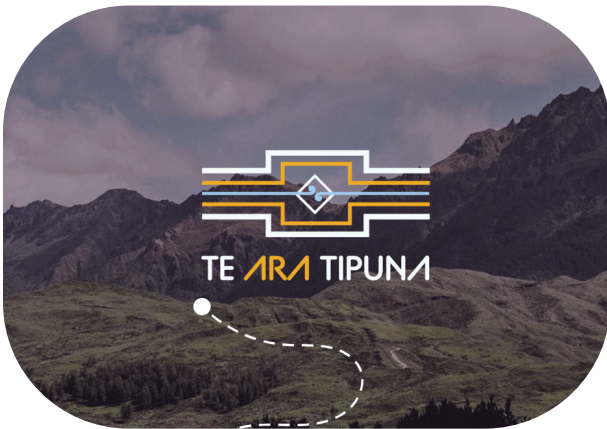


Te Ara Tipuna: A whakapapa experience in our built environment

Hoki atu ki tōu maunga kia purea ai e koe ki ngā hau o Tāwhirimātea
Return to your mountain to be cleansed by the winds of Tāwhirimātea

By Ranui Maxwell



A heritage trail that stretches throughout Te Tairāwhiti from Gisborne to Ōpōtiki that promises community connectedness, whakapapa, and sustainable infrastructure to the region has begun.

Te Ara Tipuna is the proposed network of ara (paths) and accessways, connecting existing tracks, old and new, bringing to life unused trails, defunct paper roads, and encroachments, along with new mapping to create a continuous journey from one end of Te Tairāwhiti to the other, through the iwi rohe or alternatively tribal lands of Ngāti Porou, Te Whanau-ā-Apanui, Ngai Tai ki Torere and Te Whakatōhea. That's 657 kilometers, travelled over 26 days through 22 communities and Marae.

The trail has drawn inspiration from the Camino Frances a pilgrimage starting in the south of France, over the Pyrenees mountains and across the north of Spain to Santiago de Compostela, and is being realised in Te Tairāwhiti as a multi-layered whakapapa experience.

Healthy Families East Cape's Rautaki Māori, Jade Kameta, is excited at the opportunity for Healthy Families to be involved and support the long-term project.

Healthy soil is crucial for our environment. Soil provides the optimal environment for plants to grow, it ensures quality access to water and nutrients required for the kai that we eat, and it sustains the health of the land we live on.

The prototype in action has involved collecting rau pokepoke (leaf mould), rainwater and all the leftover parts of the fish in the plastic bucket. The outcome after the mixture had been fermenting for several months, Mamera and Mark began the process of filtration, meaning you only come away with a liquid. They applied the mixture that they had watered down to their maara, noting the ratios.

It was a privilege to observe some of the engagement hui and listen to what the community had to say in response to the comprehensive Te Ara Tipuna presentation provided by the project leads. After hearing their risks, concerns, and recommendations, and reassurance that more whanau, landowners and community engagement will be held and are essential for the success of Te Ara Tipuna" says Jade.

Te Ara Tipuna, meaning the way of our forebearers, is a strategy to evoke a whakapapa experience, connecting to the whenua of our tipuna, while allowing our senses to experience the taiao, their whakapapa connections to the whenua and the many pūrakau (stories about the whenua and our tipuna).

The trail proposal also speaks of its power and significance in providing a platform for whānau to connect to their whenua, whakapapa and pūrakau. There is also potential to support whānau, landowners, hapu to start up small businesses, including courier services, accommodation, kai outlets, guided trail services etc. This is one way that whānau can elevate their wellbeing.

The beginning of 2023 saw Healthy Families East Cape receive an invite from Rau Tipu Rau Ora (Tairāwhiti Regional Leadership Group) Tuara (Secretariat) to partner with them to complete the social impact report required as part of the resource consent application that the Te Ara Tipuna Project team was submitting to the Gisborne District Council, the Opotiki District Council and EBOP Regional Council. The social impact assessment report is one of a number of reports that were prepared for inclusion in the resource consent application, including cultural impact, environmental impact, archeologically impact and sport and recreation impact assessments.

Over the past eighteen months, Te Tairāwhiti and Eastern Bay of Plenty have endured some of the most challenging severe weather events ever experienced, resulting in substantial damage to essential infrastructure, roads, bridges, waterways, whenua and housing.

Te Ara Tipuna is an opportunity to build, maintain and supplement current infrastructure through the development of walking, cycling and horse trekking accessways for communities and whānau, thereby increasing the modes of active transport available to them and enhancing their wellbeing.

Healthy Families East Cape believe that the impact of Te Ara Tipuna extends to more than the revitalisation of whakapapa and mātauranga, with the potential for active transport opportunities and health prevention ever present.

The distinct tourism experience that Te Ara Tipuna offers, in the heart of Te Tairāwhiti, is a walking cycling and horse trekking experience across isolated, rugged and rarely traversed terrain, access to stunning beaches and bays, that will be enhanced by the unique pūrākau of our rohe, which will be front and center and told in our way, by our own people.

“Te Ara Tipuna will not only provide an opportunity for iwi members to connect with their whenua and their whānau but also strengthens the whakapapa and geographic connections between Tairāwhiti and Eastern Bay of Plenty iwi and reinforces the mahi ngatahi that is already occurring amongst iwi, in relation to the Raukumara, housing and hauora, said Rau Tipu Rau Ora – Director, Amohaere Houkamau.

The unfolding of this long-term project aligns deeply with the transformational outcomes that the East Cape team is seeking for our communities. Applying our particular health prevention lens, Te Ara Tipuna has the capacity to contribute to positive and intergenerational health benefits of our iwi, hapu and whānau. Healthy Families East Cape, attended various whānau and landowner engagement hui throughout the region and can attest to the conversations around the potential impact on revitalising our matauranga across Te Tairāwhiti.

“During the hui, a number of cultural opportunities were discussed, including restoring lwi, hapū, and marae connectivity as well as amplifying kōrero tuku iho, tikanga, and kaitiakitanga across the entirety of Te Tairāwhiti. As well as other opportunities. The community were open and eager for more hui, with the need to include more whānau, particularly the landowners and key people,” says Jade.



Building on the lens of health prevention are the forethoughts for regeneration and revitalisation of cultural wealth and capability for uri (descendents) of Ngāti Porou, Te Whānau A Apanui, Te Whakatōhea and Ngai Tai. The project also promotes the opportunity to have our indigenous identity reflected and celebrated in our unique natural and built environments.

The cultural legacies that the wider project teams have been able to evoke have created a great base for storytelling experience through the eyes, ears and footsteps of our tipuna and our people.

The project seeks to build and maintain the infrastructure of accessways for communities and whānau, allowing for improved and accessible modes of active transport (cyclists, horse trekkers), local commuters, visitors, and the whole of journey hikers, bikers and riders.

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