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### **Te Kura Kaupapa Maori o Pukemiro gives 25-year-old ultra-marathon tradition fresh legs**

Te Kura Kaupapa Maori o Pukemiro will this Friday don their runners in force as they hit Te Oneroa-a-Tohe (90 Mile Beach) in celebration of legendary ancestor Te Houtaewa.

The school has taken up the challenge of keeping the run alive, now in its 25<sup>th</sup> year, after the Te Houtaewa Maori Charitable Trust cancelled the event this year due to unforeseen circumstances.

The sudden passing of respected kaumatua Dr Bruce Gregory in November 2015 saw the trust make the executive decision to cancel this year's marathon organisation, with a view to reinstating it in 2017.

However, the Kaitaia-based kura has decided to run en masse this Friday as both a mark of respect for Dr Gregory and to support the school's curriculum.

Kaiako Eileen Murray says the event is split into three stages for the school's students. She says the senior top runners will participate in a 63km relay, with the remainder older students taking part in a 21km walk.

"We decided to carry on doing the Te Houtaewa run this year because it's relevant to us. We have buildings dedicated to our tupuna – including Te Houtaewa and Tohe – and we study our tupuna. The enduring reason why we decided to continue with the race this year was in the interest of whanaungatanga," she says.

Kaiako Raihera Heka says the junior classes will take part in a 6km Walk for Life fun run relay that is this year being dedicated to Dr Gregory's memory, as the smaller length run has traditionally appealed to the largest group of runners.

She adds that there is an interesting element to this year's event as runners will be competing while holding and passing a kumara, instead of a baton, as a means of supporting the legend of Te Houtaewa.

This will be the sixth year that Te Kura Kaupapa Maori o Pukemiro has participated in the run and Raihera says the trust has been enormously supportive in providing prizes, while parents and family of students will be available on the day as support crew.

Other community organisations are also rallying around the event, including Petricevich Buses, Ritchies Transport, Te Rarawa Anga Mua, Te Hiku Hauora and He Korowai Trust.

Healthy Families Far North manager Allan Pivac says the school is an exemplar of keeping a tradition alive that supports all aspects of well-being through a tikanga Maori lens.



“We commend Te Kura Kaupapa Maori o Pukemiro for continuing on with the event this year. While marrying together locally relevant Maori legend and values with physical activity, the kura is to be congratulated for its initiative on behalf of both of its students and wider community,” he says.