



MOKO HAUORA



2025¹

“A VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF MY MĀORITANGA RECLAMATION”

Moko Hauora is a tā moko wānanga that is held annually at Takutai o te Tītī Marae in Ōraka (Colac Bay, Southland). This year our wānanga was held over the 26th - 30th of June 2025 to align with Matariki. This kaupapa is delivered by Kōrari, the Māori Public Health team at Ngā Kete Mātauranga Pounamu Charitable Trust and is a key deliverable of our suicide prevention mahi through *Kia Piki Te Ora - all ages suicide prevention for Māori*.



“I CAN JUST BE MĀORI AND IT’S SHOWN ON MY SKIN”

On Thursday 26th June, just before sunset, 45 whānau gathered outside Takutai o te Tītī Marae ready to enter into the sacred space of tā moko for the weekend. For Kōrari, our annual tā moko wānanga is deeply rooted in whakapapa and whenua.

Moko Hauora is a space for whānau Māori to reconnect with and strengthen their cultural identity through being on the marae, practicing and participation in our taonga tuku iho such as tā moko and taonga pūoro, te reo me ona tikanga, waiata and kōrero. Our wharenui, *Te Wharemoana*, was filled with emotion and wairua as whānau came to receive moko or support their loved ones.

- 25 whānau kaihihihi received tā moko
- Over 150 whānau entered the marae to tautoko their whānau kaihihihi
- 6 wāhine received moko kauae on the first day, during a dedicated mokopapa space



INSIGHTS

100%

of whānau kaihihihi felt a stronger sense of connection to te ao Māori

100%

of whānau kaihihihi felt proud to be Māori

100%

of whānau kaihihihi felt spiritually strengthened from receiving tā moko

“I FELT CONNECTED TO OUR ANCESTORS WHO HAD BEEN THERE BEFORE US”

Hoki ki tō kāinga – Returning Home

This wānanga encouraged registered members of Ōraka Aparima to come home to Ōraka and receive tā moko and for some whānau, this wānanga was a return home and their first time on their marae. Whānau kaiwhiwhi traveled from Tamaki Mākaurau, Pōneke, Ōtepōti, Tāhuna, Waihōpai, Te Tai Poutini and Ahitereira to receive moko.

“To wear tā moko was a privilege I never thought I would have and I feel an immense sense of gratitude to be able to receive it at the marae at Ōraka which is such a special and meaningful place for my whanau.”

“To be welcomed back onto my whenua (the first in over 4 generations) and get moko in the whare with my cousin and her daughter is something the english language can't convey.”

“To be able to be in our marae on our whenua meant that this was extra right and a taonga for myself and my whanau”



“I LOVE USING MOKO AS A TOHU TO SYMBOLISE MOMENTS OF MY JOURNEY”

Manawā Tītī – The Strength of Whānau

Moko has the ability to create a connection to their whakapapa and become a physical representation of their life experiences. For whānau, their decision to wear moko is deeply personal, for some receiving moko was a long time coming to reclaim their Māori ancestry or from observing their whānau receive moko. The wānanga space of Moko Hauora created a safe and supportive environment for whānau to share their stories of challenge and resilience. For some, it was about navigating the barriers to receiving moko kauae in a colonised world; for others, moko marked a personal milestone or served as a tribute to the passing of a loved one.



"My grandad passed away at the end of last year so I wanted something about him. Talking out loud about my grandad. It helped to share stories about him and then see and feel like he was there in the marae."

"My tā moko journey has been a long-term plan that started when my brother and sister received theirs. It took a bit of time and a few challenges to overcome".

"Coming to the marae was a huge deal for me, after a beautiful welcome it was a life changing moment to see my Great Nana on the wall with her whanau and understand how instrumental she was in the marae and culture in Aparima."



Ringa Whao Renata Karena

"I have been a survivor of domestic violence, cancer and many other illnesses, my resilience game is strong but sometimes it's hard to find that strength. after seeing my cousin get hers I thought long and hard about what that would mean to me. When I received the email that the opportunity for tā moko was happening at my marae that I had not even visited I knew it was time to try and get it done."

"I feel more focused and committed to contributing positively to my culture and community. To te ao Māori as a whole. I want to make it my whole world."

"The most powerful moment was the realisation that it was exactly like the moko I saw in my dreams. The reclamation of a part of my identity, the coming home."

“FOR ME IT BRINGS OUR WHAKAPAPA TOGETHER. RECLAIMING WHAT HAS BEEN LOST”

Te Rongoā o te Moko – Healing Intergenerational Trauma

When asked what wearing moko meant to them, many spoke strongly about reclaiming and visibly representing their Māoritanga. Tā moko was seen as a powerful form of healing—addressing intergenerational mamae and strengthening cultural identity, pride, and reconnection. This was especially meaningful for fair-skinned whānau, for whom wearing moko affirmed their identity in a world that often questioned it.

“I felt the hand of my tīpuna as each line was revealed, it was an emotional letting go of the mamae, the intergenerational trauma.”

Ringa Whao Jay Davis



WHĀNAU VOICES

"I see it as a beautiful way of connecting to our culture. As someone who does not 'look Māori' It is a permanent reminder of my whakapapa connections. I think about the generations of my whanau and hapu who didn't get to wear moko because of shame through colonisation and I am proud to be able to wear it and normalise it for future generations."

"I am fair skin so it's not always obvious to others that I am Māori. While my driving force to get my moko was not about ensuring that people make no mistake that I am, it's definitely a huge benefit. I feel like I don't have to explain myself. I can just be Māori and it's shown on my skin. I'm so proud of my culture and I want everyone to know that. I wear it all day, every day, and I love that."

"Being surrounded by my whānau, supporting my aunty to receive her kauae was truly magical and made me overwhelmingly proud and feel ready for my tā moko the following day."



“SEEING MORE MOKO KANOHI BRINGS ME JOY, AND PEACE TO MY HEART. IT IS AN EXPRESSION OF CULTURAL PRIDE”

Te Mana o ngā Wāhine - The Power of Women

For the six wāhine who received moko kauae as a part of Moko Hauora this year, they each brought their own wairua and approach to the marae. Alongside waiata and tears there was taonga pūoro and moteatea, kapa haka, jam sessions, whānau singalongs and Spotify playlists. While each wāhine had traveled their own journey they all arrived at the same place with the same intention - to bring to the surface the markings of their tūpuna and move forward into te ao.

This was more than a wānanga—it was a homecoming, a healing space, and a visual expression of identity, pride, and whānau resilience. The stories shared, the moko worn, and the strength shown by all involved are a powerful testament to the continued reclamation and revitalisation of being Māori in a modern world.

“I’ve wanted my moko kauae for over a decade... I felt like I wanted to overcome ideas of ‘enoughness’ and decided that I am enough as I am.”



NGĀ MIHI MAIOHA

This kaupapa would not have been possible without the skill, commitment, and mātauranga of our Ringa Whāo, the hands who carry the art, spirit, and whakapapa of tā moko. We are grateful for your care of our whānau and your contribution in bringing our stories to life through moko.

Jay Davis (Te Āti Haunui-a-Pāpārangi)

Renata Karena (Kāi Tahu, Ngāti Kahungunu)

Jacob Tautari (Ngāti Hine, Kāti Māmoe, Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāi Te Rangi).

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou mō tō mātauranga, tō ringa wairua, me tō kaha ki te whakamana i tēnei haerenga mā te ta moko.

A massive mihi to our wider whānau, Whaea Steph Blair, Tanz and the girls from Mīharo, Sean, Matua Alex, Pania and Ray and their tamariki and to everyone who brought their aroha and supported the kaupapa. Ngā mihi nui kia koutou katoa.



