



RESULTS

Encouraging experienced kaumātua to help their younger peers through life's challenges proved successful and cost-effective.

A total of 180 kaumātua were recruited to the intervention with 121 completing the study. Participants completed assessments of health and mana motuhake (autonomy and self-actualisation) measures consistent with Māori worldviews prior to and following the peer education intervention. Additionally, qualitative evaluations were given including open-ended questions and participation in five focus groups.

Positive improvements occurred after the teina had finished their conversations with tuakana. Of particular note were the statistically significant intervention effects upon teina's 'tribal identity', and 'trouble paying bills', Professor Hokowhitu noted. Tuakana also proved to be effective communicators, whose abilities were rated highly by both teina and independent assessors.

Teaching appears to be good for their health and wellbeing, too: Kaumātua reported an improved sense of purpose after finishing the programme. When benchmarked against the conventional threshold of cost-effectiveness, this intervention was "definitely cost-effective", Professor Hokowhitu reported.

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The findings show that kaumātua strengths and knowledge can be successfully deployed to improve health and social outcomes of their peers, Professor Hokowhitu concluded.

OUTCOMES

This research did not occur in a sterile, white lab. Embedded in the heart of the community, the researchers worked hand-in-hand with a local service provider — Hamilton's Rauawaawa Kaumātua Charitable Trust.

The cooperation provided the project traction and momentum with the community and participants. Like other Ageing Well projects, it demonstrated the importance of working in partnership with the people you strive to help.

Upon completion of this project, Ageing Well National Science Challenge awarded a new grant of \$2.5 million to the team to expand the scope and reach of the project. Titled Kaumātua Mana Motuhake Pōi, the new research will involve up to 350 Māori kaumātua from across Aotearoa. In addition to the tuakana-teina peer intervention, the project will also trial an inter-generational model for increasing physical activity and cultural knowledge exchange (mātauranga), including te reo Māori.

“ Professor Hokowhitu wanted to show that older people can and do contribute to our society. In the process, he aspired to reframe how we think about ageing. Ageing Well awarded the research team a \$2.5 million grant to expand the scope and reach of the project. Titled 'Kaumātua Mana Motuhake Pōi' the new research will involve up to 350 Māori Kaumātua from across Aotearoa. ”

CONCLUSION

Professor Hokowhitu's project is a welcome tonic in the dismissive age of "OK, Boomer". It offers a clarion call to policymakers and New Zealanders at large: older Kiwis do and can contribute to our society.

Drawing on the strengths of older kaumātua — their experience, wisdom and eagerness to contribute — the younger peers were successfully shepherded through some of the most difficult moments of an older person's life.

And everybody wins in this model: the kaumātua peer educators gained a greater sense of purpose; the younger peers learned ways to cope with the slings and arrows of life; and both groups' health and wellbeing soared.

The bottom line is that this project has created a cost-effective, community-led, kaumātua-administered health intervention improving the lives of older Māori.

GLOSSARY

Kaumātua: Māori over age 55.

Tuakana: Experienced kaumātua. For the study, these were people who had undergone significant life transition.

Teina: younger peers of kaumātua. For the study, these were people experiencing a significant life transition.