

# Māori Voices of Play

INSIGHTS REPORT  
2020

A young child with their arms raised, wearing a light blue denim jacket, is reaching up to catch a blue paper airplane. The background is a vibrant, colorful mural of a large fish, possibly a tuna, with a rainbow-like gradient. The child is looking up with a joyful expression.

This report was produced on behalf of Sport NZ by Nikki Penetito-Hemara, Ngāti Ranginui, Ngāti Kahungunu, Whakatōhea, Managing Director, Kori Collaborative Ltd.

Nikki is now contracted to work for Sport NZ in the Community Activations team as He Mātanga Māori – Play Systems.

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Kāore e mutu ngā mihi ki a kōutou i whakamana ai i tēnei kaupapa

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# 01

## Preface

**Sport NZ has a bold vision of Every Body Active. This means that all tamariki, rangatahi and adults in Aotearoa are physically active through play, active recreation and sport. Play allows children to experience fun, joy and laughter in a way that is important to them. It is also where they develop and practice life skills. To this end, there is an interest in contextualising play within an Aotearoa context, in particular from a Māori Worldview.**

Many countries struggle with play preservation and development as they don't have a clear anchor point within their national make up. It is very individual and seems to lack a connection to their national identity. This is a strength of Aotearoa. We have a very distinct play genesis which is enhanced by our bicultural origins and means Aotearoa has opportunities to be utterly unique in the international play, active recreation and sport sector. Our rich migration story has also added to the diversity of how we choose to play. These must be acknowledged and celebrated to give meaning to the context of play in Aotearoa.

Māori have always looked to the past to inform ways to move into the future. Pūrākau for example hold a wealth of mātauranga, of traditional practices and frameworks that sustained our whānau in times of challenge and prosperity. If we look at the 'Play System' through a Te Ao Māori lens we can rethink the way our ecosystem currently influences our decisions to play which are critical to our health and wellbeing.

This insights report is the result of a culmination of work which is being conducted in an effort to develop an Play Action Plan for national rollout.

The purpose of this insights report is to learn, discover and understand Māori play within the context of Aotearoa New Zealand. To this end, collecting the voices of Māori play and identifying the lived experiences of individuals and their whānau is paramount. We want to know what Māori play looked like in the past, what it means to whānau now and what they aspire it to look like in the future.

To give a true representation of play, we need the voices of Māori to be clear, rich and equitable. Widening the space for Māori narratives of play and more importantly Māori concepts of play increases the chances of a framework having deep resonance and impact for those living in Aotearoa.

The report concludes with a list of potential short- and long-term priorities, including a set of recommendations for further action and consideration. This will allow us to provide the Government with a plan for advancing a play agenda that is truly representative of New Zealanders.

We believe that if we design a Play Action Plan with and for whānau, this will contribute to shifts towards positive wellbeing actions and outcomes that are both meaningful and sustainable for all New Zealanders.

**Kia kaweā tātou e te tākaro**  
**Let us be taken by the spirit of play**

# 02

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Piata Penetito-Hemara, He Pi Ka Rere 2019, Tāmaki Mākaurau

# 03

## Background

Sport NZ has a role as kaitiaki (guardians) – like other parts of the play, active recreation and sport, government and private sectors in making sure opportunities for our kids to play are preserved and enhanced. Connecting and enhancing the Aotearoa New Zealand play system is a primary focus from 2020-24. Over the past three years, Sport NZ has been developing, testing and refining their approach to play.

The Sport NZ 2015-20 strategy promotes the importance of using evidence, community input and a holistic approach to create better quality experiences for participants. The belief is that this will have the greatest impact on the system. Collecting insights is about using multiple sources of information to understand the needs of participants and to improve decision-making. The Aotearoa 'point of difference' when it comes to collecting insights is the ability to integrate a Kaupapa Māori approach to unlock unique Māori perspectives.

The scoping for this project occurred over a three-month period between September and December 2019. The approach utilised the beginning phases of the codesign journey underpinned by a Kaupapa Māori methodology. It enabled us to explore, discover and really take a deep dive into the current realities surrounding play opportunities

by, for and with Māori. Initially, a literature stocktake of existing research pertaining to 'Māori play' was undertaken in order to identify gaps and trends.

The data collection phase of the project involved several one on one sessions with cultural experts, one design workshop, one wānanga and a series of empathy interviews with leading Māori sport and recreation practitioners, health workers, educationalists and Māori parents/whānau. The strengths, aspirations and challenges of the participants were heard, felt and are subsequently captured in this report.

These insights aim to assist in building a credible evidence base to support and inform the development and design of a Play Action Plan.

The report forms one part of a larger piece of work which is being led by the Sport NZ Play Unit and will contribute toward growing the collective intelligence surrounding a national play movement.

Understanding participant needs and aspirations will be key to understanding the drivers of behaviour change – that is how to preserve, enhance and bring to life the taonga that is Aotearoa Māori play.



Darrío Penetito-Hemara  
& Koianake Sharples, Toi Tangata,  
Hui-a-tau 2020, Napier

# 04

## Strategic Direction

### 4.1 Every Body Active

Sport NZ is committed to obtaining better outcomes for all children in Aotearoa, New Zealand. This is highlighted in various obligations to the UN Convention Article 31, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and the Government Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy.

In September 2019, Sport NZ released a new strategy and vision to get Every Body Active in Aotearoa New Zealand. The strategy is focused on shaping the way Sport NZ invests funds over the next four years. This includes redefining the space in which Sport NZ operates – from Sport and Active Recreation to play. The strategy is divided in two parts: a 12-year strategic direction and the first of three, four-year strategic plans.

During 2020–24 Sport NZ aims to invest in a set of actions to create a sustainable environment for play to flourish in Aotearoa New Zealand – at government, regional, local and community levels.

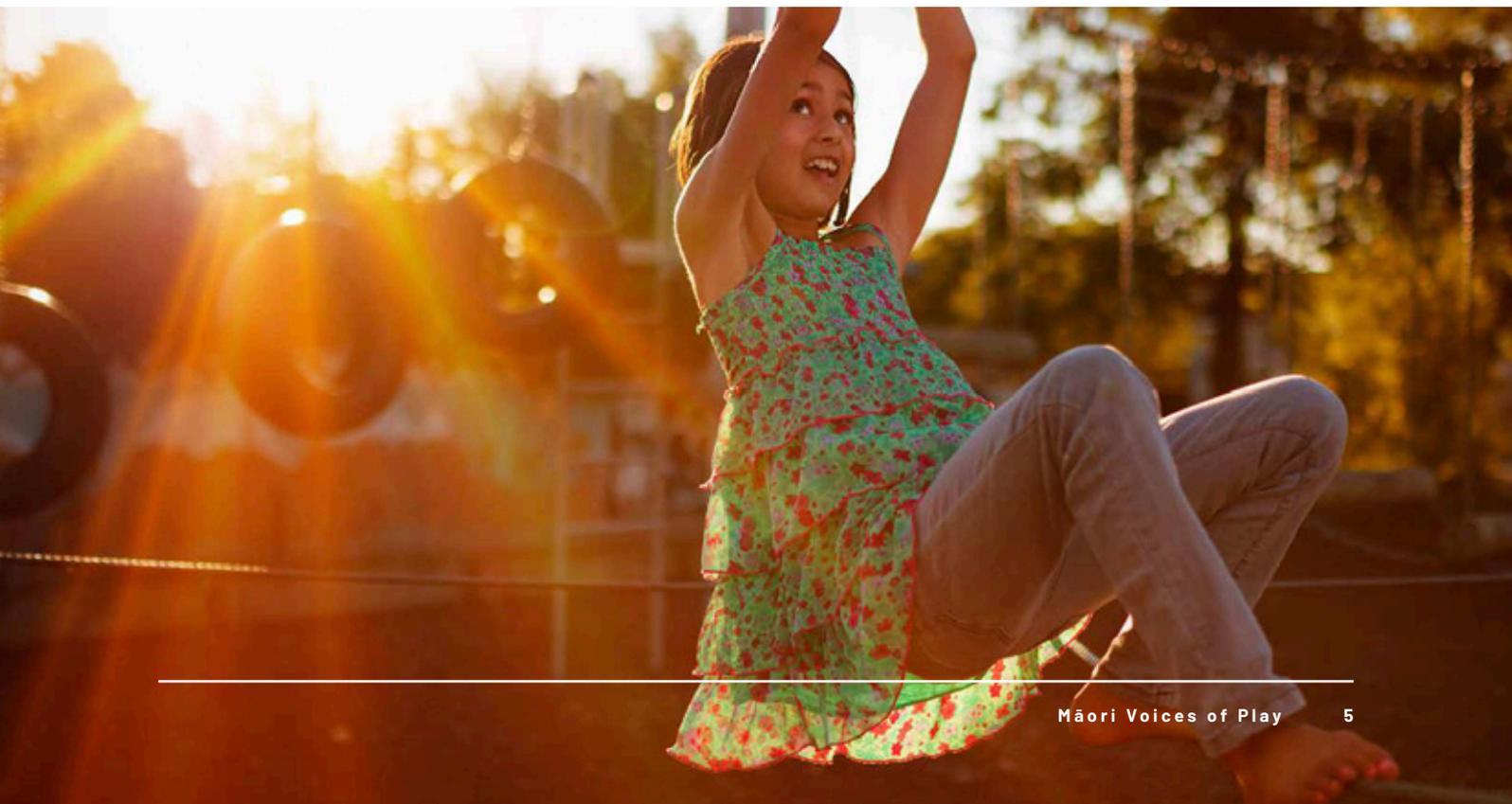
Funds will be directed towards the development of:

- A cross-government play approach
- Launching an Aotearoa New Zealand Play Action Plan (Sport NZ's response to the play strategy)
- Investment in Regional Sport Trusts and other relevant partner organisations to continue the development of national and regional play system leadership
- More free play opportunities for tamariki at school (through the Healthy Active Learning initiative).

To measure the contribution toward supporting all tamariki to have access to quality play, active recreation and sport experiences at home, within their neighbourhood, and across their communities Sport NZ has developed two outcomes frameworks. These frameworks take a long-term view and describe the desired future.

1. The Sport NZ Outcomes Framework
2. Te Pākē o Ihi Aotearoa Māori Outcomes Framework

The strength of the two frameworks will enable Sport NZ to achieve its vision of 'Every Body Active'.





## 4.2 Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Included in the strategic direction and new vision for Sport NZ is a strong commitment to upholding the mana of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the principles of Partnership, Protection, and Participation. This commitment is outlined below:

### Partnership

Sport NZ is committed to partnership with tangata whenua. We will through joint action, agree on a partnership approach and kaupapa that mutually benefit the partnership, to improve the wellbeing of tangata whenua and all New Zealanders.

### Protection

Sport NZ is committed to the active protection of Māori tikanga, te reo, taonga, and mātauranga Māori. Through our partnerships and relationships with tangata whenua, we will support the realisation of tangata whenua tino rangatiratanga.

### Participation

Sport NZ is committed to equitable and accessible opportunities for tangata whenua and all New Zealanders. We value the need for culturally distinctive pathways that enable tangata whenua and all New Zealanders to participate and succeed as themselves.

## 4.3 Te Waka Hourua

The rapidly changing world in which mega drivers of change such as a global pandemic are increasingly encouraging strategic foresight. As a result, Sport NZ conducted a series of work focused on thinking about the future we want for Aotearoa and ensuring opportunities to be physically active are preserved and enhanced.

As a result of the futures work, Sport NZ drew on Te Waka Hourua as a partnership model which enables us to reimagine a bicultural future with partnership at the forefront. Waka Hourua are the largest and sturdiest of the double hulled waka, designed to travel great distances and withstand the harshest conditions. While the hulls are separate, they are joined together by a common space. It is essential that the hulls are balanced and strong. They are both part of the same waka. If one hull is weak the whole waka is compromised.

In the partnership model the two hulls represent Tangata Whenua and Tangata Tiriti and the common space between both hulls is the Papa Noho. The Papa Noho identifies the bicultural space where there are opportunities to learn and share collectively, honouring a commitment to the Treaty principles and actively weaving the two journeys together. This is a growth area for Sport NZ, whereby it emphasises a strong bicultural foundation for the purposes of wellbeing for all New Zealanders.

# “ Everyone has potential and Every Body has Ihi. Ihi does not normally exist in isolation, Ihi begets Wehi, that begets Wana ”

## 4.4 Te Whakapapa o Te Ihi

Te Ihi is a symbolic representation of Sport NZ as the kaitiaki of play, active recreation and sport in Aotearoa New Zealand. The following whakapapa gives insight into the foundations of Te Ihi and further illustrates a cultural journey toward a bicultural future and the organisations aspiration of being Treaty-Led.

Ihi is an intangible emotion that resides within a singular being and is said to be the connection between te taha tīnana (physical being) and te taha wairua (spiritual realm), the tangible and the intangible, the potential and the realisation of potential.

### Te Ihi

Positive energy within that is ignited by what is seen, heard and felt.

### Te Wehi

The emotional reaction that acknowledges Ihi.

### Te Wana

The collection energy that unites people, connects people to environment and people to kaupapa.

Te Ihi embodies the colours from within the current brand palette, Te Haeata o te Rā reflecting the dawning of a new day, blended with the concept of the relationship between light, water and land.

### Te Ao - Light

The reflection and refraction that embodies power, strength, the intangible spirit and essence. It enables movement and activates Ihi.

### Te Wai - Water

The waves of emotions and movement, as each tide ebbs another surges, with each new tide comes new beginnings that are pure, natural and a source for activation, a source that ignites Ihi.

### Te Whenua - Land

Protects, provides and connects all-natural living things and people. Land sustains the living and it sustains Ihi.

The three Mauri pounamu gifted to Sport NZ by the people of Arahura are the foundation and inspiration of Te Ihi. Their names are represented in the three phrases below:

### Kia pono ki te kaupapa

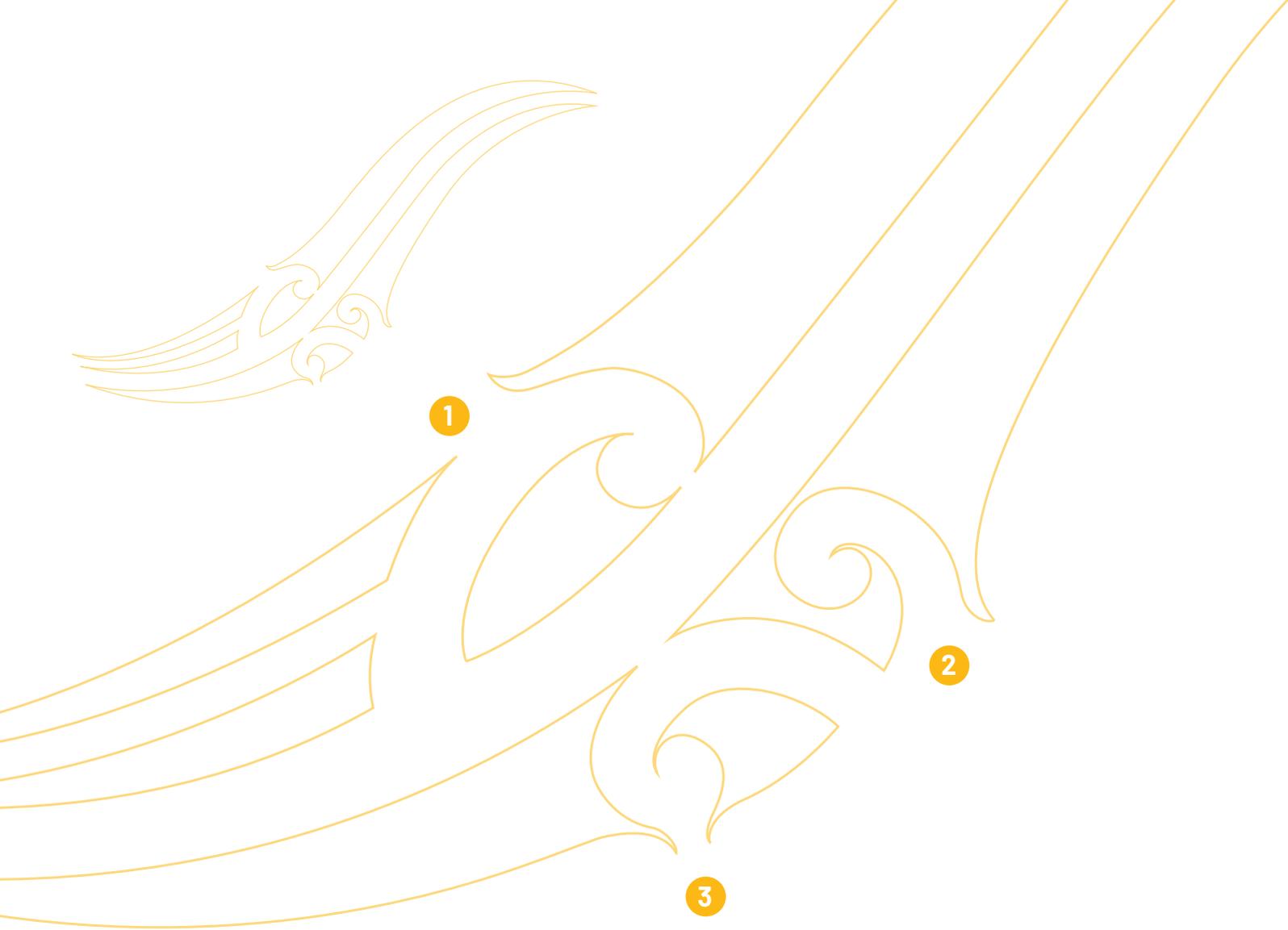
Be authentic to the purpose.

### Kia tika te mahi

Act with integrity.

### Me aroha ki te tangata

Respect for others.



Te Ihi, the design embraces and weaves together various strands of work and acknowledges Sport New Zealand, Ihi Aotearoa as the kaitiaki of the play, active recreation and sport sector.

### **Our past**

We are committed to upholding the mana of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the principles of Partnership, Protection and Participation.

### **Our present**

We believe a strong bicultural foundation is critical to our national identity and wellbeing.

### **Our future**

We are committed to enabling opportunities for tangata whenua and all New Zealanders to realise their full potential in play, active recreation and sport, to participate and succeed as themselves.

There are three simple koru within Te Ihi which each represent:

1. Te Ihi, Te Ao, Kia Pono, Past, Play
2. Te Wehi, Te Wai, Kia Tika, Present, Active Recreation
3. Te Wana, Te Whenua, Me Aroha, Future, Sport

The small curves at the joining of each koru - these specific features also refer to the water that flows over the pounamu, in time revealing the layers of maturity, growth of knowledge and activation of potential.



Jaylan Ruha & Kimiora Penetito-Hemara, He PT Ka Rere 2018, Mangere

# 05

## What is Guiding Play Development?

Play sits at the heart of the [Sport NZ Physical Literacy Approach](#) and is an integral part of the [Community Sport Strategy](#) and [Young People Plan](#). These existing streams of work including several other resources and frameworks help set the foundations for an Play Action Plan. In fact, they form a vehicle which allows Sport NZ to partner, collaborate and advocate on the importance of play for all young New Zealanders.

Our Government Child Wellbeing vision statement is:

**“ We want New Zealand to be the best place in the world for children and young people to live ”**

Externally, the benefits of Play clearly align with the long-term outcomes expressed in the [Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy](#) and the national [Living Standards Framework](#).

Internally, Play sits at the heart of the Sport NZ Physical Literacy Approach and is an integral part of the Community Sport Strategy and Young People Plan. These existing streams of work including several other resources and frameworks help set the foundations for an Play Action Plan. In fact, they form a vehicle which allows Sport NZ to partner, collaborate and advocate on the importance of play for all young New Zealanders.



## 5.1 Principles of Play

Sport NZ has a commitment to lead, enable and invest in play which is embedded in the [Principles of Play](#). The aspiration for these principles is to develop a consistent message, set of actions and infrastructure that creates a sustainable environment for play to flourish in Aotearoa New Zealand – at national, regional and local levels, as well as whānau, hapū and iwi.

Like other parts of the sport, active recreation, government and private sectors, Sport NZ has a role in making sure opportunities for kids to play are preserved, enhanced and are relevant to the world we live in today. They have developed the following set of Play Principles to help guide the work in partnering and collaborating with others interested in play, and to advocate on the importance of play for young New Zealanders.

### 1 Play is important to the wellbeing of young New Zealanders

- It is vital in ensuring young people have the best possible start in life and develop a lifelong love of community sport and being physically active.

### 2 Play is a cornerstone of our Physical Literacy Approach

- Play is a crucial part of physical, cognitive, social/emotional and spiritual development for young people.

### 3 Play is the shared responsibility of everyone

- It needs clear and strong leadership from those who can enable play. This includes the views and opinions of young people.
- It is equally important in the settings of home, school and community.

### 4 Young people must have access to enriched and varied playful experiences within their local environments

- A variety of play types.
- As an individual and with others.
- Space and place – man-made and natural.
- Sensory rich.
- A sense of an escape from realism.
- Physical movement.

### 5 Adults must understand what their role is in enabling play

- Quality play experience involves limited adult input.

### 6 Young people need the opportunity to experience risk and challenge through play

- The provision of opportunities for all children to encounter or create uncertainty, unpredictability and potential risks (including physical, cognitive, social/emotional and spiritual) as part of their play.
- We do not mean putting children in danger of serious harm.

### 7 Wherever possible, play should include the opportunity to be active.

## 5.2 Five Phases of Play Development

The [Five Phases of Play Development](#) provides further detail around how to partner and collaborate with groups and organisations interested in the importance of play. The document outlines a process for developing greater awareness, support and opportunities for play.



### PHASE 1

#### Create play champions

The first step is to establish 'Play Champions' within organisations. These 'Play Champions' are representatives responsible for endorsing the importance of play, promoting play across their different channels, seeking opportunities to engage others in play conversations and connecting with other networks locally to enhance knowledge and understanding.



### PHASE 2

#### Let's talk play

The second step is to deeply understand and document the state of play in their area or organisation. This phase focuses on feedback and insights about current and future views of play at all levels to inform phases three and four.



### PHASE 3

#### Let's plan for play

The third step is to create a plan for play which aligns and is embedded in either new or existing strategic documents. This plan will include an articulation of the child health and wellbeing benefits as an organisational priority. Commitment to ensuring sufficient play provisions within the local area is a focus, as well as an emphasis on promoting and developing play relationships at all levels.



### PHASE 4

#### Let's empower play

The fourth step is to bring the plan to life. The focus here is on evolving the 'Play Champion' role into a 'Play Advocate' role. This role is responsible for driving the play agenda within the workstream; connecting play enablers, space and resource within a 'local play network'; and identifying 'community play hubs' that support and contribute to the growth of play locally.



### PHASE 5

#### Re: Play

The fifth step is to evaluate whether the play needs of young people are sufficiently being met. This phase involves obtaining feedback from young people, their whānau and communities about their play opportunities – are they fun, challenging, accessible, relevant and equitable? The emphasis is on monitoring and assessing the delivery and impact of the play initiatives.



## 5.4 Healthy Active Learning

Healthy Active Learning is a collaborative joint agency wellbeing initiative between Sport NZ and the Ministries of Health and Education. Healthy Active Learning supports schools and kura across Aotearoa to improve wellbeing of tamariki and rangatahi through healthy eating and drinking, and quality physical activity. There are obvious synergies with this initiative when it comes to play especially considering the target audience. It has also been positioned as a key action under the Government's Child Youth and Wellbeing Strategy.

Healthy Active Learning comprises of three general components:

- Resources and health promotion staff to support healthy food and water-only environments in early learning services, kōhanga reo, kura, and school (primary, intermediate and secondary).
- Resources to support delivery of the Health and Physical Education (HPE) and Hauora curriculum.
- A workforce to enhance the physical activity experiences of tamariki in primary and intermediate.

Sport NZ aims to partner with Regional Sport Trusts and other appropriate organisations to provide a physical activity workforce to support 800 primary and intermediate schools and kura to create healthy and active learning environments, and better connection to their local communities.

## 5.5 Tapuwaekura

Tapuwaekura draws on Healthy Active Learning aims and objectives while taking a deep dive into what this looks like from a Te Ao Māori worldview. Tapuwaekura focuses on establishing a fit for purpose and relevant approach that incorporates te reo, tikanga and mātauranga Māori that can be implemented into Māori medium settings. The overarching framework used to guide Tapuwaekura is Atua Matua. In response two groups were established to guide the working moving forward.

### Tapuwaekura Leadership Group

Tapuwaekura Leadership Group was established in August 2019 and consists of representatives from Sport NZ and Ministries of Health and Education. The group was established on the back of Healthy Active Learning to ensure equitable outcomes for Māori. The purpose of this group is to have oversight of the engagement and delivery model of Atua Matua into kura, whilst ensuring all three agencies components are aligned and connected when implemented.

### Tapuwaekura Design Group

Tapuwaekura Design Group was also established in September 2019 consisting of Māori sector leaders (Health and Education), He Oranga Poutama Kaiwhakahaere, and kaiako with the purpose of designing a support package for kaiako in kura.

This project is an initiative that aims to bring life to Sport NZ's Treaty commitment statements; it is also one of the Kaupapa Māori initiatives that will be implemented as part of the Sport NZ Māori Participation Plan 2020-2024. The project will likely connect closely to He Oranga Poutama, another Sport NZ initiative that improves activity levels and increases leadership as Māori through play, active recreation and sport.

### Atua Matua

Atua Matua was developed over 10 years ago by Dr Ihirangi Heke and focuses on a shift back to mātauranga Māori, whakapapa connections and environmental wisdoms.

Atua Matua is about exploring and experiencing the taiao and learning about the knowledge it holds – whakapapa!

The Atua Matua Framework dimensions include:

- MĀTAURANGA MĀORI is the environmental where we can access the knowledge (e.g. rangi, wai, whenua)
- WHAKAPAPA is about engaging with the environment and a particular ancestral line (e.g. Tāne Mahuta, Hine te Iwaiwa)
- HUAHUATAU is the metaphorical interpretations (e.g. pūrākau, whakataukī, haka, karakia) that explain the learning within the environment
- WHAKATĪNANATANGA is the 'doing'. It is the application of knowledge in physical activity form.
- TOHUTAKA is the timing and tohu from tress, fish, birds, insects, and weather patterns that determine when to do certain things.

The framework outlines 12 Atua philosophies and metaphors for action, as well as 12 Matua expressions of knowledge obtained from the environment.

The Atua Matua Framework is best utilised when local environmental mātauranga, whakapapa, and kōrero is engaged and utilised. In fact, it aims to ensure that iwi are able to populate the framework with knowledge and information specific to their local environment, which provides opportunities for iwi-centric interpretations and application.

## 5.6 Te Ara Hihiko ā Māui

Te Ara Hihiko ā Māui is a framework which utilises the stories of Māui and his brothers as a metaphor for a pathway to innovation when it comes to play. The belief is that it is through leading by example, using the experiences of our past, applying logic, living into a positive future, and taking full advantage of opportunities we grow and broaden our horizons.

Māui is a descendant of Ranginui (sky father) and Papatūānuku (earth mother), he was imbued with a spark that has never been replicated. Māui was a tipua (supernatural), he was a living example of someone who could harness and command his Ira Atua (intangible presence) and Ira Tangata (tangible presence) at the same time. In Aotearoa, Māui appears in a number of Māori whakapapa (genealogy) and in even more stories.

Māui is also known as Māui Pōtiki (Māui the youngest) or Māui Pōtiki ā Taranga (Māui the youngest child of Taranga). Māui had elder brothers and some people relate to Māui and his four brothers as a reflection of human nature. The five brothers are said to collectively represent the divine and elemental spark in all people and provide an example of how we can achieve balance.

The names of the brothers provide an insight into the attributes of each:

### Māui Mua

**(Māui at the front, Māui the responsible)**

As the first born, Māui Mua led by example, he took responsibility for making decisions and ensured that plans were put into action and followed through to completion.

### Māui Roto

**(Māui from within, Māui the inspiration)**

Māui Roto led through drawing inspiration from historical knowledge, learnings and experience. He used lessons from the past to ensure that actions taken in the present or in the future would be considered, balanced and effective.

### Māui Taha

**(Māui from the side, Māui the practical)**

Māui Taha led through applying practicality and logic to any and all circumstances. Māui Taha would take what is possible, test boundaries and innovative approaches to overcoming existing limitations.

### Māui Waho

**(Māui from the outside, Māui the aspiration)**

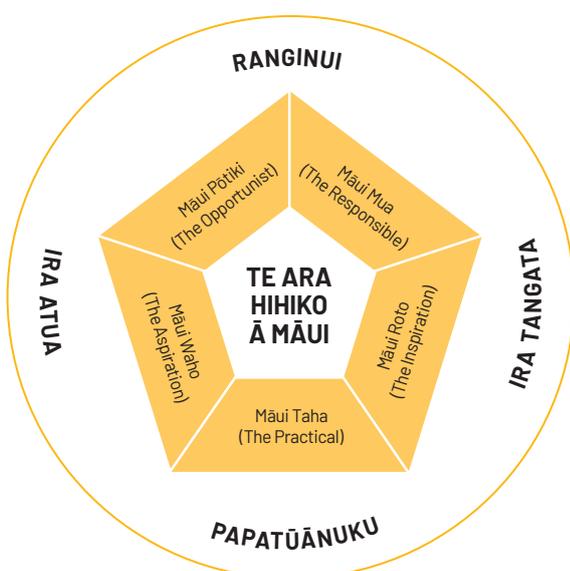
Māui Waho led through creating new paradigms and rising to new heights. The path of Māui Waho gives license to dream and create with future based abandonment. The art however, is to figure out how to turn those dreams into reality.

### Māui Pōtiki

**(Māui the youngest, Māui the opportunist)**

Māui Pōtiki led through making and taking opportunities as they arose. He did not let the constraints of the past and present prevent him from taking on challenges that were impossible. Māui Pōtiki would create and take on challenges that stretch and expand our abilities.

As people we all have our own Ira Atua and Ira Tangata. We have a spark within us that we can ignite and use to guide us in our everyday activities. When we tap into this spark, we can achieve things that make a significant difference in the world, albeit they may pale in comparison to the feats of Māui and his brothers.



The diagram on the left includes references to Ranginui (male presence), Papatūānuku (female presence), Ira Atua (intangible presence), Ira Tangata (tangible presence) as well as key attributes from the five Māui brothers. Te Ara Hihiko ā Māui can be used as a guide to create approaches that are unique, innovative, fresh and opportunistic. It can be used as a basis for Sport NZ to create more robust strategies, resources and frameworks for play in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Sport NZ Play Unit are currently using this approach as part of their operational framework.

Te Ara Hihiko ā Māui provides the structure to build a bicultural framework where all New Zealanders see pathways for themselves and can genuinely appreciate the value of play in Aotearoa. Widening the space for Māori narratives of play and more importantly, Māori concepts of play increase the chances of a framework having deep resonance and impact for those living in Aotearoa. As such, Te Ara Hihiko ā Māui also ignites the ihi which breathes life into this Aotearoa Play Plan.



Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal, Te Whare Tapere 2012, Waimāngō

# 06

## Snapshot of Māori Play

A brief stocktake of existing research on Māori play revealed a dearth of literature in this area. One common narrative (perhaps even considered a movement) across all themes which emerged was a desire to retain, reclaim, revitalise and re-establish traditional Māori practices surrounding play.

The following section gives a brief summary of some of the literature related to Māori play and outlines current knowledge, trends and gaps. The report focuses briefly on several areas which naturally emerged as a result of exploring tākaro Māori in Aotearoa.

### 6.1 Te Whare Tapere

Whare tapere are iwi-community 'houses' of storytelling, dance, music, puppets, games and other entertainments. In pre-European times from about the 12th century they were a prominent feature of community throughout Aotearoa. They have origins back to ancient Polynesia and were a main feature in pūrākau such as in the stories of Tinirau and Kae and Ponga and Puhuhuia. In Aotearoa almost every pā had one. In their simplest form, whare tapere are places whereby a collection of entertaining activities took place.

The arts and pursuits of the whare tapere included:

- Ngā Waiata (songs)
- Ngā Haka (dance)
- Ngā Kōrero (stories)
- Ngā Taonga Pūoro (musical instruments)
- Ngā Taonga-o-Wharawhara (adornments)
- Ngā Karetao (puppets)
- Ngā Tākaro (games and amusements)

At some pā, a building was created for the whare tapere but on many occasions, whare tapere took place next to a fire, under a large tree or at existing sites and buildings on the marae complex. They were community houses for everybody. A whare mātoro was a form of whare tapere that offered entertainment specifically by and for young people. Unlike the main whare whereby marae protocols took place, there were no particular rituals and sacredness attached to whare tapere. Rather they were places where the community could meet and enjoy themselves.

Unfortunately, whare tapere fell into disuse in the 19th century following the movement of iwi communities from their old pā villages into the new European inspired townships.

There has been a renewed interest in traditional or mātauranga Māori approaches to the arts and pursuits of whare tapere which has contributed to a renaissance. Increased revitalisation efforts have seen the growth of modern day whare tapere especially within school settings often related to Māori theatre and performing arts.



## 6.2 Te Whare Tū Taua

Another whare which draws relevance to this kaupapa is Te Whare Tū Taua, the house of war and weaponry. Te Whare Tū Taua involves teachings about battle formations, weaponry, attack and defence moves, dexterity of footwork, balance, speed and economy of movement as well as rituals of engagement. According to Sharples “Te Whare Tū Taua was one of the many ancient learning schools where the art of war was preserved for over 1000 years throughout all iwi”. The sacred school [Te Whare Tū Taua o Aotearoa](#) founded by Dr Pita Sharples in 1983, was established as part of the renaissance of te reo me ona tikanga to reclaim the art of mau rākau. It became an innovative programme in physical fitness, Māori history, Māori Atua, whakapapa, self-discipline, te reo Māori and the skilled use of taiaha.

Two current developing trends within this space which are growing in popularity especially among young people are [Ariki](#) a Māori Television rangatahi entertainment series showcasing Māori students from across Aotearoa competing in a new sport for the overall title of ‘Ariki’.

Hopu i te Ariki is based on the ancestral art form of mau rākau and was designed and developed by Te Whare Tū Taua o Aotearoa. The television series has a keen following among youth and is growing in participation within Kura Māori settings.

The other trend related to tākarō Māori and Te Whare Tū Taua is [Te Paerangi](#), a new Māori trading card game that features Māori deities as characters developed by Kura Kaupapa kaiako, Mau Tai Tin. It is an initiative designed to encourage children to read, learn maths and study the histories of the three major battles amongst Atua Māori. It also forms a unique educational resource for students in the many pūrākau from tribal areas around Aotearoa. Much like Pokemon or Yu-Gi-Oh, lowering the points of your enemy using different strategies and techniques is one of the ways to win. Appealing among youth is the gaming aspect of Te Paerangi, which makes mundane learning activities within school settings exciting for students.



James Webster,  
Te Reo o te Rēhia 2019,  
Tāmaki Makaurau

### 6.3 Ngā Taonga Tākaro

Ngā taonga tākaro are defined as traditional Māori sports, games and recreational activities. Traditionally taonga tākaro were cultural activities which connected Māori directly to their spiritual beliefs and formed the nexus of society, supporting education and sustaining social order in the land.

Some examples of taonga tākaro include, mu tōrere (an ancient Māori kēmu into a board game played both indoors and outdoors), kī-o-rahi (ball game associated with the legend of Rahitūtakahina), poi toa (games and physical exercises involving poi, used to sharpen reflexes, increase flexibility and improve coordination), waka ama (outrigger canoe racing) and manu tukutuku (kite-flying activities) to mention a few. These activities significantly influenced the health and wellbeing of the tribe in ancient times and are developing a movement of cultural regeneration in contemporary times.

### 6.4 Ngā Mahi a te Rēhia

Ngā mahi a te rēhia are examples of Māori games and pastimes of pleasure, which allowed Māori to reinforce their values and transport their social norms and practices through time – often through kōrero or pūrākau. Ngā mahi a te rēhia provided a balance between work and leisure in traditional Māori society and incorporated spiritual knowledge and understanding. During leisure time Māori would play musical instruments, perform waiata, haka and poi, play sports and games and tell stories. These activities served multiple purposes, such as providing a balance between the spiritual realm and the physical realm. They also encouraged the transmission of ancient knowledge and provided entertainment value for many Māori. For example, the pūrākau about Tinirau mentioned earlier, formed the basis of knowledge exchange – he taonga tuku iho, and intertwined ngā mahi a te rēhia (such as singing, dancing and a variety of performing arts), with Māori values, beliefs and narratives, to inform a Māori worldview of physical activity and sport.

Like taonga tākaro there is a growing movement to revitalise Māori games and pastimes. Many Māori are building on this movement by embedding mātauranga Māori in the development of new tabletop games, card games and other pastimes. Examples of these include, [Upoko Pakaru](#), [Tākaro](#) and [Kaupapa Game](#).



## 6.5 Māori Sporting Events Pā Wars

Another layer pivotal to this discussion involves sporting events organised by Māori for Māori. Annual Māori tournaments such as, Iwi of Origin, [Iron Māori](#), Māori national sports tournaments, marae games or Pā wars (inter-iwi or inter-marae sports tournaments) are all examples of this. These tournaments are hosted by different tribal groups and allow whānau, hapū, and iwi connections to be maintained and developed in a setting where teams compete against each other.

These Māori-led events encourage iwi, hapū and whānau throughout Aotearoa to celebrate their unique identity. Values such as whanaungatanga encourage the development of strong bonds and solidarity between players and whānau and as a result they create opportunities to nurture social and cultural capital. Learning new waiata and haka, which are often performed pre-game or at the accompanying festivities such as whakangahau (entertainment concert) add another distinctive layer to Māori sport. These culturally specific sporting contexts create a platform for mātauranga Māori, Māori values, beliefs and whakapapa to be shared from one generation to another.

## 6.6 Māori Physical Activity, Movement and Exercise Programmes

There are a growing number of Māori practitioners who are developing and running Māori physical activity, exercise and movement programmes by Māori, for Māori. Several practitioners are leading the way for Māori physical activity today and are revisiting concepts that once connected traditional Māori to their natural and spiritual realms, in the context of sport and physical activity to provide the foundations for optimal health.

Dr Ihirangi Heke in his work on Atuatanga (Māori philosophical practice which acknowledges ngā Atua Māori) talks about reconnecting. He asserts that what we can learn from Atua and tūpuna will reinforce our whakapapa in a contemporary context. This approach is also becoming a growing trend. A few examples of programmes which reinforce a connection to whakapapa through physical activity, exercise and movement will include [He Pi Ka Rere](#), [Patu Aotearoa](#), [Māori Movement](#), [Aka](#) and [Rangatahi Tū Rangatira](#) to name a few. Each of these programmes assist in growing an awareness of participants genealogy of body, mind and spirit and the relative connections to the environment. The formation of these connections result in nurturing and maintaining cultural identities as Māori – a theme common throughout the literature.

## 6.7 Kapa Haka

Kapa haka is an indigenous cultural icon in Aotearoa. It has origins and whakapapa in the creation of the universe and pūrākau. Historically, kapa haka was the most general and popular form of amusement in the whare tapere and it is one of the few Māori cultural practices that have survived and in fact significantly grown in participation over time. From spine-tingling demonstrations of the haka and mau rākau, to the graceful movements of the poi – kapa haka continues to galvanise and touch the hearts not only of Māori and non-Māori here in Aotearoa, but internationally as well.

Kapa haka captures history, whakapapa, te reo Māori, the power of music, the joy of movement and the absolute wairua of te ao Māori. Kapa haka evolved out of rituals performed on the marae, including pōwhiri, whaikōrero, and the supporting kinaki waiata. One key component of kapa haka is whanaungatanga – the importance of people and connectedness. For many, kapa haka is a portal to their cultural identity and for those that live away from their kāinga or home areas, it forms a place of belonging. Another major benefit of kapa haka is its power to effect wellbeing, not just in the performers, but also the audience, not just the individual, but also in the collective. For example, in the lead up to significant events such as Te Matatini, ASB Polyfest, Te Ahurea and other regional and tribal kapa haka competitions, kaihaka are involved in strict health and fitness regimes. According to Pihama, Tipene, and Skipper (2014) there seems to be a growing trend which is helping to shape kapa haka in the future:

“ **A major shift within competitive kapa haka in recent years has led to a new standard in terms of levels of physical health and fitness. That shift has affected a quantum change in attitudes towards health and fitness amongst kapa haka practitioners. This is believed by the participants to have many associated benefits, not just for the practitioners themselves, but also for their extended whānau and communities** ”

It is too early to tell, but this behaviour change is likely to impact generations to follow.



## 6.8 Mara Hupara

Mara Hupara are natural educative playgrounds based on long forgotten Māori traditions. Hupara were an important resource for ancient Māori, they were utilised in social protocols, game play, skill, strength and conditioning exercises. They were also used by tribes in psychological healing practices and as spiritual sanctuaries. Because Hupara encourage being in tune with nature and connected to the whenua, they are deemed to have life giving properties and are often considered rongoa Māori.

They have an increased sense of relevance today, in a world which is constantly searching for alternatives to mining and fossil fuel-based products. Hupara are enjoying a profound renaissance around the country in playgrounds, outdoor classrooms, and in recreation and leisure centres. As playgrounds, they are particularly appealing to Regional Councils because of the benefits of nature play. Similarly, they are cost effective in comparison to their plastic equivalent, especially when utilising repurposed rākau. Their reduced impact on the taiao is also highly attractive.

Harko Brown in his leadership within this space asserts that Hupara are an important teaching resource which can inspire intellectual inquiry, create social harmony, encourage artistic expression, promote conservation, empower concepts of kaitiakitanga and augment physical education and wider school curricula development. In this regard there is cross over with both taonga tākaro and the Healthy Active Learning government-led initiative. There is a great deal of autonomy with Mara Hupara and with less structure they encourage the power to imagine.

They have mana and mauri, but they need awakening from their slumber to regenerate their potential in contemporary today.



# 07

## Collecting the Māori Voice of Play

### 7.1 The Approach

The data gathered in this report utilised a co-design approach grounded in Kaupapa Māori methodologies. Co-design as a method and a mindset involves working together on an innovative kaupapa when there is mutual benefit and power sharing in the decision making. Kaupapa Māori methodologies draw on Māori knowledge, Māori paradigms of thinking, Māori forms of inquiry and Māori tools for action. The belief is that a 'Māori Framework for Play' in Aotearoa is underpinned by Māori playing an active role in the decisions that impact the way they engage in play both as individuals and as whānau.

**“ Māori have been innovating for generations. History shows, there was a need to work together, be creative, take risks, and be comfortable in ambiguity to ensure the continuation of our people - Ngai Māori. Māori are innovating every day and social innovation allows and encourages us to live and breathe our daily practices while addressing social challenges for the betterment of our people ”**

Kataraina Davis, 2015

The lived experiences of Māori captured in this report were explored through a series of empathy interviews, workshops and wānanga. The insights convey the passion and knowledge of Māori who are invested in the preservation of play in Aotearoa at all levels, from parents to practitioners to policy writers. While they represent only a small portion of the Māori population, they provide a good starting point to guide future action. The insights and observations must not be considered truths or trends but rather seeds for further interrogation.

Storytelling formed a key role in the data collection phase. Participants were encouraged to tell a story or create a game to help articulate what Māori play looked like in the past, what it looks like now and what they would like it to look like in the future. The aim of these questions was to firstly reveal Māori thoughts and feelings about play and gain insight into why they make the choices they do. Secondly, their perspectives enabled us to understand their behavioural traits and identify their needs.

The following section presents an array of direct quotes which provide both insights and learning related to each key heading. They are purposefully real, raw and relatable in order to create a memorable, identifiable picture of the people we are trying to serve. Leaving these quotes authentic and uncut allows the reader to connect to the participants stories and share in their lived experiences. Although they only represent a snapshot of the perspectives shared throughout the data collection phase, they aim to create an appetite for further analysis. These quotes alongside the personas, emerging themes and critical considerations will form the basis for the design of a Māori Play Framework in Phase 2.

## 7.2 Contextualising Māori Play

When asked to define Māori play and give their views on important components as distinct/unique to Māori, the vast majority of the participants spoke of their experiences with and amongst the taiao, at the marae, in kura kaupapa settings such as kōhanga reo and at their whānau pā or homestead.

“ My earliest memory of play was at the beach gathering kaimoana, so my memories aren't necessarily about playing with other people, but rather playing with the environment – the water, the starfish, building sandcastles, it was all in and around the moana ”

“ As an indoor option I remember cooking with my nan in the kitchen. Nan would always need a hand cooking and she was always keen to have me in there. That was pretty cool too to have the one on one time with nan ”

“ I'd associate Māori play as being at the river or out in the environment ”

“ The earliest recollection of play for me was i roto i tōna kopū o te Māmā – play inside the womb. While I don't have a recollection of my play at that time, mum would always tell me about how busy I was with my movements. There were certain times of the day when I would be more active than others and subsequently, ki te whaiao, ki te ao mārama – I carried on that behaviour pattern ”

“ Play happened everywhere my whānau were including Aunties and Uncles houses, school and the marae. We are lucky, at the back of our marae there's a big orchard and so it was perfect for playing tag, hide and seek, capture the flag and stuff like that. It was the perfect environment for play because the whole whānau were often there and at the end of the day there was always kai as well. And, it's your tūrangawaewae so there's that sense of belonging. You might not realise it as a kid growing up, but now, as an adult, I think farrrrr one of my biggest playgrounds as a kid was my pā ”

### 7.3 Māori Play in the PAST

Participants described play in the past as multipurpose and integrated into people's daily activities, whether that be walking home from school, gathering kai, jobs around the house or farm. Play provided multiple opportunities to have fun, but also to learn life skills as well.

Note: Play in the past was self-identified by each participant. Some chose to speak about their experiences growing up in Aotearoa New Zealand, some chose to share stories they were told by their grandparents and others shared their knowledge of research about traditional Māori play.

**" In talking to my nanny it seemed as though play would happen when gathering kai. It was just part of everyday life. I watch my kids now doing the dishes and playing with the bubbles. Looking for opportunities to play in our everyday lives is something that was normal for our people "**

**" My nan and my aunties would talk about our awa being their playground growing up. Every single day after school they would go to the river because they lived so close. At the moment you definitely don't want to swim in our awa its very polluted, but I can still imagine it in my mind. There's a bridge they used to cross to catch the bus and they used to jump off there. We had one of the biggest Meatworks and in the afternoon the drain from the Meatworks would flow blood into our river. They would still swim there and because the ika would feed off the blood, one of the cuzzies would be fishing for kai while the kids were swimming "**

**" The fun elements in play were across all our mahi i ngā rā o mua e.g. gardening, waiata, so it made the laborious arduous things in life a bit more fun. I ngā rā o mua, we (Māori) have created a system or tikanga or practice that has enabled us to be well. To learn social skills and strategies in order to keep well "**

**" For my grandparents their play involved animals, feeding their pet pig and riding the sheep. A lot of their kōrero around play that I can remember was about how they played on the farm with the animals. This was integrated into their lifestyle "**

**" Some of our earliest tākaro was about building social relationships and understanding our environment, learning tikanga/ kawa, our te reo, our kitenga o te Ao and involved transmitting mātauranga across generations. So, there is a whole range of stuff that play does beyond the physical "**

**" The comradery and the company is what my nan enjoyed. Play came as a result of meeting up with her friends. The focus wasn't on play though, she looked forward to catching up with her mates more than anything else "**

## 7.4 Māori Play in the PRESENT

When asked to describe the current reality of Māori play there was an undertone in the kōrero that 'Play in the Past' was better, less structured, more autonomous and more Māori than 'Play in the Present'.

“ Play now is colonised! I feel like play is now overly structured because our lives in urban settings deem it so. There is so much in our modern environment that has impacted negatively on our Māori ways of playing. We don't live in villages where we have the same opportunities to connect with whānau easily. So, play is now isolated to our social settings which are less whakapapa whānau based e.g. neighbours, work or kura friends ”

“ One concern I have as a parent is seeing other kids rely on their parents to dictate what their play experiences should look like. Maybe it's the old school in me, but my youngest is always saying dad what can I do I'm bored, and my older ones go and find their own play to do ”

“ Play in the past was more Māori than now. The play I engage in now is contained, so it can fit into my schedule and my busy lifestyle ”

“ I definitely make the most out of allowing the kids to be haututū. If I see them do something that is a little sketchy, I think you know what, I feel like they'll learn if something goes wrong. Allowing them to be a bit more free to let them figure things out on their own is important ”

“ There's plenty of parks with playgrounds, but very few that are developed from a kaupapa Māori perspective. If I think about places and environs, I see a proliferation of non-Māori places ”

## 7.5 Māori Play in the FUTURE

When asked to describe future aspirations for Māori play, considerable discussion centred on ways to explore and solidify a strong cultural identity. This included opportunities to utilise te reo Māori, to restore cultural practices of old, to live by Māori principles, to practice Māori ways of knowing being and doing, to connect with whakapapa and to deepen levels of mātauranga through play.

**“ My dream would be to make it about the taiao and exploring your identity. I would like it to look and feel effortless, not something you have to do, but something you want to do. I would love to wake up one day and have my kids walk in and say mum can we go up the maunga ”**

**“ Play offers a great opportunity to enhance our te reo, restore some of our mātauranga, especially considering there is a lot of interest in that these days. We need to use that interest and get people moving as a result of that ”**

**“ Create another medium to teach our mātauranga and whakapapa so that it continues to stay relevant in a contemporary space ”**

**“ Connection to te taiao is really important especially considering climate change, the destruction of our environment today and the relevance to us as indigenous people who come from the land. I think there are changes in our social we can tie play to that ”**

**“ There are changes in our social and physical environments e.g. urban vs. rural where there is not much green space and it is harder to get outside ”**

## 7.6 Māori Play Boundaries

Participants described Māori play boundaries as implicit rather than explicit. These boundaries demonstrated a natural alignment with tikanga – they were often passed down through generations by siblings or cousins and relied heavily on using intuition when it came to safety and risk taking. Normalised behaviours in public spaces also contributed to how, where and what Māori play looked like.

**“ As a kid, you low key knew what the boundaries are, but we would push the boundaries to see how far we could go. I definitely think we knew though. At the river we knew exactly what we were supposed to be doing, but sometimes we didn’t wanna be like that, and that’s probably the Māui in all of us, we wanna be a rebel and cheeky. But that’s what makes it fun sometimes ”**

**“ Tikanga had more to do with safety and in some instances, there would be rāhui which governed what we could or couldn’t do. Direction was given by pakeke but I would’ve picked it up from my cousins ”**

**“ I would stick to smaller safer things if I was playing on my own, but if there were a group of us, I would become more endearing, things would be a bit more challenging and a bit more competitive ”**

**“ I’ve lived overseas recently with my whānau and I experienced lots of differences with regards to play in the Cook Islands compared to here. One thing that stood out to me were the fences around whare. In Rarotonga, there were no fences anywhere and so the kids would play hide and go seek with the neighbouring kids who were whanaunga and they would roam through 6 odd properties playing hide and go seek and tag. There were no fences keeping people out or keeping people locked in. So there was an opportunity to play together and interact with ease ”**

**“ We didn’t have the safety rules and regulations that we have today, our older cuzzies knew and so did we. We could go anywhere, and we would come back when we were hungry. The boundaries were more self-imposed ones. We knew what was safe and what wasn’t. We used our intuition ”**

## 7.7 Māori Capability and Resource

These voices and the emerging insights provide a starting point to collectively consider where we are best placed to invest our time, money and efforts. These direct quotes centre on what capability and resources are required to fulfil future aspirations for Māori play in Aotearoa to form the basis of critical conversations to be had before any future action is progressed:

“ We must ask ourselves, do our messages (within the framework) land, do they resonate with all Māori, can Māori see themselves in it and do they agree...because if they do, the likelihood of influencing behaviour is higher. Then we must consider, do we have enough people that can create a shared kaupapa that lands with people? How do we create culturally distinctive pathways that land for Māori, for tangata Hamoa, Iniana, and Pākehā as well? ”

“ The resource I think we need is more experts that know how to raranga, tukutuku because that’s what this is really about - Pēhea te whatuhia i te kaupapa. I think the resource we really need is the human resource and we need to build that - it’s such a small pool at the moment, a small group of experts ”

“ There are logistics involved, once you’ve created an amazing taonga, then there’s how are you going to distribute that taonga out ”

“ Are there people who are living examples who we can gain knowledge off? ”

“ He Pī Ka Rere is good example of a resource that although it is in reo rua, it never lost the essence of the kōrero, te wairua, te mauri, it’s all still there. That’s really difficult to do. To keep the integrity and the authenticity of a Māori kaupapa when creating a resource to share ”

“ Knowing how to work the system, what is the right word to the right person. We need the people who know the system in places of real influence ”

“ I do quite a bit of work in Kura Auraki and a large percentage of our Māori are in there. For whatever reason they still pine for their culture. Children don’t have a choice in how they are educated and so I wouldn’t want our Māori in mainstream schools to miss out on some of these real taonga that are out there. These guys are still the majority. Our Kura and Kōhanga kids are still the minority in terms of our population. It will probably take three more generations before it flips the other way ”



## 7.8 Emerging Themes

With consideration of the data collected in this insights report, below are several key themes which emerged and must be considered in the development of a Māori play systems framework:

A recurrent and unanimous theme across all data collection points was that Māori play has a strong connection to the Taiao (natural environment). Māori want opportunities to see, feel and interact with the natural environment – to maunga (mountains), awa (rivers) and whenua (land) as part of the play they engage in every day. Culturally distinct interactions with the natural environment enable a celebration of Māori connection to the taiao, it reaffirms cultural identity and it provides justification to connect.

**“ We should technically be going all the way back to taiao, which is a pre-European concept to give us the rationale for why we do what we do. When there is a sense of play out in the taiao there is a form of acknowledgement that we are in a relationship with our taiao, it's not a space it's whakapapa ”**

While all participants were able to easily relay experiences around how they 'play' (past, present and future), some struggled to distinguish 'Māori play' from non-Māori experiences. An undertone in the commentary was associated with 'not growing up Māori', this seemed to be a self-assessment based on levels of te reo Māori fluency, participation in Māori medium education and number of visits to their marae or papa kāinga (home base).

**“ For many they have been disconnected from their culture, their identity, their language and they don't understand what it means to grow up and have this privilege. We have a responsibility to reach and influence but also re-educate and reindigenise the thinking along the way ”**

Only a small number of participants could provide insight into Māori play experiences prior to European arrival in Aotearoa. Much of this knowledge was acquired through literature as opposed to experienced first-hand. Therefore, the data collected is only reflective of 3-4 generations of Māori. Participants were limited by what they had experienced themselves, and what their parents and grandparents had shared with them growing up.

**“ Clearly there's a lack of awareness, comprehension and understanding of Māori ways to play and there is a lot of work to do to build that understanding. That's reflective of our experiences being disconnected, our identity being stripped away from us and so it's the reality ”**

Distinct Māori play opportunities attract Māori participation because they create pathways to celebrate cultural identity. Māori indicated that they would travel, often long distances, to ensure their whānau experience unique Māori play opportunities. These include but are not limited to, returning to their papa kāinga, setting foot on their whenua, or participating in annual whānau/marae/iwi games.

**“ The cultural component provides other levels of interest. It pulls in people like the ones interested in kapa haka, mau rākau and waka ama who may not typically be interested in exercise or sport. These activities are physically demanding sure, but they don't necessarily do it for that, but rather for the cultural connection ”**

Experiences of Māori play today reflect decades of revitalisation efforts. Tākaro such as whai, kī o rahi, mau rākau, taonga pūoro and māra hūpara are growing in both knowledge and application. Efforts are made to ensure layers of cultural knowledge are associated with these Māori play opportunities however, the delivery and implementation of some lack a depth of understanding when translated into contemporary contexts.

“ **Knowing how much our mātauranga Māori has been compromised in spaces/places over generations I question all of the definitions and perceptions that we have about what is Māori** ”

Levels of fluency and strength of connection to Māori worldviews are two indicators of readiness to engage in Māori play which in turn has an impact on Māori participation.

“ **We must consider how we bring those that have been bought up in mainstream settings closer to their Ao Māori. Na reira – Ka ora!** ”

Māori play a lead role in the global context through sharing our most precious asset 'Māori knowledge', with the rest of world. A reflection of a dynamic culture is to make sure that as soon as an opportunity presents itself, we possess the ability to evolve and therefore survive. The ultimate aim is to get to the point where the behaviour is self-perpetuating.

**“ We have to model for other groups away from here, outside of Aotearoa, what it is we are doing. I’m talking about a collective approach for all Māori to benefit through that knowledge. Other indigenous groups see what we do as a model and they start to engage which means we get collective mind power. We could have half a million indigenous people looking at a community in Aotearoa if we initiate the process of giving away first. This is manaakitanga, sharing why we do things not just what we do – it’s not the content, it’s the why ”**

Consideration of how to measure quality experiences of play from a Māori worldview is relatively unknown especially when it comes to wairuatanga.

**“ Te Ao Wairua – where does this fit in play? How do we give it the same mana as the physical outcomes? Kia kawea tātou e te rēhia – let your spirit be carried by Rēhia (the fun/enjoyment). How do we measure this and ensure it is part of the framework? Because it’s not just playing the game that’s important, it’s the spirit – the wairua of the tākarō ”**

There was a sense that we need to adopt a philosophy whereby we can bridge the gap between Māori and non-Māori worldviews to create a unique Aotearoa approach for play.

**“ Māori play becomes an example of the manifestation of tangata whenua and tangata Tiriti and how we integrate te ao Māori and kaupapa Māori with te ao Pākehā or te ao o Aotearoa nei. I’m real keen to look at where and how those two streams come together to form one stream. How do we take the best of both worlds and how can we join them together and then create something uniquely Aotearoa oriented? ”**

Play is the vehicle for the transmission of indigenous knowledge. We must not forget to broaden our vision to see application in other areas.

**“ When it comes to games, the game is just the modality for the delivery of indigenous knowledge. What we are looking for are philosophies that allow other indigenous people and ours to get on the bus, to go on the journey and then reinterpret the knowledge into their space. It’s the philosophy that we’re after and for them to repopulate the content with their own and then think about what’s their contribution to other indigenous people ”**

Play takes on different functions the older you get. Participants spoke about intergenerational play as best observed on the 'marae' between older cousins and younger ones and at 'home' when kuia and koroua (elderly) pass on life skills through platforms such as maara kai.

**“ My nan and papa and all their siblings have amazing gardens; perfect lawns and they cherish this. My papa is gearing up for a hangi this weekend and so he was talking to me about going to the river to get some rocks, digging the pit, getting some new cloths and stuff. My nan and papa are all about looking after us, and they do that by doing the things they're good at like this. They also have a pool that they keep perfect for us whenever we come over. Come to think of it, my nan and papa are probably more active than me ”**

Technological advancements have proven to be of tremendous importance in almost all aspects of our lives. Despite negative commentary surrounding technology and its impact on sedentary lifestyles, we must also acknowledge that it has revolutionised our world. There are many amazing tools, resources and information at our fingertips and it has opened up communication channels globally. Technology has solidified its place in the way Māori choose to engage and participate in play, active recreation and sport.

**“ Technology can guide, aid and assist in the development of play opportunities but the ultimate outcome is whānau experiencing the act of playing by actually doing it. For example, drone footage of our tūpuna maunga showing its beauty is only the vehicle to draw people in to walking and engaging with it themselves – that's the point ”**

Stories stick! The fact that our stories have lasted thousands of years is a testament to how our stories codified knowledge, codified values, and formed a key role in the transmission of our pūrākau across generations. Cultural narratives which are coupled with gamifying play experiences for all ages is appealing to modern audiences.

**“ When we did our gym-based study with our Māori men, I thought about how to make the gym space more Māori. Ideally, we would be outside and wouldn't need the gym but there are times where the gym is the most practical place. So we started using Māori narratives and as a foundation for the way we trained. Instead of saying we will do three sets of 12 repetitions of a particular exercise I started telling the story of Kupe, where the wheke ticked him off because he kept taking his fish and so he chased him. We replicated that in movement form, so as soon as the person (Kupe) caught up to another person (wheke) a battle ensued which was a particular set of reps of an exercise and the other person had to match it. Then if he was able to match it then he'd take off and the opponent would start chasing again. Kinda gamifying the workout ”**



Te Whānau Penetito, Whānau Hui  
2019, Waharoa

## 7.9 Observations – Marae Setting

Te whānau Penetito come together annually to noho, to wānanga and to connect with each other at Raungaiti Marae, Waharoa. Born out of a desire to bring whānau together and increase opportunities for whanaungatanga, these hui form a unique occasion whereby family members can share any highlights or key events from the year, share stories of old, develop whānau plans, learn whakapapa and discuss any whānau related matters as a collective. Below are some play observations from this hui:

### Licence to be young again

Kāumatua are perpetuating a non-Māori social construction of what is/isn't appropriate play for them to participate in. However, when given permission to join in they enjoy the experience the most.

### Making a comeback

The evolution of certain play activities was evident across generations. For example, one kaumātua spoke about his memories playing with pōtaka (wooden spinning tops with flax whips) while rangatahi made comparisons to Beyblades – a modern-day version of the spinning top.

### Free play goes unnoticed

We observed many tamariki (under 15 years old) engaged in a great deal of 'free play' most of the time during the whānau hui. In fact, 'free play' was the main activity for this age group from the time they woke up until bedtime. 'Free play' was often initiated by the adults being in 'wānanga mode' and the tamariki making too much noise in the whare, therefore being asked to go play outside. Outdoor games lasted a lot longer than any attempt to play indoors – noise was a factor in this.

### Play adaptations off the cuff

Games were adapted as the weather changed. For example, a game of tag moved from the grass area outside the front of the Marae to underneath the mähau. Other games evolved from running to walking games. We also witnessed tamariki spontaneously create a new game which involved jumping over the seats on the paepae where it was sheltered as well.

### Why whai the WiFi?

One significant motivation for playing outside was that there was no access to WiFi at the marae. Tamariki and rangatahi had no choice but to be creative and develop/design their own games to play. Others brought card games and very few had iPads to play with. You were made to feel fairly out of place if you were inside the whare playing on your iPad. It almost seemed as though being at marae gave the tamariki and rangatahi license to think of play activities beyond technology.

### The Kid Magnet

We observed tamariki being fiercely attracted to the mattress room. We also observed tamariki getting told off numerous times for the types of play activities they were engaged in and the mess they would leave in there. However, it didn't matter how many times they were told off, they would constantly make their way back to the mattress room to continue their fun. Upon reflection we recognised that the mattress room formed a place of belonging for all ages and stages of development.

- For pēpi it was a quiet place to sleep (tamariki would be sent out of the room while this happened)
- For tamariki a place to play
- For youth it was a place to sleep, somewhere to rest after a night out with the cousins or a place to hide away from having to do jobs
- For pakeke it was a place of refuge or rest away from the hui
- For kaumātua a place to play the role of kaitiaki

*Ka tika me mihi ki tōku whānau mo te tuwhera i te hui whānau Penetito ki tēnei Kaupapa*

## 7.10 Observations – Te Reo o te Rēhia

Te Reo o te Rēhia: Māori Games and Pastimes was an Auckland based wānanga born from a desire to share taonga, collective wisdoms and learnings. This event brought together approximately 100 whānau, teachers and practitioners from all over the North Island who have a keen passion for te reo and tākarō Māori. The wānanga created a platform to network with others, kōrero about future opportunities and be inspired by leaders who are championing the revitalisation of te reo Māori and tākarō within the whare tapere and te rēhia space. Below are some observations from the event:

### An unfair compromise

Design teams and developers looking to create games with Māori values at the forefront such as rangatiratanga and kaitiakitanga, struggled to do this throughout all stages of the supply chain. Most found ways to support local Māori businesses when it came to design, however struggled to access raw materials locally and ones which were sustainable and had a reduced impact on the environment (e.g. wooden boards and figurines). Manufacturing the products locally posed serious challenges to cost efficiency which would need to be absorbed and therefore impacted affordability and access for whānau.

### Kia tūpato

You can look but you can't touch – the assumption (rightly or wrongly) with taonga pūoro is to wait until you've been given permission by someone more senior before playing with the taonga. Kōrero amongst participants centred on what tikanga, knowledge and experience participants needed to have to be able to play taonga pūoro. Both kaupapa believed in minimal restrictions for all. They spoke about taonga pūoro as a form of rongoa therefore, restricting one's ability to access this rongoa to heal was deemed contradictory to their purpose. There was a sense that most, even tamariki demonstrated levels of respect and care when it came to using the taonga pūoro.

### Crowdfunding to kickstart

One design team talked about their kaupapa starting as a social enterprise and they shared some of their industry experience on innovative game production. They gained buy in for their kaupapa through online crowdfunding where they posted their prototype on the internet (via Kickstarter) and asked the public to pledge their support to raise funds to go towards a launch. This platform was particularly appealing for other participants as a key benefit included determining presale orders prior to the launch, which confirmed support and interest for the game.

### Content vs. Intent

Some participants expressed that depth of Māori learning, knowledge and understanding was preferred over playing Pākehā versions of games which were translated into te reo Māori. One debate focused on high levels of proficiency required to play the game versus games that only encouraged surface level learning. Those that hit the 'sweet spot':

- Created play opportunities for all despite age, gender and ethnicity
- Were anchored in mātauranga Māori (e.g. pūrākau, waiata, haka, whakapapa)
- Were applicable across settings (i.e. work, home, indoors, outdoors)
- Encouraged te reo Māori to be spoken at a variety of levels
- 'I do it for the kaupapa'.

It was apparent that many leaders were in it for the kaupapa and therefore funded much of the activities out of their own pockets. Some expressed that they didn't have the skills to apply for funding or raise funds over the internet, so they chose to absorb the costs themselves. Time was the biggest cost which impacted on their ability to find money, apply for it, wait for an outcome and then gain access to it. There was a sense that the process was 'too hoha', and if they waited any longer, opportunities to advance their kaupapa would be missed.

*Nei rā e mihi atu ana kia Kuruho Wereta kōrua ko Rosie Remmerswaal otirā ki ngā kai tautoko katoa o tēnei kaupapa*



# 08

## Recommendations

With consideration of the literature and data collected in this scoping project, the following are a number of recommendations for the development of a Māori play systems framework.

### 8.1 Alignment

With consideration of the literature and data collected in this insights report, the following sections outline several recommendations for the development of a Māori Play Systems Framework.

- Develop a Sport NZ Play Action Plan which recognises the genesis for play in Aotearoa stems from Te Ao Māori. This plan will outline key commitments and actions which will contribute to the desired impact on the play system within Aotearoa.
- Establish, build and maintain a network of 'Māori Play Champions' nationally. In addition, the formation of a Māori advisory group which values the distinctive voice that tangata whenua bring to the play conversation is vital and demonstrates a commitment to a partnership approach. These leaders/experts will play a critical role in enabling culturally distinctive pathways for tangata whenua and all New Zealanders.
- Enable and support the ongoing capability and capacity build of 'Māori Play Champions' through ongoing learning and development opportunities which raise the knowledge, awareness and understanding of Māori play. Profiling Māori play nationally will also be critical as an attempt to restore, reclaim and revitalise traditional knowledge surrounding Māori play.
- Communicate, collaborate, strategise and design across the 'Healthy Active Learning' and 'Tapuwaekura' initiatives as they share a natural alignment with school play development and Māori play systems within school settings.
- The 'Principles of Play' have evolved since their conception and must now demonstrate commitment to upholding the mana of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the principles of Partnership, Participation and Protection both internally and externally.
- The 'Five Phases of Play Development' require reference to Te Ao Māori. Consider alignment with existing strategy and draw on relevant frameworks and resources. For example, test the alignment of Te Whetū Rehua alongside Phase 3 and 4 of the process. Similarly, determine how the Regional Play Huddles ensure that the mana and cultural integrity of the play kaupapa is upheld and maintained.
- Ensure alignment with other relevant cross-government and cross-sectoral strategies.

### 8.2 Research and Design

- Utilise this report for the development of Phase 2 – Māori Play Systems Framework.
- Conduct further action research to expand on the voices of Māori play included in this report.
- Explore current and past Māori play systems in relation to their connection to environmental anchors. Utilise a taiao/environmental approach (i.e. Atua Matua) rather than a human centred one to investigate similarities and alignment with non-Māori frameworks such as spatial modelling and urban planning.
- Further analysis of key emerging themes and insights alongside a wider internal team to delve deeper into the opportunities and challenges for Māori.
- Validate the insights gathered in this report with Māori communities nationally and make the relevant changes needed to ensure legitimacy and social impact.
- Utilise a bicultural approach to prototype and guide future design and action. A bicultural approach may include drawing on tools such as Atua Matua, Te Ara Hihiko a Māui, co-design and systems thinking to design play opportunities by, for and with local Māori communities.
- Plan and implement a series of Māori play design wānanga. These wānanga will occur in settings which affirm contributors as Māori and encourage space to participate and succeed as tangata whenua.
- The 'Māori Play Framework' must be adaptable and provide opportunities to incorporate and interpret tribalcentric/local information appropriately. Māori are not a homogenous group but rather they are born of a tribal history, therefore we must explore and give space for difference. We must also preference the view that we are all descendants and part of a whakapapa.
- Ensuring each iwi, hapū, whānau, kura can populate the framework with information that is specific to their particular knowledge base, environment or interpretation is paramount.



Orion Ruha, He Pi Ka Rere  
2018, Mangere

### 8.3 Cultural Capability

- Invest in Māori resource and capability both within Sport New Zealand and externally to ensure the mana and cultural integrity of the play kaupapa is upheld and maintained. Given the nature of the work is agile, fast paced and is increasingly drawing on new partnerships with Māori at all levels, it requires more than a part time/short term solution to manage any reputational risk. Importantly, this work needs to be guided from a position of awareness, knowledge and understanding which is authentic and underpinned by tikanga Māori.
- Whanaungatanga “He reo e rangona, engari he kanohi kitea” – “A voice may be heard, but a face needs to be seen”. The development of a process that ensures Māori engagement (both internal and external, strategic and operational) is at the forefront of all work streams moving forward is paramount. Building enduring relationships without intent is essential. While the design process can be rapid, there must still be a commitment to giving time and space to build the rapport needed to work meaningfully together.
- All Play Unit staff to participate in the Tū Te Ihi Māori programme to build capability around bicultural practice. There is significant appetite and interest for adopting a bicultural approach which is led by indigenous thinking, however this requires leadership and understanding of ‘how’ to implement such an approach.
- Social innovation encourages a continuous cycle of learning and calls for innovation, creativity and curiosity. The team must continue to be brave, bold and use fresh thinking to test new approaches. Continue to prototype frameworks such as Te Ara Hihiko ā Māui which currently governs the way the Play Unit operate as a team. Utilise multiple methods kōrero (talking), whakarongo (listening), wānanga (learning forums), uiui (questioning) to check, reflect and adapt the approach for future action and impact.

# 09

## Personas

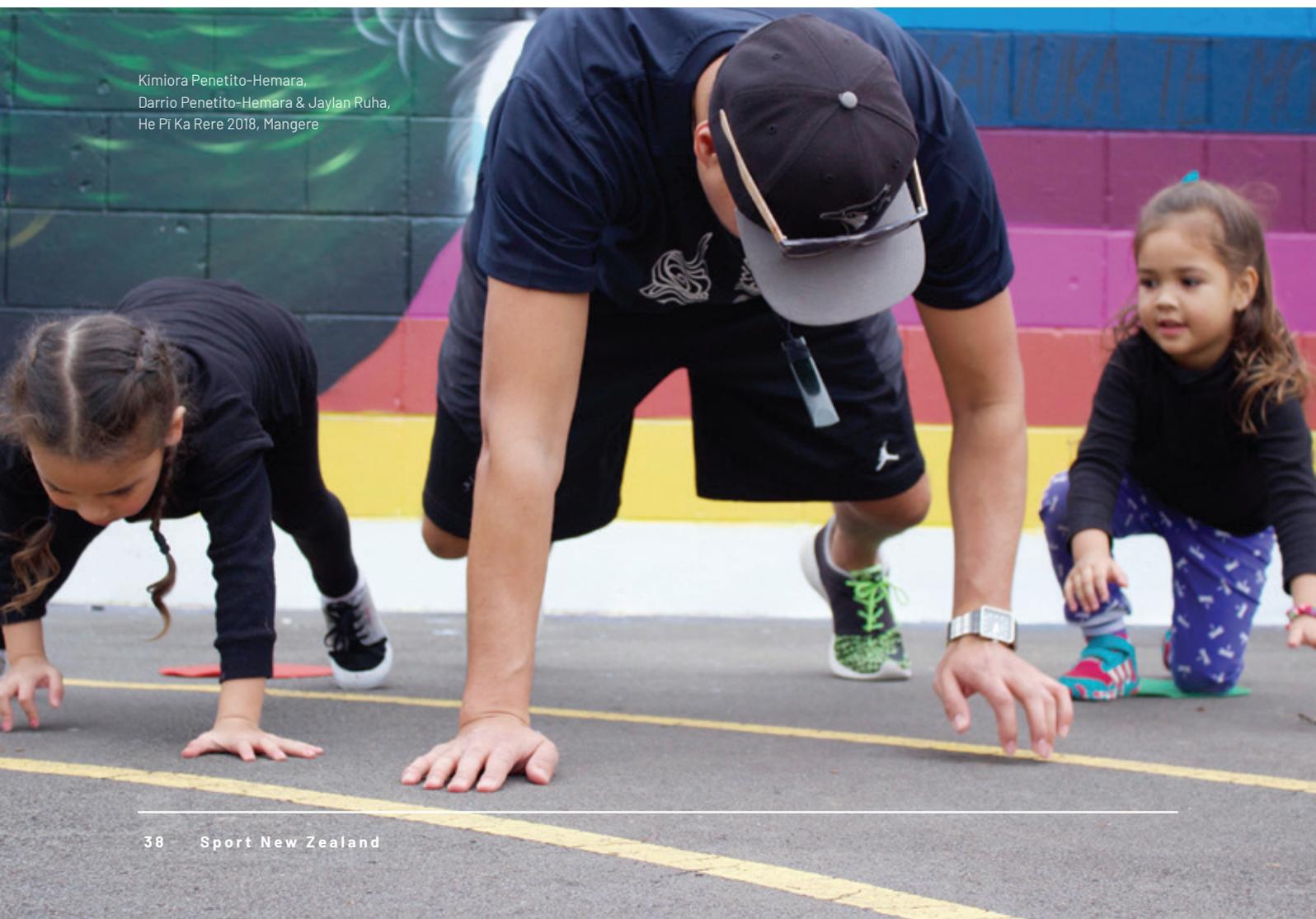
Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand account for 16.5% of the national population. This insights report focused on exploring and amplifying Māori perspectives on play in order to design and develop a play framework which resonates with Māori.

As part of the synthesis of findings, we created six 'personas' based on the stories participants shared. The purpose behind the development of these personas is to bring to life the experiences, mindsets, characteristics and journeys of the people who shared their dreams and aspirations for Māori play in Aotearoa. They represent a range of Māori voices across various ages and stages of development.

The aim is to use these personas during the later phases of the design process to inspire innovation and creativity while also inform decision making. The profiles will help us understand the user needs, experiences, behaviours and goals in order to co-create ideas and solutions suitable for Māori communities. Each persona provides an indication of whakapapa connections to whenua, wai, whetū/rangi and provides geographical iwi links in order to apply an Atua Matua framework alongside this design process. They also include a raw quote from the data collected which relates to the persona and helps provide further context which will be helpful when it comes to the design process.

Note: We are aware that using a co-design tool such as personas to design Māori play opportunities which are taiao based illustrates a tension between human centered and environment centered approaches. Significant consultation has taken place in relation to this tension and a decision has been made to pursue with this process in an attempt to capture the widest audience. We fully acknowledge that successive versions of this approach will follow based on where the sector is at.

Kimiora Penetito-Hemara,  
Darrío Penetito-Hemara & Jaylan Ruha,  
He Pi Ka Rere 2018, Mangere



## Persona 1

Ngāti Ranginui, Ngāti Kahungunu

# Piata

Piata is two years old. She is a thriving Kōhanga Reo kid with a bold, confident presence about her. She enjoys opportunities to socialise with others especially with tamariki and kaimahi.

Piata is the youngest of five siblings and has demonstrated that she has a way with old people. She manages to befriend the grumpiest of nannies on the marae with her charisma and sass. On a recent trip back to the marae, her parents observed that she had a natural affinity to ngā kōhatu and loves to use them to play.

In the months after she was born her parents took her to the water and discovered that she wasn't a fan. Instead she jumps at any opportunity to be outdoors and is known to love a good hīkoi in the ngāhere.

At home, Piata can often be found belting out a good waiata or haka and has recently taken a liking to karanga mo te kai. Her sisters always talk about her moodiness. They liken her temperament to the different phases of the Moon saying, "she can either be your best friend or your worst enemy some days". Her mum has recently introduced a limited amount of screen time on her iPad, however, has noticed that Piata stays glued to the screen and chooses to block out everything else around her. She also has tantrums when asked to give it back or put it on charge.



“ Play is not just restricted to social play (with others) there is individual play as well. For example, we may be engaging with our tūpuna rākau, tūpuna kōhatu which is a different social relationship. We might think about individual play as 'kōtahi te tangata, engari, ko te tākaro me ona taiao, o ngā whanaunga taiao ”

Taiao - Meter	Taiao Links
← Whetū/ Rangī →	Mārama/ Maramataka
← Wai →	Ngā kōhatu
← Whenua →	Ngāhere

## Persona 2

### Te Whānau-a-Apanui, Ngāti Tūwharetoa

# Jordan

Jordan lives rurally and is in Year 4 at the local Kura Kaupapa.

Jordan calls himself a 'gamer'. He plays a variety of games on the PlayStation and has developed a keen interest in virtual and augmented reality. One of his favourite games is Te Paerangi which is about the three battles of Ngā Atua Māori. His family don't really understand this passion of his, and so he's often found sneaking off into his room to play before he gets asked to do some 'real work' around the house.

At school he dislikes maths and reading which often frustrates his teachers because they see potential in him. He has two long term friends at Kura but is an introvert at heart and doesn't enjoy socialising with others face to face unless he really knows them. When he's not gaming, Jordan enjoys hunting and fishing alongside his brothers. They are fortunate enough to live near the local awa, so he can be found doing bombs off the bridge alongside many of his cousins after school.

Aside from his passion for technology, he aspires to follow in the footsteps of his Uncle who has recently graduated with Pouwaru or the eighth stage of Te Whare Tū Taua o Aotearoa.

He has noticed over the years that his skills are often misunderstood by his peers. He has a hearing impairment which people assume is a disability, and yet this hasn't stopped him from excelling both on the water and in the bush.



**“ A year or so ago now, I watched a whole lot of kids playing 'Pokemon go' and thought to myself what has drawn all these kids and families (adults as well) – who would usually be inside gaming, outside into the environment. I thought, how can we gamify their experience and leverage that interest to create play opportunities that teach the stories of those spaces and places instead ”**

Taiao - Meter	Taiao Links
 Whetū/ Rangī	Te Paerangi
 Wai	Awa, Fishing, Bombing
 Whenua	Ngāhere, Hunting, Mau Rākau

## Persona 3

Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Whātua

# Taaniko

Taaniko is a naturally talented sportsperson, even at 13 years old. Taaniko started making local representative teams at age 11. He has a winning track record in multiple codes including swimming, athletics and tag. It's safe to say that he is in fine physical form for his age. While he shows promise, his family have recently observed a decline in his passion to play sport.

He is in his first year of high school and is beginning to find an interest in girls. He has also acquired some new friends who have brought out the inner *haututū* in him. Taaniko is not afraid to tell you what's on his mind and for this reason many other students look to him as a leader. His teachers, however, feel he has a lot more maturing to do.

Taaniko recently joined the school *kapa haka* group and is part way through their *Polyfest* campaign. Although he seems to be enjoying it, he mentioned to his friends that he feels out of place. He didn't grow up with a strong connection to his Māori side and so he sometimes questions if he's 'Māori enough' to take the stage.

His mother (Pākehā) and father (Māori) separated when he was just four years old and so Taaniko grew up under the care of his maternal grandparents. He stays with his father during school holidays but has found it difficult to learn about his *whakapapa*. Taaniko comes from a large blended *whānau* and is therefore spoiled rotten by his parents on both sides. His grandparents are getting old now but find great joy in imparting wisdoms on their *mokopuna*.



“ My favourite memories of play were at the river. It was cooler to swim at the river than it was at the pools, because of the freedom. When we were at the pools we were restricted, we couldn't do bombs. It was the excitement of walking the whole town for waterholes and claiming them. If you found it, you named it, you claimed it ”

### Taiao - Meter



Whetū/ Rangī



Wai



Whenua

### Taiao Links

Hau - Haututū

Swimming, Awa

Field Sports - Tag, Athletics

## Persona 4

Taranaki, Ngāi Tahu

# Chantelle

Chantelle is a university student studying a Bachelor of Indigeneity. She started in Kōhanga Reo as a pēpi and then completed her schooling years in a mainstream private school in the South Island. Chantelle's parents worked hard to get her into private school. They both had a dream that she would go to university and get a good job, one that she loved. Chantelle is only the second grandchild in their family to go to university and so she feels a great deal of pressure to succeed.

In her last year of high school, she completed a project centred on her papa kāinga. The project reignited her passion for te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori. This has encouraged her to reconnect and deepen her knowledge of her own whakapapa.

Since she was a little girl her whānau would return to their papa kāinga every year for Christmas and New Years. Their whānau whenua backs on to their tūpuna maunga and corresponding awa so they spent a lot of time exploring those environments as kids. Chantelle noticed a few years back that she has an innate attraction to mountains. On her travels overseas she has walked many mountains and so she attributes this love to being surrounded by the beauty of her own maunga her whole life.

Nan would often call Chantelle her 'wairua' moko. She spoke about observing Chantelle's deep spiritual connection to the whenua from a very early age. She revels in the fact that Chantelle is so in tune with the taiao now!



**“ A connection to the taiao is really important especially considering climate change and the destruction of our environment today. It has relevance to us as indigenous people who come from the land. My dream for play would be to make it about the taiao and exploring your identity ”**



## Persona 5

Te Arawa, Ngāti Porou

# Kiri

Kiri is a 38-year-old Māmā to four young tamariki - one pēpi (5 months), one at Kōhanga Reo (4 years), one at Kura (9 years) and one at High School (14 years). Kiri grew up down the line on the coast. For the first five years of her life she was a marae kid, free spirited, playing all day long and living her best life alongside the cuzzies and wider whānau. When she was 6 years old her family moved to the city to find better job opportunities and potentially experience financial prosperity.

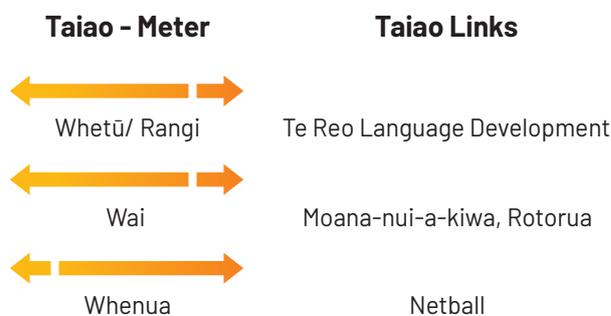
After moving to the big city Kiri spent her childhood in mainstream public schools and so very quickly lost what little reo she had. She never really enjoyed sport, although played in a few netball teams growing up.

Kiri has her hands full most of the time. She is married to a man of Samoan/Māori decent and enjoys the melting pot of culture that her children have the ability to tap in to. After having her second child she felt the need to turn her attention to revitalising te reo Māori within her whānau. She enrolled in te reo night classes and moved her kids into Māori medium schools. She has also just started a Facebook page for Māmā wanting to practice speaking te reo at home.

Kiri rarely returns to the coast but when she does, she is guaranteed to spend her whole time at the beach. Her husband is very well connected to their Samoan heritage. Their family recently returned from their first whānau trip to their village in Samoa which is also situated on the coast. Upon returning home, they spoke about observing how confident their children are in the ocean - something they were both very proud of.



“ When it comes to play, I want my children to be in places that support their Māori/Samoan identity. So te reo Māori might be the dominant language used, there will be opportunities for a close connection to nature, they will be able to build an awareness of ngā Atua Māori through play and even experience tuakana teina through building social relationships with their whanaunga/community ”



## Persona 6

Ngāti Hauā, Ngāti Maniapoto

# Koro Wally

Wally is 80 years old and full of life lessons and wisdoms.

Born into a large whānau, he is the second eldest of ten children. He grew up on a dairy farm in the central Waikato and played rugby for the local team. His connection to this whenua is strong, he returns regularly and is therefore regarded a rangatira in his whānau.

Wally travelled the world teaching alongside his wife and three kids. He is now retired and constantly has his nose in a new book. He is also quite the joker and loves to spend time winding up his mokopuna. He enjoys getting out in the māra on sunny days, but he can only do short stints as his back becomes mamae. Wally has enjoyed a long career in the health and education sectors. He is steeped in mātauranga and although he came from the generation who were punished for speaking te reo Māori, he is a fluent speaker of the language today. He also has a deep connection and understanding of the taiao.

He surprises many of his generation, as he is one of the rare few who doesn't shy away from technology. He always has the latest toy whether that be a phone, iPad or his recent purchase – a drone. One thing to note though is he's not the most tech-savvy when it comes to using the devices.



“ The kind of play that I remember was eeling with my whānau down at the awa. My Papa would be teaching us how to line the nets and how to put the bait on. It's like 9pm at night so we had torches on our heads and on the off chance we caught an eel, everyone would be screaming because no one wanted to touch it. Papa would come and get it off the line and then we would all chuck it at each other to freak one another out ”

Taiao - Meter	Taiao Links
←→ Whetū/ Rangī	Ngā Kete Mātauranga
←→ Wai	Waikato Awa
←→ Whenua	Māra, Farmlands

# 10

## Summary

Sport NZ may be one of the first international government institutions to attempt to understand the role of indigenous play systems within the context of a national strategy and framework for play. Within the potential working group of ministries, Sport NZ has the potential to influence and shift mindsets and investment for tangata whenua, tamariki and all New Zealanders when it comes to a play agenda.

Across all the data collected there was a unanimous and resounding view that the taiao (natural environment) plays a key role in the way we once played, the way we currently play and the way we want to play in the future. However, its value and unique cultural distinctiveness is not fully acknowledged or understood within Aotearoa New Zealand. The mere fact that over the last few decades we have been conditioned to focus on human centered wellbeing versus environmental gain reflects these limitations and a general readiness for change. Utilising a Te Ao Māori lens alongside play enables a shift toward an indigenous taiao/environmental focus for wellbeing. It also illustrates an alternative mindset and a unique Aotearoa New Zealand approach to play which is strengths-based, culturally appropriate, based on indigenous role models and esoteric knowledge.

Many participants spoke of the intrinsic link between play, whanaungatanga and the development and maintenance of their cultural identity. Play is seen as a platform for creating meaningful connections with others. Play also forms the vehicle for knowledge, language and culture transmission across generations and at all levels. Albeit there seems an obvious loss of mātauranga when it comes to traditional Māori play, we are seeing a renaissance of opportunities in ngā taonga tākaro, mara hupara and the development of new and emerging games developed by, for and with Māori. Sport NZ must consider what role they play in these revitalisation efforts both now and into the future.

It is clear that strategic kaupapa such as the 'Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, 'Healthy Active Learning' and 'Tapuwaekura' share a natural alignment with Māori play systems. This demands a call for action to invest in Māori resource and capability within and across Sport NZ.

The voices captured in this report further highlight a need to invest in building human resource because there is currently only a small pool to draw from. Support for increased participation and leadership as Māori is key and so this work must be guided from a position of authority on the topic.

### **Mā te ihu o te waka te ngaru nui e wāhi The prow of the canoe can break big waves**

Play is one vehicle for the transmission of indigenous knowledge to be celebrated. There is an opportunity to be pioneering, be brave, implore a growth mindset, reconnect to our ancient wisdoms and try new approaches to challenge current norms within the sector.

### **Kia kaha, kia māia, kia manawanui!**

# 11

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