. They always have your back through everything.

My dad, he's probably my biggest critic, but he's like my biggest fan at the same time. He's always there for me, always telling me what I can do, and he's just always supporting me. Same as my mum. When it comes to school, she's the one that's making sure I do my homework and have everything done on time.

My number one supporter is my mum. She has been there since day one. She knows what I want to do, and how she can help me. My two older sisters, they're there when I need advice and when I just need anything. Whaea at school, she's helped me with everything. When I need anything, she's always there. Our principal, she's like my mentor. She's somebody I can talk to and she's really good friends with my mum.

If you've got great support around you, it's all going to happen.

- **Knowing that you can access explicit and timely direction**

We have a special initiative in our school. It not only helps with your leadership skills, but it keeps track of your academic records, your attendance and everything. They really crack the whip and help you to stay on track. Teachers help us to understand what we need for university and what we need to gain scholarships or anything like that.

It's made me more confident - there's so much support. We're just like a big family, we've got support everywhere, so that's awesome.

My tutor teacher, he makes sure that if my grades aren't up to standard, that I re-submit and get them up. Just teachers in general - they've pushed me this year to do my best.

The teachers in school are so helpful. They give us more than they had and they also act like our parents. They form that relationship with us so we can bond with them easily, and that contributes to our success.

