

Kōrero Pakiwaitara: Under-the-Radar Kapa Haka Heroes

He tuhinga auaha e aro ana ki ngā kōrero
a ngā rangatira kore mihi o te ao kapa haka.

Screened competitive kapa haka is widely understood as the apex of ‘traditional’ Māori performing arts, operating at the nexus of embodied practice, visual culture, and mediated performance. In particular, the contemporary presence and prestige of Te Matatini reflects a vast infrastructure of regional competitions, intergenerational participation now hard-wired into Aotearoa’s mediascape, and consequently audience engagement intensification through broadcasting and digital media. Originally a presentation at the Athens Institute for Education & Research, this article examines the importance of kapa haka to cultural thrivance¹, and the transformation of competitive kapa haka into a highly stylized, mediated, “sportesque” production structure and spectacle. These are inseparable from Māori broadcasting developments and shifting regimes of spectatorship. While this has elevated visibility and participation, it has also reshaped the aesthetics, judging practices, and notions of authorship, celebrity, and indeed of performance. Centring on kōrero pakiwaitara as both research method and epistemology, the dual purposes of this article are firstly to explore/test kōrero pakiwaitara besides – not in place of – the now well circulated concept of pūrākau, and secondly to underline the extended conversational accounts with senior practitioners Joe Harawira, Robert Pouwhare, and Hine Kataraina Mamaku, all based in and tribally linked to the Mātaatua region where Kia Rite! The ongoing evolution of screened competitive kapa haka – the wider project of which this article is but a small component – focuses. These kōrero pakiwaitara were documented as the central research in a small scoping corpus of screen production materials. The research consists of complexly rich, empirical narratives that target critically important shifts in broadcasting, adjudication, leadership and general development across kapa haka in the first half century of screened competitive kapa haka practice. In this article, and across Kia Rite! kōrero pakiwaitara are the essential research interventions in a field where critical writing remains limited, particularly concerning Māori media, judging frameworks, women’s leadership, and considerations that may be seen to counterpoint general kapa haka narratives. By centring these under-the-radar heroes, these are the agitators for te reo Māori, broadcasting, and indeed for kapa haka to modernize yet maintain its ‘traditional’ roots, this research reframes kapa haka as an intergenerational continuum of cultural activism, innovation, and responsibility, of which kōrero pakiwaitara are a significant methodology.

¹Thrivance, which according to Baumann (2019, 2023) is a way of articulating the identity of (Blackfoot) folks who push beyond the boundaries of simply surviving colonization, and into thriving by both understanding and activating ways-of-knowing. For Māori, it could be that screened competitive kapa haka is a vehicle, a platform, and in many ways is evidence of thrivance. Of course, there are instances where thrivance in competitive kapa haka isn’t the case for kaihaka/former kaihaka, and I’ve explored some of these in other research (2024a, 2024b, forthcoming, 2026).

Keywords: *kapa haka, Māori media, kōrero pakiwaitara, tikanga, broadcasting, leadership*

He kōrero pakiwaitara i te Tūwhera | Prefacing story

♪♪ **(THAT'S A) WRAP WHĀNAU** ♪♪

A script written by Jani Katarina Taituha Wilson

(Ngāti Awa, Ngā Puhi, Mātaatua)

OTAKIRI ROAD, WHAKATĀNE July 2026

1.INT. LOUNGE IN A PRIVATE RESIDENCE, WAIIOHAU – JUST PAST LUNCHTIME, A SUNNY WAITANGI DAY (2026)

BLACK SCREEN

WAHINE (V.O.)

AAAAAAAAND CUT!

Claps, sighs, chitter-chatter

WAHINE (V.O.)

AND THAT'S A WRAP WHĀNAU!

FADE IN

More claps, woohoos, more chitter-chatter

JANI/WAHINE – late 40s, wears a deep bronze, stretch-cotton onesie with a black tino rangatiratanga print on the front, a black t-shirt underneath. She uses her plastic file of 'just in case' prompts to fan her flushed face.

UNCLE ROBERT – kaumatua, sports a black cotton button-through shirt and linen pants. He holds a red 1B4, his prized notebook, and joins in the face fanning.

UNCLE GARY – kaumatua, a salmon cotton button-through shirt, linen pants, and thick, super-geek black framed specs, reclined on the chaise couch in the opposite corner.

COUSIN AWHI – undisclosed age, a t-shirt and jeans, supports from her perch on the couch beside UNCLE GARY. The two have continually yapped in the flanks the entire shoot, undeniably both hōhā *and* helpful to UNCLE ROBERT throughout the process.

LJ - late 40s, a dark-coloured singlet and shorts, big, frizzy 'Bunty Afoa' hair, and wayfarer specs. He's focused on the pack down, which he's done several times now, and needs JANI to stay out of the way.

Chitter-chatter continues, now more ferociously than during the shoot

Face fanning continues. Pack down commences. LJ retrieves UNCLE ROBERT'S microphone and shimmies to the corner where the black and blue kōwhaiwhai suitcases are. Cameras go back into their protective cases, leads and extension cords are rolled,

1 and put into the correct suitcase, screens are moved and ready to be transported to the
2 truck.

3

4 **COUSIN AWHI**

5 He said Ruatāhuna for that pātai ay?

6

7 **UNCLE GARY**

8 Yeah, he loved them... and Matarae, too. Wow, that time they lifted Miriama up above
9 everyone was, wow, that, that was incredible...

10

11 The chat between COUSIN AWHI and UNCLE GARY hangs over from AHO III, the
12 concluding 'Quick Fire' section of the shoot. They keenly banter about UNCLE
13 ROBERT's responses to the questions until UNCLE GARY disappears down the long
14 hallway into the kitchen and returns with mango iceblocks. He kindly distributes them
15 to ALL with a smile; ALL savagely rip into them.

16

17 **UNCLE ROBERT**

18 Was that OK, Darling? Like, what you were thinking, what you were after?

19

20 Despite sweating like a mofo, both from the summer heat beating through the plethora
21 of windows (an incredible backdrop and natural lighting), JANI stops fanning her face,
22 pauses from her iceblock, and leans forward.

23

24 **JANI**

25 Uncle Robert...

26

27 *Pause*

28

29 You've ruined what I'd planned the project to do...

30

31 UNCLE ROBERT looks a bit bummed.

32

33 **JANI**

34 But in the best of ways...

35

36 *Beat*

37

38 Cos now this is new research.

39

40 The sound UNCLE ROBERT usually makes in between a 'really?' and a 'whatever'
41 derives from the back of his throat.

42

43 **JANI**

44 No one knows this stuff.

45

46 *Beat*

47

48 No one.

49 LJ's pack-down system nears completion, even with one hand holding an iceblock.

50

51 **JANI (V. O.)**

1 OMG. How did he do that?

2
3 ***SLOW FADE OUT TO BLACK***

4
5
6 **He Kupu Whakataki | Introduction**

7
8 Pūrākau mobilised in Māori academic research as a framework grounded in
9 ancestral narrative traditions and their contemporary retellings at least half a century
10 ago, by way of Ranginui Walker (since 1970s), Māori Marsden (1980s), Cleve
11 Barlow (1970s), Charles (Te Ahukaramū) Royal (1990s), Linda Smith (1980s),
12 Jenny Lee (2000s), Pouwhare (2018, 2020), Zak Waipara (2022), and a plethora of
13 others. I'm specifically referring to Pouwhare's definition of pūrākau (2016, 2020)
14 where the building blocks of the concept shows dual concepts; the *pū* or the root
15 system beneath the surface, known to be there yet unseen; and *rākau*, the widest
16 definition of which is 'tree' or 'stick', yet an ancient Tūhoe understanding of the
17 word is 'story'. Topically, Pouwhare is **UNCLE ROBERT** in (*That's a*) *Wrap*
18 *Whānau* (*Wrap Whānau* from here), the script written from the true events of
19 this year's Waitangi Day. In an outstanding doctoral research that focused on
20 Polynesia's significant (and highly contested) Māui narratives, Pouwhare (ibid.,)
21 says "[f]or some *iwi* (tribes) these pūrākau included *karakia* (ritual incantations),
22 *whakapapa* (genealogy), esoteric knowledge, history mythologies and
23 cosmologies" (*italics* his emphasis, p. xxiv), which exemplifies that the definition
24 of pūrākau as 'story' is limited. However, he also demonstrates that pūrākau have a
25 deeply spiritual, kai māro dimension too, particularly where the esoteric and
26 cosmological elements are concerned. Methodologically, pūrākau are two-fold
27 knowledges; te kura huna, the tacit, esoteric knowing, that is unseen (huna) yet
28 higher, deeper knowing. And te kura tūrama, the explicit (tūrama), physical and
29 visual evidence (Pouwhare, ibid.,). Pouwhare utilised pūrākau to bring together his
30 own academic research (te kura huna) and creative practice (te kura tūrama) to
31 support his understanding of practice-led research (Scrivener, 2000, 2002, 2004,
32 2012; Candy, et al., 2006; Barrett & Bolt, 2014) and the methodological design
33 appropriate to both components of the thesis.

34 Kōrero pakiwaitara is storytelling, too, and while they may carry codes and
35 moral lessons from our tīpuna, they can be considered less formal. There are
36 building blocks to the concept pakiwaitara, and here I present two: *paki*- yarns,
37 gossip or scandals that are memorable, and easily circulatable, +*waitara* difficult
38 tasks or pipedreams. Or *wai*- flow of waters or tears, or to ask who someone is (Ko
39 wai koe? Who is/are you), + *tara*, also gossip or rumours, and/or female genitalia.
40 The building blocks presented here both promise exciting and titillating kōrero, but
41 besides the distinct kinds of stories and storytelling, here kōrero pakiwaitara
42 privileges the generative, conversational, and co-constructed sharing of *experiential*
43 or *empirical* narratives. The emphasis here is the important shift from stories passed
44 down, or the inherited knowledge (tuku iho) from our tīpuna, to experiences retold,
45 across a kōrero ātea, by the character at the centre of the narrative. Significantly, the
46 characters upon whom these narratives pivot, tell their stories. In this article, and
47 across the wider project that it connects to, kōrero pakiwaitara are collected as screen

produced character vignettes. These are significant in a discussion about, in, and for te ao kapa haka for several reasons; but primarily because the testimonies are from critical lived experiences.

This creative, critical article develops a methodological component of a far wider Marsden funded project named *Kia Rite!: The ongoing evolution of screened competitive kapa haka*, dedicated to examining the ways in which screen production has influenced how we perform and the impacts on overall kapa haka aesthetic. Kōrero pakiwaitara are useful because much of the critical historical knowledge around screened kapa haka 1) doesn't (yet) appear in scholarly literature, 2) is kept out of mass-produced media for want of maintaining a particular kind of kapa haka narrative, or 3) hasn't been included in narratives across screen produced materials to date. Lastly, I am a kairangahau Māori and retired kaihaka; meanwhile, my professional/academic life has been dedicated to researching, teaching and leading in screen studies and screen arts for over 25 years. *Kia Rite!* is the contribution that exemplifies the at times tenuous marriage between my upbringing in performing arts and my academic training. The flood of 'kura kaupapa kids' and mainstream school rangatahi to whom kapa haka has been an activity of significance have arrived in our universities, and *Kia Rite!* is largely for them and the future of kapa haka research.

A kōrero pakiwaitara framework employed is central to Te Urupounamu, which in short is a screen production scaffolding designed for *Kia Rite!* It weaves together three distinctive strands (AHO I, II & III) which could function on their own, yet each are strengthened by the presence of each other. Importantly, the main objective of producing Te Urupounamu, which are the character vignettes produced about significant agitators in te ao kapa haka o te Mātaatua rohe, to draw audiences into the wider project. However, a longer documentary based on the kōrero pakiwaitara, based on significant practitioner conversations, rather than the retelling of established iwi narratives. Kōrero pakiwaitara is therefore a way of recognising those conversations as legitimate sites of Māori knowledge production while remaining connected to the broader narrative traditions from which pūrākau methodologies emerged.

Hanganga | A note on the structure of this article

I wrote this as a creative academic article and began it unlike most others; producing a kōrero pakiwaitara in an academic writing context is something I've done for years and consequently employed in my pedagogical practice for quite some time. Many of my students in the arts are creatives with academic bents, the inversion of the usual academic/creative bent format. Primarily, creative academic writing is a mechanism that encourages my students to self-reflect on how they arrive at critical thoughts about certain aspects of the media, and these support the foundations of creative making. *Wrap Whānau* activates the context of Te Urupounamu by setting the scene, introducing the characters, and elucidating the wider research milieu. Particularly important was providing context around UNCLE ROBERT, so readers might understand how he is effectively the glue that holds *Kia*

1 *Rite!* together. Most significant to this article though, was how I arrived at the
 2 realisation that Te Urupounamu – loosely translated as addressing important issues
 3 - is indeed well named, as each kōrero pakiwaitara collected thus far has addressed
 4 incredibly salient and critical issues that are to date under-the-radar. Potentially
 5 more relevant though, was the point JANI made to UNCLE ROBERT where he'd
 6 essentially destroyed any of the preconceived notions of what the most important
 7 research facets of competitive screened kapa haka are. *Wrap Whānau* is my
 8 authorial kōrero pakiwaitara, a script of my recollection of activities in shooting the
 9 footage for Te Urupounamu in Waiohau on Waitangi Day, 2026. My pakiwaitara
 10 filters into the remaining creative critical article, concentrating on kōrero
 11 pakiwaitara as a significant methodological component in the marriage between
 12 research and screen production.

15 **Ariā | Power & Visibility**

17 Visibility is not neutral. In the general media context, being visible is complex
 18 and hinges on dynamics of power. Scholars of Indigenous media note that televisual
 19 amplification reshapes audiences and the very form of cultural expression (Barclay,
 20 2005; Ginsburg, 2008). According to early screen materials where kapa haka was
 21 highlighted, performances were on marae, and notably in footage such as *Hui at*
 22 *Tikitiki* (1926) was part of wider event such as receiving dignitaries. Thus, kapa haka
 23 was not the central activity of focus. A century later, kapa haka is highly stylized, in
 24 that it has its own production structure, dedicated on-site broadcasting
 25 commitments; the festivals that house the kapa haka are highly efficient, well-
 26 resourced, and have unprecedented stallholder, volunteer and audience support. It
 27 took the entirety of competition's history to land in this moment where screened
 28 kapa haka builds and thrives. Screened kapa haka functions within complex media
 29 ecologies shaped by broadcasting logics, digital circulation, and popular
 30 consumption. Interweaving competition adds a consistent ratcheting up of
 31 standards, and with that an expectant audience.

32 Despite this transformation, critical scholarship on the intersections of kapa
 33 haka, broadcasting, judging, and leadership, particularly of the labour of wāhine in
 34 the kapa haka schemata remains unfathomably limited. Existing literature tends to
 35 privilege hauora (Pihama, et al (2015)), kapa haka's role or potential role in
 36 education (Whitinui, 2008, 2010; Bidois, 2011; Sakamoto, 2012) cultural
 37 descriptions or broad discussions of language revitalisation, leaving gaps in areas
 38 such as the media which circulates it and has grown it to both a deep local and global
 39 reach. Aside from commissioning a few studies in relation to hauora and wellbeing
 40 (Pihama, *ibid.*; Nikora et al, 2022; Rollo, 2016; Takoko, 2019; Wilson et al. 2025),
 41 Te Matatini's publications are primarily reports based on how well their
 42 organisation hosts events to evidentially forecast the coming kapa haka campaign
 43 cycle. To this point, they are yet to support critical development. Among many other
 44 salient topics *Kia Rite!* explores some critical topics that must be considered for the
 45 ongoing wellbeing particularly of those who are in their post-kapa haka lives
 46 (forthcoming, 2026).

There is a growing and morphing literature in kapa haka. However, this article responds to gaps in relation to screened kapa haka and the influence and impact of screen production on the way we perform our art. It is but a kick-start to potential research *and* budding, straight off the stage/screen potential scholars in the discipline. I deliberately foreground the kōrero pakiwaitara as the necessary critical theory needed to ensure the ongoing development of our beloved art, of which criticality is essential. It centres the voices of senior practitioners who have witnessed and shaped the evolution of kapa haka across multiple domains. In doing so, it argues that oral knowledge traditions must be recognised and underlined as a most significant intellectual contributions within Māori and Indigenous scholarship. Producing Te Urupounamu leaves no question about who these much-loved kaikōrero are and their quiet, yet strong contributions to kapa haka, and championing kapa haka, albeit it largely under-the-radar.

Pitopito kaikōrero | Snapshots of speakers

Joe Harawira

Main tribal links: Ngāti Awa, Tauranga Moana

Son of prolific waiata composer; leader of kapa haka from high school age; several times champion tātaki tane; kaiako; judge for nearly 20 years; professional storyteller; recognised patron of the arts.

Watch & React Clip: Ngāti Awa ki Rangitāiki, tutored by Mate Anini Harawira & Ben Mamaku, Aotearoa Traditional Māori Performing Arts Festival, Whangārei, poi item, *Auē te aroha* (written by Mate Anini Harawira, solo by Hine Kataraina Mamaku), 1988.

Relevance: mother was tutor; mother wrote the item; sister and cousins in performing team, most of whom have passed away.

Robert Pouwhare

Main tribal links: Ngāti Haka, Tūhoe

Mokopuna to - and raised by - tohunga, repository of ancient oral histories; native reo Māori speaker, activist, inaugural chairperson of the Te Reo Māori Society; interpreter and translator; TVNZ trained and award-winning screen producer and director; prolific composer; judge; academic.

Watch & React Clip: Irirangi Tiakiawa, tohunga, opening kōrero mihi whakatau/haka, inaugural screen produced Polynesian Festival, Avondale (Auckland), 1981.

Relevance: was a new producer on the production crew, a major agitator for TVNZ to record the competition.

Hine Kataraina Mamaku

Main tribal links: Ngāti Awa

Mentored in the 1960s by ‘Pūtauaki’ kapa haka group, her aunties and uncles; native reo Māori speaker; leader of kapa haka since intermediate school; recognised tātaki wahine; songstress; kaiako; judge/adjudicator; waka extraordinaire.

Watch & React Clip: Ngāti Awa ki Rangitāiki, tutored by Mate Anini Harawira & Ben Mamaku, Aotearoa Traditional Māori Performing Arts Festival, Whangārei, haka item, *Rūaumoko* (written by Ben Mamaku, led by Paul Tukere & Chubb Anderson) 1988.

Relevance: husband was a tutor; husband wrote the haka about the recent earthquakes centred in their region; Hine was tātaki wahine; had never seen this footage.

Kōrero Pakiwaitara | Te Urupounamu

Kōrero pakiwaitara is an epistemological practice that privileges relationality, memory, humour, embodied, and most importantly, empirical knowledge (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Ware et al., 2018; Fox, 2025; Kaitai-Mullane, 2026). Unlike structured interviews, kōrero pakiwaitara unfolds through whakawhanaungatanga, allowing participants to guide the flow and emphasis of discussion.

The brief conversations presented in this article were conducted during the mid-stage of a documentary research process called Te Urupounamu. I deliberately refer to it as this because the documentaristic materials provide a survey of empirical knowledge that is yet to appear in scholarly literatures. This three-tier Mātaatua kapa haka-centric project considers the important coordinates of how we’ve landed on the current cultural, societal and global state of competitive kapa haka. In terms of production, technologies and audience, it focuses on what kapa haka *has* been, what it is *now*, and considers what we *want* it to be. Meanwhile the study contemplates how kapa haka has been produced for screen and re-produced on stage *for* screen, and the distinctive evolution of competitive kapa haka because of the various technologies. It was identified that kaumātua are in best position to discuss and recall the changes and challenges that have taken place in te ao kapa in relation to the technology forced adaptations. This tier is entitled Te Urupounamu, one-on-one kōrero pakiwaitara with loyal, Mātaatua haka fiends who because of their seniority are best placed to remember the several changes to the artform, as the opening of the study’s lens on the region. Topically, Mātaatua is also known as the ‘rohe of death’ represented through an array of distinctive tū across Apanui, Te Whakatōhea, Ngāi Tūhoe, Ngāti Awa, Ngāi Tai and Tauranga Moana, both nuanced and stark distinctions. These pakiwaitara are quite simply kapa haka love letters to the rohe.

I hail predominantly from Ngāi Taiwhakāea, the largest hapū in the Ngāti Awa. The kaikōrero were recruited by way of my personal networks. Once their interest

was confirmed, I sent the appropriate ethics documentation² by text message, WhatsApp and email, and I took hardcopies to the shooting location. Although the majority had been in screen productions before, it was important to patiently unpack the goings on and provide as much detail for kaikōrero and their whānau as possible, as kaumātua are equally as busy as they are anxious to say/do the ‘wrong’ thing. By giving as much preparation lead-in as possible to dispel any potential fears or pressures ensures the mana of the kōrero is underlined, rather than what’s happening in the production process.

Ensuring kaikōrero could be best prepared for production enabled participants to speak freely and reflexively while still immersed in the central kaupapa. Notably, I reduced AHO from a tuapuku (four stranded cord) to a whiripapa (three stranded cord). Initially, the kōrero pakiwaitara were in a separate AHO IV, however after shooting the first two, the progression of the ‘Watch & React’ segment led quite naturally to the kōrero pakiwaitara. This was a really useful tweak for the remaining invited kaumātua, as I wanted to make sure the shooting script didn’t overwhelm them.

He whiripapa | Threads to the cord

AHO I is primarily the gear set-up segment; once completed, karakia and mihi, officially open and clear the production and kōrero ātea, and any pātai are addressed. This leads straight into the ‘Watch & React’ section designed to set the kapa haka tone and jog particular memories for the kaikōrero. Here, I present short, pre-edited clips of archival screened kapa haka that I’ve edited, which according to my research, the kaikōrero has a connection to. The clips in each case so far have drawn emotional responses, very happy and reminiscent. In my community research practice (Wilson, 2013, 2023, 2023a; Wilson et al, 2025; O. Wilson/Wilson, et al, 2022; Carter/Wilson, et al, 2024) I’ve asked our research whānau to bring an image, footage or a taonga that connects with the central kaupapa, which acts as a kōrero pakiwaitara starter³. In the case of Te Urupounamu, organizing and editing the appropriate footage for each kaikōrero required my active attention across their kapa haka life, and identifying items that would encourage memories from a particular time; it required only a small amount of technical skill with an editing suite. On average, shooting AHO I has taken approximately an hour.

AHO II is a ‘Quick Fire’ pātai segment where I ask kaikōrero a series of 16 questions that require a rapid reply such as name your top three Mātaatua kapa haka of all time? Maro or piupiu? Tūhoe tū or Apanui tū? And 4 are longer answer

²These were the Participant Information Sheet, Consent Form, Ngāi Tahu Acceptance Letter, and a brief Shooting Script.

³Ordinarily, this is a whakawhiti kōrero (exchange back-and-forth) method was designed for the kaikōrero to tell the story of the taonga, and the pakiwaitara associated with it would open the ātea to others in the group (optimal numbers are 5 – 7) to ask any pātai. However, in Te Urupounamu, it is one kaikōrero and the discussion is brought on by the screen clip and is expected to go into far more depth than a whakawhiti kōrero arrangement (Wilson, 2023b; Wilson et al., 2025).

questions. This passage was designed to draw viewers into the wider documentary by getting to know kaikōrero through the character vignette, acting as a kind of preview. It's important to 'give a hoot' about the character in the first moments, and these vignettes are where viewers can identify the level of knowledge, personality, taste, and importantly about the kapa haka nous of the kaikōrero. Despite AHO II's 'Quick Fire' design, and most took a maximum of two minutes, one kaikōrero took 16 minutes to complete it, having to provide context for their responses. Working with kaumātua in screen production, you can neither ask them to rush nor repeat themselves. If they want to explain their response, you must allow that space. There is only one shot; as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) wrote in her ethical research protocols, research participants are watching to see if the researcher is a good person or not (p. 120). There is a deeper responsibility here for kairangahau Māori, and in more proximity to this study, kairangahau o Te Mātaatua because I whakapapa to here (genealogically tie to this place); I grew up here, in Whakatāne; all my whānau, hapū and iwi are here. Once the research project ends, I return here. Herein lies the challenge, duty and pressure on kairangahau who often don't have the luxury of walking away from our research, because our connections and whānau are in them (Wilson, 2021). Frequently, kairangahau have a personal/familial interest in their study, thus investment into the chosen field is intense (ibid.), and straddles the personal and professional (Wilson, 2013, ibid.).

AHO III is the acapella waiata strand and closing. The Participant Information Sheet asks for kaikōrero to be prepared to waiata; and their voice becomes part of the sound design, as well as providing a tau or calm end to the production process and leads into a brief mihi whakakapi and karakia whakamutunga. Closing properly is the important last impression left with the kaikōrero and their whānau in the professional capacity, thus it significant. This strand tends to be less than ten minutes, as is pack-down of the small mobile production rig.

For my crew of two, there were two BTS (behind-the-scenes) sections which consisted of the two/three of us talking in the vehicle on route to the location. And lastly, drone shots, designed to provide geographical context for each kaikōrero all who are in different parts of the rohe.

Te Tāhuhu | Themes in macro-brief

An overarching theme across all three kaikōrero - which I'll explore in far more detail in other *Kia Rite!* publications and screen materials in the coming year - is that kapa haka is far more than performance. It is a living expression of whakapapa, tribal identity, language, memory, resistance, leadership, and intergenerational responsibility. They consistently return to the idea that kapa haka must remain grounded in whānau, whenua, whakapapa, and tū Māori, even as it evolves through competition, media, and changing generations. Due to space constraints, the brief kōrero pakiwaitara underlined here are simply one of several strong themes from each kaikōrero.

Hine

Hine repeatedly links kapa haka to memories of her parents, kuia, and longstanding whānau connections. Further when asked which kapa stood out to her, she remarked:

I always go back to [Derek] Lardelli [of Whangarā Mai Tawhiti] because he's so close me... he always asks me, Auntie can you come and bring your style to us?

Despite the discussion being about personal taste, her response was moreso in relation how the kapa has a style that is innovative and new, yet yearns to link with the traditional, as her style is. It also touches on the familiar and familial ties with her. Here, she turns to Professor Pou Temara's wife Hema who performed for Tū Te Maungaroa (a Te Whanganui a Tara-based Tūhoe group),

His wife always said to me, "When you come down [to Wellington] I want you to perform with us" and I said "I don't know your songs, what are you on?" and she said 'Moemoeā.'

The relevance of this waiata is Hine sang *Moemoeā* at the Aotearoa Traditional Māori Performing Arts Festival (1988) when she was invited back onto stage to sing a solo encore straight after their performance for Ngāti Awa ki Rangitāiki. She chose this as the encore waiata to represent the close relationship between Ngāti Awa and Tūhoe, and the Temara's clearly appreciated her humble gesture, by an honorary membership to Tū Te Maungaroa.

Exploring her taste and preferences in kapa haka seemed to circle back to who respected her. And when she speaks about the decade of kapa haka she appreciates the most, it's in the 1960s:

That was when I was a child. I was 13 years old, being with my mum and dad school. And now I'm 80, so how many years ago was that? [...] while I was with them. When I went back to school, I became the leader for the kapa haka at school. All because my mum, my dad and this kuia [Nanny Rori] was in that kapa haka.

The formative years were clearly a most significant epoch to impact her understanding and views about kapa haka.

Joe:

Joe's experience in the formative ages was similar. He described that any performance of the waiata *Auē Te Aroha* immediately transported him back to childhood:

Every time I hear that song it's like Mum... Mum's come back... so my first reaction was pupū ake te... te aroha. Mō taku whaea [welling up, the love. For my mother] the recollections of having, holding onto her dress when she was instructing Whakatāne Māori Youth Club, I travelled with the Whakatāne Māori Youth Club in my younger,

1 younger years. *Sending a team to the Koroneihana* [Māori Queen's annual coronation]

2 ...

3
4 Notably, and this is certainly palpable in his character vignette, Joe's eyes filled
5 with tears during the 'Watch & React' as he heard his cousin, Hine Kataraina,
6 singing his mother's waiata. Mate Anini was a woman who worked in and for the
7 iwi, and a gifted waiata composer, earning a QSM. Watching her tutor the local
8 teams was a catalyst for Joe's fifty year voluntary career in kapa haka, and a natural
9 move into leadership and professional storytelling. By the formative years, kapa
10 haka was normal in the household, and leadership when he attended Hato Tipene
11 (Saint Stephen's Māori Boys Boarding School) and Waikato University, was but an
12 expected progression. He continues in relation to the tikanga and values-based
13 aspects of judging kapa haka, which for him were formed early:

14
15 *I think when you're growing up with it in your formative years you don't understand,*
16 *people don't understand - and even I didn't understand at the time - that I was carrying*
17 *my people with me, because there's tikanga aspects involved, there's behavioural*
18 *aspects involved. There's a whole range of aspects that are involved in perpetuating*
19 *the stories, the history within those compositions and performance to the world, I*
20 *suppose.*

21
22 To emphasise formative experiences as tamariki that shaped their lifelong
23 commitment to kapa haka.

24 Whereas for Robert, a native reo speaker, and someone who was deliberately
25 groomed by his Waiōhau elders for leadership he recalled when his Te Reo Māori
26 Society Crew (Victoria University) first introduced the idea of him entering screen
27 producing in the 1970s:

28
29 *I was first with this because Te Reo Māori Society had become very political by this*
30 *stage. It was set up for us to practice our reo and whaikōrero, karanga, and waiata*
31 *and we used to meet at the tennis pavilion every Thursday night at Victoria University*
32 *and we'd all meet there and practice [...] so the idea of setting up this [Māori Media]*
33 *unit came about and there's those women from Te Reo Māori Society they said to me,*
34 *'you have to apply for this production course.' I said, 'I don't know anything about*
35 *television.' 'No, you gotta do it.' We didn't have a television in Waiōhau you know?*
36 *We didn't even have power! [For me] I can just press a button and the pictures come*
37 *on... [These ladies in the Society] gave me no option, but to apply.*

38
39 After a gruelling application, interview and testing process, Robert made it into
40 the TVNZ producer and director training course in Avalon, Wellington amongst a
41 group of four Māori. As the Te Reo Māori Society was politically agitating for
42 visibility and audibility of the language, Robert's clear role was to upskill in the
43 media. He asserted:

44
45 *Our mission is we gotta get radio and we gotta get a mea, television [...] I had to move*
46 *from Wellington up to Auckland in 1980, to set up the first programme 'Koha' with*
47 *Merata and them, so why, why I labour on this, is that we barely got to master the*
48 *technology...*

Learning the limits of the technology was an important historical facet particularly in terms of what was possible in the formative years of screened kapa haka. TVNZ produced New Zealand's longest running programme *Country Calendar* (1960 -) and *A Dog's Show* (1977 – 1992) over this time, so infrastructure and OB were indeed accessible and he personally agitated for the Polynesian Festival to be shot at the Avondale Racecourse. He spoke of the strict, and unjust parameters placed around Māori productions, the inherently direct racism of being referred to as 'The Chocolate Bickie Club', correlating with Merata Mita's (1996) reference to the early days as "bitter and demoralising" (p. 46) time at TVNZ while making *Koha*. Robert claimed:

In the year 1980 and 81, I'd been complaining to the Pākehā Head of the Department that I was becoming very angry that the horses got more time on television than the Māori. You know, the horse races? You know what I mean? And next minute, we're at the [Avondale] racecourse, and it's the Māoris [sic] at the racecourse [...] It was poetic justice you know what I mean? I just loved it; it was like utu and cool. Now we're gonna see these thoroughbreds on stage you know what I mean?

Politicking was rife at that post-New Zealand Film Commission Act (1978), where the government outlined what it stipulated as national materials of which Māori were an intrinsic part. This moment Robert brought to the fore exemplified that getting anything in ahurea Māori to screens was particularly time-consuming, challenging, yet indeed, possible. And as we see in today's kapa haka competition, worthwhile.

For Hine, Joe, and Robert, the formative years were spent in the presence of parents, kuia, tutors, activists, and community leaders who insisted on the normalisation of kapa haka, te reo Māori, and collective responsibility. The kōrero pakiwaitara, despite their brevity here, reveal that leadership, service, and cultural authority were not necessarily conscious goals; rather natural extensions of environments saturated with Māori knowledge, values, and participation.

Particularly striking is that each kaikōrero traces their huge, but under-the-radar contributions back to those early experiences; Hine's commitment to whānau relationships, iwi connections, and traditional style; Joe's lifelong service as a leader, tutor, judge, and a barometer on tikanga in the judging paradigm; and lastly, Robert's role in establishing pathways for Māori media, reo Māori advocacy, all built on a vision of the unknown, and of more for Māori; the thrivance. For all of the kaikōrero, calls to leadership originated in early life encounters with people who modelled excellence and cultural responsibility. The kōrero pakiwaitara also highlight the interconnected nature of kapa haka, broadcasting, language revitalisation, and political advocacy, none of which existed in isolation.

Ultimately, the narratives remind us that the true strength of kapa haka has never rested solely in performance and the screening of performance, but in its capacity to create belonging, transmit knowledge, and inspire future generations to carry the kaupapa forward. Kōrero pakiwaitara are significant and multilayered memories of the past, and enduring lessons about how ahurea Māori is nurtured, protected, and sustained.

=||'ōrero Whakakapi | Closing

Throughout Te Urupounamu so far, the power of kōrero pakiwaitara reveals what formal histories can miss. Simple questions rarely produced simple answers; effectively, they opened a doorway into memories, relationships, struggles, humour, and cultural knowledge that have largely remained undocumented. As I told UNCLE ROBERT, reflected in *Wrap Whānau* “You’ve ruined what I’d planned the project to do... but in the best of ways. Cos now this is new research.” Kōrero pakiwaitara are recollections and taonga. They carry the lived experiences that shaped kapa haka, te reo Māori, and our communities. Most importantly, they remind us that when we sit and listen to our kaumātua, we are not simply recording the past. We are safeguarding knowledge for the future. As Uncle Robert’s kōrero made abundantly clear: **no one knows this stuff**, precisely why they *need* to be told.

Glossary *te reo Māori* to English

<i>aho</i>	strand
<i>ahurea</i>	culture
<i>ātea</i>	space, without obstruction
<i>hauora</i>	wellbeing, health, the vitality of one’s breath
<i>hōhā</i>	annoying, vexing
<i>huna</i>	hidden, covered, secret
<i>kaiako</i>	teacher
<i>kaihaka</i>	kapa/haka performer
<i>kaikōrero</i>	speakers
<i>kai mārō</i>	esoteric lore, sacred rites or tribal histories, genealogies
<i>kairangahau</i>	researcher
<i>kapa haka</i>	Māori/tribal performing arts group
<i>karakia</i>	incantation
<i>kaumatua</i>	older man/older person
<i>kia rite</i>	<i>be/get ready! get prepared!</i>
<i>kōwhaiwhai</i>	scroll designs that follow the same pattern usually on rafters in meeting houses
<i>kōrero</i>	narratives, stories, to speak, speech

1	<i>Koroneihana</i>	annual coronation at Tūrangawaewae Marae, Waikato
2	<i>kuia</i>	older woman
3	<i>kura kaupapa</i>	an immersive Māori primary education system set up in
4		the 1980s
5	<i>Mātārae</i>	headland; but a contraction of Te Mātārae I Ōrehu, a
6		champion kapa haka team from Te Arawa Rotorua
7	<i>Mātaatua rohe</i>	a region in the Eastern Bay of Plenty, mai Ngā Kurī a
8		Whārei ki Tihirau, from Bowentown to the East Cape
9	<i>mea</i>	a ‘thing’, usually said when someone forgets a word
10	<i>Moemoeā</i>	the name of a song, loosely translated as ‘Dream’
11	<i>mokopuna</i>	grandchild or related children at the age of one’s
12		grandchildren
13	<i>pātai</i>	question
14	<i>pakiwaitara</i>	informal, conversational chats/stories
15	<i>pūrākau</i>	the limited definition is story
16	<i>rangatahi</i>	Māori youth
17	<i>reo</i>	language, voice
18	<i>rohe</i>	region, territory
19	<i>tamariki</i>	children
20	<i>tātaki tane/wahine</i>	male leader/female
21	<i>te ao</i>	the world
22	<i>tino rangatiratanga</i>	a design by Linda Munn et al., adopted as a Māori flag
23	<i>tīpuna</i>	ancestors
24	<i>tū</i>	stand or tyle in kapa haka
25	<i>Tū Te Maungaroa</i>	a Wellington-based Tūhoe kapa haka group
26	<i>tuku iho</i>	passed down, generally to do with knowledge
27	<i>tuapuku</i>	four stranded cord/plait
28	<i>tūrama</i>	explicit, unhidden, seen
29	<i>wahine /wāhine</i>	woman, feminine gender/qualities/women
30	<i>waiata</i>	song or to sing
31	<i>Waiohau</i>	a small settlement in the Eastern Bay of Plenty
32	<i>waka</i>	canoe, boat, vehicle
33	<i>whakakapi</i>	closing off

1	<i>whakamutunga</i>	finish
2	<i>whakapapa</i>	genealogical links
3	<i>whakawhanaungatanga</i>	making familial or familiarity connections
4	<i>whakawhiti kōrero</i>	exchange of talks, consultation, reciprocal speaking
5	<i>whānau</i>	limited definition is family
6	<i>Whangarā Mai Tawhiti</i>	a kapa haka team from the East Coast
7	<i>whenua</i>	land and umbilical cord
8	<i>whiripapa</i>	a three stranded plait or cord

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