



Sustained Excellence
in Tertiary Teaching
Kaupapa Māori Category

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“I made the choice to learn te reo Māori. I love it and will always be a learner. I love teaching the history of our land and seeing a spark in those I teach from connecting with language, culture and identity.”

Kay-Lee's father grew up in a small town on the East Coast of the North Island and was the first Māori Fire Fighter in Ōtautahi (Christchurch), a great achievement. He and his whānau had a great affinity with the land but, like many others at the time, his parents refrained from speaking Māori in the home. Kay-Lee grew up hearing the odd Māori word or phrase (generally pertaining to kai), but te reo Māori was not a normalised language. Kay-Lee's mother, whose whakapapa descends from the bottom of Te Waipounamu (South Island), has whakapapa Māori, but she was not raised with cultural knowledge, nor was this talked about in her upbringing. Both of Kay-Lee's parents taught her values and ways of being that inspire her as a kaiako today. Her mother's tautoko, akiaki and high expectations gave Kay-Lee the confidence to continue her learning as well as a passion for transferring this love for learning to her trainee kaiako. Her father taught her the importance of whānau and to work hard.

“My goal is to empower pre-service kaiako with the tools to inspire our tamariki to speak our ancestral language and understand that our Indigenous knowledge is precious.”

After completing her undergraduate degree, Kay-Lee taught at a range of kura, including a rural, bilingual school. She loved the tamariki and knew their whānau, interests and passions. Kay-Lee made the difficult decision to leave the primary school classroom to achieve the bigger goal of returning to tertiary teaching, with the hope of inspiring future kaiako to demonstrate a genuine heart for te ao Māori and normalise te reo Māori me ōna tikanga in their practice. Now, as a lecturer in the College of Education, Health and Human Development at the University of Canterbury, she shares her experiences in Māori education, fostering a passion to grow knowledge within te ao Māori, which relates to the whakataukī Poipoia te kākano kia puāwai, “nurture the seed and it will blossom”.

In 2010, Kay-Lee taught in the School of Māori and Indigenous Studies at the University of Canterbury. She then returned to the primary school setting as a teacher and deputy principal. In 2015, she completed a Master of Education degree and resumed tertiary teaching. During her time within the School of Teacher Education she has taught in a number of programmes and courses, interacting with approximately 2,000 students, teaching either face-to-face or online. She says Māori often seek places and spaces in which they feel a certain wairua, where they feel comfortable and can seek guidance, and this is what she aims to provide for her ākonga. She wants non-Māori teacher trainees to consider how to create culturally rich spaces for the tamariki they will teach, with her there to tautoko.

Each year, Kay-Lee helps to facilitate numerous noho marae for her Bachelor of Teaching and Learning and Post Graduate programmes. She organises activities that help to build students' confidence and

understanding of te reo Māori me ōna tikanga whilst fostering a sense of whanaungatanga. This year she has co-facilitated three noho marae, benefiting more than 80 students. She believes the teaching and enactment of tikanga Māori and te reo Māori in the right space and place cannot be replicated with the same authenticity in the classroom. She says noho marae is a transformative experience where a majority of her students are well out of their comfort zones. To help ease their minds, she often shares personal stories and experiences within te ao Māori. She also reminds them that they are all on the same waka, all tuākana or tēina in different situations and roles and that we are all learning.

Kay-Lee uses innovative techniques to engage learners in communicative language learning experiences. When teaching te reo Māori courses, she says it is essential to intertwine aspects of culture, tradition and mātauranga Māori. By doing this, she immerses her students into a truly integrated learning experience. She embeds different traditional Māori ways of knowing, such as the Maramataka (Māori lunar calendar), in her programme and shows her ākonga how they might use traditional pedagogies in their teaching. This is an area of interest for Kay-Lee and, she admits, she is on her own journey of learning in regard to traditional ways of knowing, being, and doing.

Kay-Lee's approach to leadership is based upon 'he tangata māhaki' and incorporates a sense of humbleness, humility, service, knowledge sharing and tautoko. It is about first getting to know people and their whakapapa and then understanding what is important to them and their whānau. Her role includes setting high expectations and aiding goal setting. Kay-Lee herself has a strong work ethic and has high expectations of her teaching, which includes ongoing reflective practice.

Around 10% of kaiako in Aotearoa are Māori, and an even lower percentage are school principals with whakapapa Māori, and Kay-Lee is aware of the need to equip teachers in the New Zealand education system with the ability to embed Māori worldview, te reo Māori, culture and traditions, in the curriculum. This year, she led the development of a suite of pilot courses in collaboration with a Ngāi Tahu Rūnanga partner Mātauraka Mahaanui to strengthen te reo Māori me ōna tikanga competence and confidence of qualified kaiako. "It is a privilege to teach and learn alongside mana whenua." The courses are delivered in night classes, wānanga and noho marae. All assessments reflect a practical element with transferrable skills for the classroom.

Kay-Lee mentions that there are further challenges in regards to teaching te reo Māori and Māori concepts by distance. In an online medium, whanaungatanga and manaakitanga of your ākonga is just as important as kanohi ki te kanohi. You have to be creative, innovative and engage the students through real-time Zoom hui, Zoom recordings, guided PowerPoint slides to support Zoom sessions, Learn, online quizzes, Education Perfect (a language learning tool), podcasts, videos and websites.

In 2017, Kay-Lee completed a Bachelor of Māori Performing Arts. As a former kaihaka for Te Pao a Tahu, she enhanced her understanding of kapa haka and also deepened her language proficiency. She started doctoral study in 2017 and is in her fourth year, exploring the stories of teachers in Level 2 Māori immersion programmes. She has won teaching honours, including University of Canterbury, College of Education, Health and Human Development Teaching Excellence Awards in 2017 and 2019. She sits on the New Zealand Association for Research in Education Council and was on the organising committee for their 2019 Conference. At the 2019 IndiGEN Conference, Kay-Lee co-presented a paper on a bilingual pathway at the University of Canterbury and co-facilitated interactive activities emphasizing the importance of sharing Indigenous knowledge. Outside of university, Kay-Lee sits on the Board of Trustees/Te Tautarinui o Matariki for Te Pā o Rākahautū, a 21st century learning village catering for early childhood to tertiary education, this is the pā her three tamariki, Wi, Cina-Rose and Hawaiki attend. They are her taonga, her 'why'.

"All of our tamariki, mokopuna are a taonga, as kaiako we need to keep this at the forefront of our minds. We (as parents) entrust our most precious taonga with kaiako and this is a message I try to portray to our pre-service teachers. In supporting our teacher trainees I recognise that all students come with their own kete of knowledge. I aim to add to that kete, and they to mine."
