

Te Arawa Pride: strengthening wellness and Te Arawatanga through sport and traditional activity.

Overview

Te Arawa: Empowered through Toiora (wellness) and Māori development.

*Hei oranga mo te tangata matapoporetia.
A person's wellbeing is paramount*

*Herea te weri kia kiki, kia kore e matata.
Keep kin ties close upon the cloak of the people*

Te Papa Tākaro o Te Arawa (TPTOTA) is a Māori provider responsible for sport, physical activity, recreation, education, culture and health. TPTOTA was established from strong philosophical foundations—which continually shape and inspire a far-reaching initiative called Te Arawa Pride. Through sport and traditional physical activity, Te Arawa Pride is engaging Te Arawa whānau, hapū, iwi and marae, strengthening tribal identity, tikanga (customs) and cohesiveness.

Te Arawa Pride is multi-layered. The initiative touches different Te Arawa people in different ways, with the universal highlight a series of Hapū Challenges, building up to the first Te Arawa Games to be held in almost eight years, in 2011. The Challenges and Games weave together health, language, tikanga and whānau. Diverse sports and activities range from waka ama to surfcasting, ki-o-rahi to table tennis. There's involvement of all ages; in many activities, young and old participate side-by-side in the same team.

Te Arawa Pride—including the Hapū Challenges and Games—establishes a platform to bring people together and meaningfully celebrate Te Arawatanga. It's a holistic and uniquely Māori approach to the promotion of wellbeing and health.

Background & partners

Te Arawa is a confederation of iwi and hapū and the tribal region stretches from Maketu to Tongariro, including Matata.

Te Papa Tākaro o Te Arawa (TPTOTA) was mandated and registered as a charitable trust in 1993 and is headquartered in Rotorua. Their web site states: *TPTOTA strives to increase participation in healthy lifestyles, promote and encourage iwi development and grow leadership opportunities.*

TPTOTA general manager Paora Te Hurihanganui explains: "Our real focus is what we call our WHIMMs—whānau, hapū, iwi, marae and Māori. We talk of *Te Arawa Toiora*, *Te Arawa Hauora*, *Te Arawa Tangata*: Te Arawa wellness, health and people. Our kaupapa or philosophical driving force is to put our people and their health at the forefront of everything we do. Te Arawa pride is a by product of that."

The idea for the Hapū Challenges and Games grew from the original Te Arawa Games, which ran for about 10 years and were last held in a major way in 2002. "Numerous comments from Māori communities, whānau and hapū have resonated for their re-establishment. We realised the games would help to bring our tribe back together," Paora recalls. The smaller Hapū Challenges have been deliberately created as stepping-stones to the main games—building involvement, skills, cohesion and of course excitement and expectation.

Te Arawa Pride is funded through Active Communities He Oranga Poutama investment. Supporting investment is provided by Te Puni Kōkiri, Toi Te Ora Public Health Service, and Health Rotorua PHO.

Fundamental to the whole process, marae and hapū share leadership and organisational responsibilities (see below). Under He Oranga Poutama investment, Te Arawa Games and Hapū Challenges will run until June 2012. After that, the intention is that hapū and marae will facilitate and guide the games with the support of TPTOTA .

The initiative

The Hapū Challenges began in December 2009 and now run year-round. They have included: Te Arawa Pride Whānau Tri Relay; a Hoe Waka Challenge held at Taheke Marae on the shores of Lake Rotoiti; the Tangoroa Games held at various sites; and the Matariki Challenge. Most challenges are between seven hapū or marae and generally attract 500-700 participants. The Te Arawa Games will be held in Rotorua over Easter weekend (April) 2011. The target is 8000 participants from over 50 Te Arawa marae.

While every event is unique there's a similar structure for each big day (or two days). Things kick off with a powhiri, with everyone welcomed onto the host marae in traditional fashion. Then everyone registers and the events roll out. Activities are run consecutively so that people can participate in more than one sport, if they so choose.

For each challenge and the games, hapū and marae choose the range of sports, and the level of competitiveness: they lead the way, not TPTOTA. All events have a strong whānau vibe: family and participation comes first. "In most sports [in the challenges and games] the criteria for teams is to have one member under 13 years old, and one over 50," explains Maylene Meroiti, TPTOTA's Community Development Coordinator.

Ki-o-rahi is one of the big sports. This is ideal because people of all skill levels and ages can play on the field at the same time—including youngsters and elderly. There's also an historic context: ki-o-rahi was played in Aotearoa in pre-European times. It was taken by the Māori battalion to Europe, where it remains popular.

The day is punctuated with opportunities for everyone to experience fun activities like Salsa-cise, Zumba, and 'give it a go' activities. These activities are aimed at those who find the prospect of getting involved in the actual challenges somewhat daunting. It gives them a chance to try a feature sport without any pressure to be good at it. Often people end up wanting to get more involved once the whakama (embarrassment) barrier is removed.

"At the challenges there are no trophies as such. The reward is the mana of representing one's whānau, hapū, iwi and marae. For the WHIMMs who do well in the challenges there is something really special about being recognised by your own. The winning teams are announced at the prize giving and everyone leaves the event on a high note," says Paora.

The aim is to get activities over by 3-5pm, with the marae available for overnight stays if required. During the day, a number of whānau/hapū members are asked to do an evaluation, detailing what they like—and what could be improved. This supports ongoing programme enhancement.

Continuing the stepping-stones following the Te Arawa Games, TPTOTA aims to establish a tripartite games, involving Te Arawa, Waikato Tainui, and Mataatua (Whakatane). "We want to have a national type competition," forecasts Paora.

Steering group

Te Arawa Pride Roopu (TAPR) will consist of WHIMMs, Te Arawa/Maori Koeke/Corporations, Te Papa Tākaro O Te Arawa, Te Arawa Pride investors (financial and inkind). TAPR has ultimate responsibility for providing advice, support and information—assisting the priorities and sustainability of Te Arawa Pride. Project delivery and decision-making will be guided by TAPR discussions, representing the voice of WHIMMs, the Te Arawa Pride Coordinator and TPTOTA.

- **Iwi delegates**

TPTOTA invites involvement from delegates, to represent their whānau, hapū, iwi or marae in Te Arawa Pride. Delegates help to shape project initiatives with advice and practical input. They meet a number of times in the lead-up to each challenge and are kept up-to-date through email contact and meetings at least once a month.

“Delegates lead the way. [TPTOTA] is only there to help run things smoothly,” notes Paora. “There’s a lot of involvement from the delegates. Different people will turn up for different events. We get multi-level involvement—one time a ki-o-rahi expert might come along [representing a marae or hapū], the next time a waka ama expert. We’ve been surprised at just how much involvement there has been,” he reckons.

- **Nationwide communication**

While the Hapū Challenges are by nature fairly local, Te Arawa Games will see participation from all over the country. As well as traditional whānau channels and local media, TPTOTA is communicating updates and information via its web site, an email database and Facebook.

Effort is being made to communicate the underlying vision and goals of the Challenges and Games. Some participants enjoying the Challenges have seen them as simple sports and activity days, without realising the underlying social and physical benefits. It’s an ongoing education process, but important. Full understanding of the vision and goals will promote long term commitment, and therefore sustainability of the initiative.

- **Volunteering, coaching and mentoring**

Volunteers are sourced from TPTOTA staff, extended whānau and other Māori health providers. “In the build-up to the Te Arawa Games it is crucial that we amass a pool of volunteers from within our WHIMM communities. We are heavily reliant on volunteer support in the same way that marae are reliant on the whānau, hapū and iwi they serve to keep the marae operational,” explains Paora.

“TPTOTA is determined to support the development of sport and traditional physical activity, as a vehicle to strengthening tribal identity, tikanga [customs] and cohesiveness. One of our priorities is to deliver workshops and training, in particular for traditional activities such as ki-o-rahi and mau rakau—which are not widely considered in mainstream sporting circles but will be integral to the Te Arawa Games.”

“TPTOTA is also becoming more involved as the ‘go to’ organisation for Māori communities wanting to participate in sports of all kinds. We can channel people into the networks they need to access. A formalised coaching development approach will be taken in the latter half of the project,” says Paora.

Benefits

- **Strengthen culture and Identity.** Te Arawa Pride is helping to enhance cultural and tribal identity and awareness, by re-engaging and re-affirming Te Arawa individuals with their families, extended families, sub tribes and tribes.
- **Develop tribal infrastructure.** Te Arawa Pride encourages whānau, hapū, iwi, and marae to strategise, grow and learn together.
- **Strengthen whānau.** Te Arawa Pride brings people together and builds trust and inclusiveness. It provides a platform to strengthen positive family dynamics in positive ways.
- **Develop community sport.** The initiative provides quality sport and physical recreation opportunities, pathways and learning. There are opportunities for whanau, hapū, iwi, and marae to development relevant, sustainable sporting events and activities.
- **Nurture leadership.** Te Arawa Pride opens new opportunities for skill and leadership development. Expertise is gained from local sporting clubs and Te Arawa sporting role models, through learning and interaction opportunities.

- **Promote health and wellbeing.** The Hapū Challenges and Te Arawa Games facilitate access and participation in sport and physical recreation. There's a wealth of promotion of holistic wellbeing through customs, practices, Te Reo Māori, and positive values.
- **Applaud volunteers and coaches.** There's plenty of energy put into growing the culture of whānaungatanga (participation) by supporting and acknowledging volunteers and the huge contributions they make. Coaching development and training initiatives aim to increase skilled, active coaches across the sporting codes of the Hapū Challenges and Te Arawa Games.
- **Foster economic development.** The initiative is helping to build organisational and leadership skills within local communities. The Te Arawa and tripartite Games especially have the potential to stimulate tourism and economic growth. Above all, positive, well-connected people and communities are more pro-active in seeking opportunity.

Looking ahead

“Hopefully the Te Arawa Games will be the first of many,” says Paora. “It would be great to see all of Te Arawa (Mai Maketu ki Tongariro) being involved in Te Arawa Pride by 2012. Whānau enjoying positive activities and trying something new contributes to their holistic wellbeing. Creating opportunities and pathways for Te Arawa to perform competitively on a national and international scale is also a dream across all sporting codes — a national iwi competition is definitely a major goal.

“It is important for Te Arawa development that all opportunities contribute to collective iwi wellbeing. Sport and recreation is such a strong vehicle to provide a safe and non-threatening environment for Te Arawa to contribute positively.”

Contacts and Links

To find out more about Te Arawa Pride, please contact Aneta Morgan by calling 07 348 3377 or emailing aneta@papatakaro.org.nz. The initiative is featured online at the TPTOTA web site: <http://www.papatakaro.org.nz>