



Sustained Excellence
in Tertiary Teaching
Kaupapa Māori Category

Dr Awanui Te Huia

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"Our students come to us with a very diverse range of experiences. My role is to create space for all of those experiences to be valued and recognised."

Awanui's teaching and research, guided by her psychology background and underpinned by Kaupapa Māori methods, is driven by a strong desire to understand her students' learning processes. Her research (published in journals nationally and internationally) is strongly focused on the experiences of both Māori and Pākehā learners of te reo Māori and their varying learning needs and challenges. She uses the understandings she gains from research to adapt teaching practices to fit with what learners find useful for Māori language acquisition.

As a Kaupapa Māori educator, she thinks critically about the environments she is consciously a part of creating and ensures that *manaakitanga* and *aroha ki te tangata* are central pillars of her teaching practice. She is encouraged by the way her *tauirā* (students) are able to overcome challenges, such as the accumulative impacts of colonisation, to reach their educational, cultural, and linguistic goals. Part of her role involves assisting Māori students to negate feelings of guilt and shame that they feel for not knowing more about their cultural heritage prior to enrolment.

"Practising Kaupapa Māori requires that I invite students to regain control over areas of their academic, social and cultural lives to create a narrative that is aligned with their goals."

Awanui says her own and other Māori research indicates that many Māori students enrolling in te reo Māori classes want to avoid showing incompetence at learning their own language and culture, particularly in tikanga marae-related courses. She encourages them to think critically about how such colonially influenced circumstances came to be and seeks to understand the socio-political and economic constraints her students may be experiencing, without limiting her expectations of them. Awanui uses models of tuakana-teina to bridge the gap between students with high levels of cultural/linguistic exposure and those who may be closer to the beginning of their learning journeys. Students bring with them multiple skills and, when these resources are shared, positive benefits can occur.

The papers Awanui teaches and co-ordinates have a strong focus on mātauranga Māori and mātauranga ā iwi. *Te Tū Marae*, a course she has co-coordinated and team taught for 5 years with Dr Mike Ross, involves supporting students to understand tikanga related to marae, hui ora and hui tangata mate and the impending challenges that marae are facing. It enables students to explore how tikanga are employed within their own marae, as well as learning how they are embedded in the university marae's practices. Awanui's research project with Tohu Māoritanga found that some students needed more support to deal with the new learnings

about colonisation and this has been incorporated into her teaching. The research has been included in the co-authored book *Huakina mai te tatau o tōu whare: Opening University Doors to Indigenous Students* (Hall, Keane-Tuala, Ross, Te Huia, 2018).

In Te Tohu Māoritanga, Awanui uses a number of practical activities, such as role-play and facilitated discussions, so that students develop confidence in their skills. Drawing out humour and wit that students bring with them to the learning environment are also used to communicate complex discussion points. Students are given experiential learning opportunities, such as active engagement in karanga, and are supported in this. Awanui gives individual coaching, allowing students to practise in a culturally safe space, taking into account their different levels of confidence. At a postgraduate level, she encourages students to reconnect with their *mātauranga-ā-iwi* by teaching Māori research methods, which also allows her to combine research knowledge with teaching.

Most of the courses Awanui teaches are at the foundation level as te reo Māori is both her teaching specialty area and her research focus. Since she began teaching te reo Māori, the university has seen almost a 100% increase in enrolments, from 120 to 220 students enrolled at the introductory level. She has adapted technologies to suit these classes, and focuses on interpersonal relationship development through a range of student-led interaction activities. Because there are limited resources for teaching specific grammatical structures in Māori, she supervised the development and refinement of targeted audio language resources, coupled with listening comprehension questions and an answer booklet. Students can remotely access Quizlet revision tasks for every lesson, which has improved their ability to retain new vocabulary and sentence structures. Awanui was awarded a Learning and Teaching Grant to evaluate the effectiveness of the Quizlet tools between 2019-2020. She also finds using mātauranga Māori through waiata has been an effective teaching tool. In response to feedback from students who found language assessments overwhelming, Awanui introduced the option of students creating short films.

Awanui believes *whanaungatanga* and feeling a sense of connection with other students and teaching staff helps give *tauirā* a sense of belonging at university and in their courses and that holding noho marae encourages students to foster close relationships with one another.

As a collaborative academic, Awanui has been an external post-graduate essay examiner for Margaret Mutu's course MĀORI 732 Rangatiratanga since 2018 and also invites other teachers to view her teaching through the *Open Classrooms* series. As a PhD graduate of psychology, she is often called upon by the School of Psychology to support their clinical teaching programme, teach in their social and Indigenous psychology courses, and liaise with management about their Māori academic recruitment. She has also co-supervised two psychology based PhDs.

Awanui was a co-coordinator of MAI ki Pōneke, a Māori and Indigenous PhD support programme between 2013 and 2016 and continues to support MAI. Since 2015, she has supervised 11 post-graduate students, from honours through to PhD, as well as providing summer internships for five students. In 2016, she was awarded an Early Career Teaching Award. Not only does Awanui give substantial support to post-graduate students, but she provides high levels of pastoral care to second-chance learners. Her impressive list of publications, written in both English and te reo, demonstrate the impact of her novel teaching approaches.

"Creating mana enhancing environments that are fostered through manaakitanga helps learners to progress to higher levels of Māori language proficiency."
