

advance

Māori Innovation

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Carvings from Ngākau Māhaki (the whareniui) of Unitec's Te Noho Kotahitanga Marae, pictured on the cover and through the magazine, were created by tohunga whakairo Lionel Grant.

Editor Ngaire Molyneux

Writers Mary de Ruyter, Jess Perenara

Contributors Jenny Lee-Morgan, Rau Hoskins,
Matt Crawford Photography

Design Tineswari Maruthamuthu

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Phone 0800 10 95 10
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Tackling homelessness through marae-led care

A Unitec-University of Waikato research team is examining Te Puea Memorial Marae's kaupapa Māori-led work with vulnerable whānau, to show how marae can be an integral part of urban housing solutions.

HOUSING

In the winter of 2016, Te Puea Memorial Marae (TPMM) voluntarily opened their doors to vulnerable whānau seeking emergency housing. Continuing the legacy of Te Puea Hērangi¹, the marae responded to the call of homeless whānau in Auckland, helping them to access food, housing, employment and financial assistance – at a time when the previous government had refused to acknowledge homelessness as a 'crisis' or even a serious issue.

The small team at TPMM not only made the reality of homelessness visible by caring for 181 people (of all ethnicities and cultural backgrounds) that winter through a kaupapa Māori-led response, they also disrupted the dominant narrative by naming the housing situation in Auckland as a 'crisis'².

Unitec's Rau Hoskins (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Hau) and University of Waikato associate professor Jenny Lee-Morgan (Waikato-Tainui, Ngāti Mahuta) are the co-principal investigators leading a two-year National Science Challenge research project entitled *Te Manaaki o te Marae: The role of the marae in the Auckland housing crisis*. Hoskins and Lee-Morgan bring together a wealth of knowledge and experience about Māori housing, architecture and design, and kaupapa Māori research (research done according to Māori principles and ideology).

They also disrupted the dominant narrative by naming the housing situation in Auckland as a 'crisis'.

¹ Prominent Waikato-Tainui leader and Māori social advocate of the early 20th century; niece of the Māori King Mahuta.

² Collins, S. (2016, June 1). *Marae calls for army to help with homeless crisis*. NZ Herald. Retrieved from http://www.nzherald.co.nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11648844



The wider research team outside Te Puea Memorial Marae: from left, Allister Young, Rau Hoskins, Dr Mohi Rua, Wayne Knox (rear), Lena Henry (blue top), Miriam Moore (rear), Ella Henry (black dress), Rihi Te Nana (orange scarf), Kat Poi, Jenny Lee-Morgan, Trent Hohaia, Reuben Smiler and Matt Roskruge.

Both say they appreciate the privilege and opportunity to conduct research at the marae with the support of the board of trustees, the chair and director of Te Manaaki Tāngata Hurimoana Dennis (Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Kahungūngu, Rongowhaakata – and a Master of Applied Practice student at Unitec), the programme team and whānau.

they have a strong background in kaupapa Māori research and working with vulnerable whānau. The wider research team includes people with expertise in statistics, planning, finance, urban Māori wellbeing and economics, ensuring the research findings are well grounded and capable of directly influencing local and central government Māori housing policy.

"Our team are acutely aware that marae have always been the epicentres of whānau, hapū, iwi and urban Māori communities."

Other key members of the research team are associate principal investigator Dr Mohi Rua (Ngāi Tūhoe, Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Whakaue), of the University of Waikato, and Unitec research officer Rihi Te Nana (Ngāti Hāua, Ngāpuhi);

"As kaupapa Māori researchers, our team are acutely aware that marae have always been the epicentres of whānau, hapū, iwi and urban Māori communities, and have always provided shelter for those in need. Marae provide a critical connection to our culture, whenua (ancestral land) and the wider natural environment, and continue to be foundational to our tūrangawaewae (cultural security) and sense of identity," says Lee-Morgan.



View from Māngere Mountain: the research team is examining the physical environment in which the marae operates, as well as the historical, cultural, political and social contexts.

"There are currently a range of significant marae-led housing solutions, of which TPPM is one."

HOUSING

"We recognise that TPPM is enacting an age-old tradition of manaakitanga (holistic hospitality), while demonstrating that marae can also play a significant role in urban emergency and transitional housing solutions today. Given there are more than 70 marae in the Auckland region³, as an established feature of the Tāmaki Makaurau cultural landscape, there are currently a range of significant marae-led housing solutions, of which TPPM is one."

Along with students from the Te Hononga centre of Unitec's Architecture pathway, Hoskins and co-lecturer Carin Wilson are leading the design of urban marae Māori housing solutions to support the Te Manaaki o te Marae research. They are developing three separate marae housing typologies based on medium density, detached and hostel models, and all informed by direct engagement with TPPM and three other Tāmaki partner marae.

While the focus of this research project is the role of marae, in particular TPPM (who have

continued their revamped Manaaki Tāngata programme in 2017 and 2018), in providing emergency and transitional housing, this is only one dimension of *Te Manaaki o te Marae*. The broader research context concerns marae-led housing interventions premised on the ability of marae to extend their cultural reach into communities.

The transformational potential of marae for Māori is heightened as the Auckland housing crisis continues to escalate, and the number of Māori living in the region is expected to grow. Worse still, Māori are disproportionately affected; for example, 53% of rough sleepers in Auckland are Māori.⁴ This research seeks to provide information that will strengthen marae (through mana whenua, taura here and mataawaka⁵) to engage in the housing crisis for urban Māori in culturally consistent and sustainable ways.

³ Independent Māori Statutory Board. This number also includes institutional marae, ie. at schools and universities.

⁴ Auckland City Mission 2016 (<https://www.aucklandcitymission.org.nz/2016/06/08/200-counting-central-aucklands-rough-sleeper-population-reaches-record-high/>)


⁵ Mana whenua: power from the land; taura here: urban kinship groups; mataawaka: tribe, clan.



Key members of the research team: from left, Rau Hoskins, Jenny Lee-Morgan, Rihi Te Nana, Dr Mohi Rua.

"Our hypothesis is that marae have the capacity to assume central roles in the provision of critical, culturally based housing initiatives that enhance Māori whānau lives in the city, and inform a new Aotearoa New Zealand housing continuum. While the holistic nature of 'te manaaki o te marae' is not new, the agility and success of marae to respond to 'homeless' whānau in the current Tāmaki housing context is an innovative Indigenous intervention," says Hoskins.

"It is fundamentally different because it is underscored by an interconnected set of Māori values, beliefs and practices. We posit that marae-led housing interventions bring added value as a social and cultural network, and therefore a source of resilience in the face of the crisis. This research will be foundational in realising the potential of marae to contribute to long-term Māori housing solutions."

Team members are still in the information-gathering phase of the research. They will begin distilling initial research findings in August, and complete their research outputs for dissemination by the end of June 2019. 

"Marae-led housing interventions bring added value as a social and cultural network, and therefore a source of resilience in the face of the crisis."

contact

Rihi Te Nana
rtenana@unitec.ac.nz