



Tapeta Wehi

Te Wehi Haka –The Haka Experience

WALK THE TALK FINALIST



THE STORY

Tapeta Wehi has dedicated his career to promoting Māori performing arts and kapa haka within New Zealand and all over the world. During the Covid-19 pandemic he used the haka as a way of spreading the message of aroha, unity and resilience in challenging times.

Along with his wife Annette, Tapeta created Te Wehi Haka - The Haka Experience, a performing arts group that provides an authentic, professional, Māori cultural experience in the form of performances, traditional welcomes and cultural workshops, custom-designed for businesses wanting to develop cultural capacity and incorporate traditional Māori cultural values into their workplace.

As CEO and co-founder, Tapeta's role includes composing haka, poi and a variety of waiata for the traditional Māori performing arts festivals and competitions, choreographing works for international events, as well as teaching and motivating high-performance teams.

The Haka Experience cultural coordinator Wiha Hiku says Tapeta's leadership has helped promote the importance of diversity within Aotearoa.

"Te Wehi Haka was built with the values of sharing our culture and leading the way for all cultures throughout the world. We focus our client base on those who need guidance in this area and Tapeta has developed and successfully established a relationship with several organisations to showcase our culture as an example of how to overcome the struggles of diversity," she says.

"He extends his knowledge to his staff and performers, so they are able to share the importance of cultural awareness with the world, not only through our workshops, but also through our expert performances, and traditional welcomes. Tapeta and his family have

dedicated their lives not only to the workforce, but also the Māori community by encouraging all young Māori to follow a pathway in which we share our culture throughout the globe.”

Tapeta has spent decades developing ways to preserve, share and teach elements of Māori culture, while also helping organisations to progress further along their diversity pathway.

“He has spent more than 30 years studying and critiquing techniques and has created a formula to deliver an outstanding, engaging workshop that gives tools to help people from all ethnic groups thrive in the workplace,” says Wiha.

Helping people thrive in their workplace was one of the inspirations for the haka Tapeta wrote and taught online during the Covid-19 lockdown period.

Aware of how people were struggling away from their traditional support systems, he wrote a haka to promote unity, and contacted several organisations he had worked with previously and offered to teach it to their staff online, so they could unite from the safety of their individual bubbles.

“I created this haka as a call for Aotearoa to come together, to unite,” Tapeta told TVNZ Breakfast. “I’m using haka as a platform to share a nationwide message of strength, aroha and resilience. We are a very resilient people, when we get knocked down we will come back fighting.”

Wiha Hiku says the feedback The Haka Experience received following the online workshops was overwhelmingly positive, and Tapeta’s leadership made a significant difference to how participants coped during a time of widespread uncertainty. His leadership also encouraged the organisation’s staff, who’d had performances and travel plans disrupted by the pandemic.



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“The anxiety was evident throughout the pandemic and Tapeta committed himself to bringing people together through an uncertain time,” she says. “Once the lockdown restrictions began to lift, the anxiety was also lifting and the gratitude from people was immense, and felt throughout our company. We felt the purpose of our Haka online workshop was successful, and once again it brought our company and our staff hope. Tapeta has been nothing short of an exceptional leader.”

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