

## Te Kura Kaupapa Maori o Te Kotuku



A side profile of the school and its entrance

**Project:** Te Kura Kaupapa Maori o Te Kotuku  
**Publication date:** 2010  
**Client:** Ministry of Education  
**Architect:** Brewer Davidson  
**Client Representative:** White Associates  
**Governance Facilitator:** Hohepa Campbell  
**Contractor:** Naylor Love Construction Ltd  
**Region:** Auckland  
**Sector:** Education/Public Building  
**Final Contract Value:** \$7.9m  
**Tender:** Design/Build, Guaranteed Maximum Price  
**Construction timescale:** November 2008 to April 2010  
**Form of Contract:** NZS 3915

**In the latest addition to the Pathfinder Programme, we go back to school to understand the lessons learned by the project team on the Te Kura Kaupapa Maori o Te Kotuku and to understand how they exceeded the expectations of the school whanau in the construction of the new school.**

### Background

This \$7.9m project procured by the Ministry of Education is a total immersion Maori School for students year 1-8 located in Ranui, West Auckland. The school currently has capacity for 100 students with an infrastructure for planned growth to cater for up to 150 children. Since the school opened it has attracted over 20 additional children to the new facility.

It was important for the client that the project team appointed had a track record of delivering schools and had a commitment to local community engagement. A critical aspect to the project for the Ministry of Education was the project team's capability to engage with the wider school whanau and to understand and implement their views and requirements into the design and delivery of the school.

This Design and Build project was tendered on a Guaranteed Maximum Price basis and was successfully bid for by a consortium led by Naylor Love Construction with the project starting in January 2009 with outline planning and commencement on site in March 2009. White Associates was engaged as client representative to provide budget and financial advice to the Ministry.

The key to the success of this project was the architect and construction company's interpretation of the whanau's requirements in terms of how they understood their culture, how

the whanau wanted to teach their children and showed a commitment and a willingness to learn what was required to create and deliver a total immersion school environment.

### Challenges Faced

#### Whanau Engagement

The critical factor to enabling success on this project was how the construction team used their experience of working on previous projects together in developing their approach to managing client and community engagement. A critical part to this was developing relationships both within the Ministry of Education and the school whanau. To assist in this process Hohepa Campbell acted as a facilitator between the project team and the whanau to make sure that all parties had an understanding of the whanau's requirements.

#### Understanding Maori Culture & Values

Whilst the team had worked together on previous school projects, this was the first Kura project that they had been involved in. As a result, considerable upskilling was required for the architect, Brewer Davidson, and Naylor Love with regards to the cultural aspects of the project. The role of the facilitator, Hohepa Campbell, was critical in managing the relationship between the whanau and the project team.

The project team needed to understand the Maori values in their community and in translating how they wanted to teach their children into the finished school. They had to immerse themselves in the Maori culture to understand the implications from cultural and educational perspectives. The process of stakeholder engagement that the project team employed ultimately was the equivalent to developing a “super detailed brief” for the whanau. By understanding the cultural aspects for the whanau enabled the project team to create a new layer of meaning to the design of the project that satisfied both the expectations of the whanau and the client, the Ministry of Education.



*CAD screenshot of the final design*

### Managing Multiple Stakeholders

One of the key challenges on this project was the management of multiple stakeholder groups in ensuring that the project delivered on the functional and cultural issues for this new school. A key issue is the role of the occasional client and management of their expectations. The Ministry of Education have a comprehensive stakeholder engagement programme in place that enables the construction team to focus on the design and delivery of the new school.

### Successful Outcomes

#### Delivering Value through the Client Brief

At an early stage of the project, Hohepa Campbell, led an exercise with the local whanau to develop a vision and set of values for the new kura. Part of this process was to analyse Ministry of Education data on high performing kura from the last 20 years and to then explore what had contributed to creating best in class educational performance in these kura. This process identified that a common aspect of high-performing kura had been an open plan learning environment rather than single cell learning accommodation.

The open plan concept also bought into the whanau’s vision of ‘it takes a village to raise a child’ and also strengthened teacher accountability, responsibility and transparency. This set of vision and values sharpened the design throughout the project and ultimately engaged the whanau throughout the construction phase of the project, for example if developing the artwork, and in ultimately maintaining the life force of the building.

### Experience from Previous School Projects

The architect, Peter Davidson of Brewer Davidson, and Naylor Love had previously worked together on other school projects which had a dual benefit for the project team. Having worked on previous education projects meant that they understood the Ministry of Education requirements and procedures in tendering for the contract. Additionally, the contract was let in a similar way to the previous projects so the team had already built relationships and trust on earlier projects that they could then carry forward into the kura project.

The Ministry of Education included community engagement in the non-price attributes of their contractor selection criteria and attended design meetings along with members of the school whanau. The Ministry also played a key role in managing stakeholder expectation and in enabling the whanau to reach the right result in terms of the teaching methodology that they wanted for their children and delivering the right environment and asset to enable this.

### Engaging the Whanau

Six key people from the whanau were fully engaged throughout the design and construction phase of the project. Annie Day, the Naylor Love Project Manager, stated “The whanau were involved throughout the project and it was good to have that level of engagement as the project team could communicate and manage expectations accordingly.” An example of the project team’s approach to maintaining relationships with the local whanau was in providing them with their own personalised protective gear to enable them to attend site visits and meetings throughout the construction phase of the project.

Regular meetings created an open and trusted environment for honest discussion that enabled the project team to learn what was important for the community and therefore where to focus their efforts. Meetings were used to air all matters regarding the project and occasionally could focus on just one specific aspect of Maori culture rather than any construction related activity. These meetings became a critical part of the build process and enabled a deeper level of understanding of the Maori culture and in managing expectations of the whanau.

Once the design had been signed off by the client there continued to be ongoing engagement with the Ministry and the whanau to discuss and incorporate new ideas into the project. This approach meant that the project team could continue to manage client and community expectations and resulted in very few client changes.

### Participation & Willingness to Learn

On previous projects the team would typically meet with the school board a several times throughout the duration of the project. For the Kura the project team had already had ten meetings with the whanau prior to the contract being signed such was the intent of the project team to understand the requirements of the whanau, in engaging the local community and translating the Maori cultural requirements into reality for this project.



*An overhead plan of the site*

As part of this process Peter Davidson, the architect on the project, visited an immersion school in Palmerston North with Hohepa Campbell which enabled essential bonding and demonstrated the effort the team were willing to go to get the design of the new school right. This put the team in a position where they could apply best practice from existing schools and employ this learning into their project.

Having this level of intense engagement added layers of detail into the design that included the use of artworks in certain parts of the building and incorporating essential aspects into the school that had ancestral and symbolic meaning for the whanau and for the staff of the school.

Finally, the savings created by the project team were invested back into the school to cover the costs of blinds, storage shelves, amphitheatre seating, windows at a children's eye level, sound proof ceiling tiles and other services into the building.

#### **Passive Sustainability**

Designed to Green Star level 5, systems were designed into the school with natural ventilation, good use of insulation, installation of heat pump with superior energy performance, low energy light fitting, low water use fittings and use of natural light was used extensively throughout the built asset.



*The entrance to the school and grounds*

## **Summary of Benefits**

### **Get your documentation ready**

Make sure that you have the relevant paperwork, manuals and instructions ready at handover.

### **Communication and community engagement**

Getting communication and the right level of community engagement was arguably the critical issue to the success of this project. It was integral to the process in engaging the key stakeholders from the whanau, the Ministry of Education, Hohepa Campbell and the project team. It was key to enabling all parties to express their opinion and in having the design and completed building accepted by the local whanau.

### **Cultural and educational learning**

The intensive effort required to understand and then immerse themselves into the Maori culture that then enabled them to utilise this understanding to translate it into the design and construction of the building. A new layer of detail and understanding was required and without it the project could have potentially failed.

### **Sustainable passive outcomes**

The building still achieved a high Green Star rating with the use of sustainable design features and systems rather than more expensive active systems. Ultimately, this will reduce the operating costs of the facility over its lifetime.

### **Post PC engagement**

Keep the project team together until all aspects of project have been finalised post practical completion.

## **Key Lessons & Possible Improvements**

To develop and deliver a facility that would meet the Maori educational requirements and also the whanau's community activities the project team immersed themselves in the local community. The board wanted an open learning environment and created one single class room that would accommodate up to 90 people. The whanau did not want a traditional classroom environment as they wanted to maintain the sense of community with children of different ages as well as teachers of differing experiences mixing together in a single room environment. The school also has a community style kitchen, whanau dining room, library and shared showers and toilet facilities.

The kura was delivered on budget with a slightly extended programme but still on time for the official opening ceremony which the Maori King attended along with other Government dignitaries. It is now acknowledged by many as the best-in-class kura facility in New Zealand.

Key lessons to take forward from this project have been identified as:

- **Maintain client and stakeholder engagement:** This enables accurate delivery of the brief and management of client and community expectations. It also enabled the project team to focus on the delivery of the project.
- **Get your documentation up to date and ready:** This was a critical learning of this project to have all the handover documentation ready for the client.
- **Keep the project team together during defects resolution:** Another key learning from this project was to make sure that key project personnel are engaged with the client post-handover. Too often our sector is under pressure to re-allocate personnel to different projects.

### Key principles for repetition

- Community & stakeholder engagement to manage expectations
- Immersing the team in the culture of the community
- Use site visits to similar facilities
- Utilising best practice and experience from previous projects
- Keep the project team together post-PC
- The approach to passive sustainability – it becomes a part of the way we build

### Conclusion

The community engagement approach adopted on this project and the commitment to understanding the cultural aspects of the whanau has enabled the project team to fully immerse themselves in the cultural and educational requirements needed to design, develop and deliver the class leading Maori immersion school in New Zealand. Anne Bowmar at the Ministry of Education, commented *“This is a superb outcome for this high profile project. We are delighted with the completed kura as it meets our educational requirements and the project team has worked hard with the local Whanau to deliver a facility that meets their cultural, educational and community requirements. It has provided us with plenty of learning to take forward into our next immersion school project.”*



*The main classroom area*



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