



Wednesday July 6 2016

Publicity release: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kaitaia opens the gate to its first living library

A community initiative that has been quietly bubbling away since the beginning of the year is set to spill over into fruition on Friday 15 July 2016 at 11am, with the opening of the Kaitaia-based Tuia Whare Taapapa and Maara Whenua.

The community garden, or the 'Garden of the Land', is a joint project between Kia Piki Te Ora and Te Aho Tuu Roa with support from kohanga reo, puna reo, kura, wharekura and learning communities focused on kaupapa Maori environmental projects.

Te Aho Tuu Roa kaiwhakapuamau Joanne Murray says the project carries the vision of becoming a living library for the community to promote sustainable living and guardianship practices, whilst empowering participants by developing capacity, providing support and strengthening intergenerational learning opportunities and networks.

Kia Piki Te Ora is a group nurtured by Te Rarawa Anga Mua that meets every Friday to practice and create rongoa Maori, or traditional Maori medicine. Te Aho Tuu Roa is an initiative funded by the Toimata Foundation charitable trust that works in communities that embrace Maori culture, language and wisdom.

Kia Piki Te Ora co-ordinator Vivienne Body says the garden is representative of community collaboration as the existing facility renovations and artworks that adorn the garden have been undertaken largely by volunteers with a minimum of funding.

"We've had to beg, borrow and steal but we've made it. This has been a real labour of love and the manaakitanga that has come through has been awesome," she says.

The garden features riparian planting of native trees – including koromiko, karaka, ti kouka, harakeke, kawakawa and tupakihi – which will eventually be used in both controlling the lay of the land and for the creation of rongoa Maori.

Carved pou representative of Maori kaitiaki such as Tane, Ranginui and Maui have also been installed, as have carved waharoa, pataka and rua which are standard features of a traditional Maori garden.



Furthermore, two areas have been dedicated to the memory of prominent kaumatua who passed away last year. The native tree area has been planted in memory of Te Kai Makiha and the pataka kai in memory of Dr Bruce Gregory – both invaluable members of the rongoa Maori group and key speakers at the Mauri Ora Mai Tawhito Symposium held in 2015.

Joanne is delighted with the result: “We’re happy we can put some more positive projects in place and bring this garden to life for our community.”

Healthy Families Far North manager Allan Pivac says the new space is an exemplar of a Far North community working in collaboration in each other’s best interests.

“A healthier Far North starts in the places where we live, learn, work and play. The opening of this precious resource has highlighted who some of our community champions are and provides a vehicle of inspiration for us to take charge of our health and wellbeing,” he says.