

Ratonga Ahi me ngā Ohotata i Aotearoa

Fire and Emergency New Zealand

NGĀ ĀHUATANGA O TE TIRITI

MEDIUM-LARGE ORGANISATION HIGHLY COMMENDED



THE STORY

In 2018, Ratonga Ahi me ngā Ohotata i Fire and Emergency New Zealand published its tauāki paiherenga expressing its commitment to working with Māori as tāngata whenua. It signalled the organisation's intention to strengthen its cultural understanding and build relationships with Māori in culturally appropriate ways.

“This commitment was to become the tūāpapa (foundation) to support all future work aspiring towards better outcomes for Māori,” says Senior Communications Advisor for the Kaupapa Māori and Cultural Branch Caitlin Mackay.

As Aotearoa's unified urban and rural firefighting entity, with more than 14,500 people, the organisation provides support for communities throughout the country, protecting and preserving lives, property and the environment. Ratonga Ahi me ngā Ohotata is consistently voted the most trusted public sector organisation in Aotearoa.

However, its work extends beyond essential services and into education. Helping to reduce the incidence of unwanted fires and the associated risk to life and property, damage to property, land and the environment.

Māori are disproportionately affected by unwanted fires and emergencies, and with almost half of their asset base invested in climate sensitive industries, iwi and hapū are also highly impacted by climate-change related fires. With this knowledge, Ratonga Ahi me ngā Ohotata was compelled to strengthen its service to deliver better outcomes for Māori.

Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini. My success is not the work of an individual, but the work of many.

This well-known whakataukī speaks to the importance of acknowledging those who have contributed to your success. In the case of Ratonga Ahi me ngā Ohotata, it refers to the important mahi done to build capacity and confidence within their organisation to uphold their commitment to Māori.

This led to the creation of He Tīmatanga Kōrero - An introductory guide to Kaupapa Māori for Fire and Emergency NZ. An illustrated resource, providing understanding around the commitment and what kaupapa Māori looks like within the organisation, the resource gives kaimahi beginner knowledge regarding the use of te reo Māori, tikanga, our history as a nation and building enduring relationships based on mutual understanding.

To accompany the resource, a Tohu, wearable award, was designed to visually represent the commitment made by the wearer to the kaupapa and their progression in their cultural education.

“The intention of He Tīmatanga Kōrero and the Tohu was to give our people an accessible way to take the first step in increasing their knowledge of aspects of te ao Māori,” Caitlin says.

“By doing so, they will be encouraged to take another step, and then another. All these steps accumulate in our people having a greater appreciation for Māori culture and, in turn, better serving Māori in their role.”

Bringing to life the phrase he toa takatini, success through the work of many, the implementation of the resource was led by the organisation’s Board and Executive.

Caitlin says that from the outset, the Executive Leadership Team and Board set the tone by all attaining their Tohu. “They continue to wear them with pride and actively encourage others to follow suit.”

Since then, the kaupapa has grown organically, with more than 2,700 personnel completing the guide and knowledge check, and receiving their Tohu.

Caitlin believes that He Tīmatanga Kōrero and the Tohu demonstrates effective implementation through a combination of strong leadership commitment, shared responsibility among staff, and targeted initiatives.

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THE CHALLENGE

Raise awareness within Ratonga Ahi me ngā Ohotata i Fire and Emergency New Zealand of its commitment to working with Māori as tāngata whenua and improving cultural capability to better engage with Māori when designing and delivering services.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- An illustrated resource He Timatanga kōrero - An introductory guide to Kaupapa Māori for Fire and Emergency NZ was created
- Tohu, wearable award, was designed to acknowledge completion of the guide and knowledge check
- The whakaaro (perspectives) of Kaimahi Māori were actively sought and their voices were integrated into the development of these resources
- Implementation led by the Board and Executive Leadership Team as the first kaimahi of the organisation to complete the guide and receive their Tohu
- Responsibility for updating the resources and distributing the Tohu is held within the organisation by the Kaupapa Māori and Cultural Communities Branch
- Inclusion of the kaupapa in the Career Firefighters' recruitment course. All recruits are encouraged to complete the knowledge check before graduation
- Direct alignment with organisation-wide "Eke Taumata" programme to achieve long-term workplace culture change and ensure a positive work experience



RESULTS AND BENEFITS

- More than 2,700 personnel have completed the guide, knowledge check, and been awarded their Tohu since July 2021.
- Current average of 52 monthly completions achieved largely without active promotion.
- Volunteer Fire Brigades independently adopting the kaupapa as part of their training nights. Hokitika Volunteer Fire Brigade achieved a 100% completion rate. In recognition of their dedication, the Chief Executive, Kerry Gregory and Deputy Chief Executive, Kaupapa Māori and Cultural Communities Piki Thomas personally presented Tohu to each member.

KEY LEARNING

Successful implementation of diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives is achieved through a combination of strong leadership commitment, shared responsibility among staff, and targeted initiatives.