

TPP enables local iwi to connect with past through technology

Virtual and augmented reality technologies are providing a link to the past for 30 young West Coasters these school holidays.

Tai Poutini Polytechnic (TPP) has established a partnership between local iwi and South Island based social enterprise Fabriko to explore the possibilities of new technologies as a platform for storytelling.

TPP Chief Executive Alex Cabrera says the partnership is focused on connecting younger Maori in the West Coast community with future-focused technologies.

TPP Director of Maori Education Dave Mason says the rapid development of technology is causing a rethink away from our reliance on traditional industries.

“At Tai Poutini Polytechnic, we’re eager to support the emergence of this new thinking, which is why we are partnering with local hapū, Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Waewae, and Fabriko Creative to create a programme called Koneki, or ‘Here’,” he says.

Fusion Rangatahi Wānanga is a school holiday programme designed for primary and intermediate aged children that whakapapa to Ngāi Tahu. It is operated under the guidance of Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Waewae, and has been going for over 10 years now, originally started by Rūnanga Member Chantal Tumahai.

Rūnanga Member Nelly Mason and her team have organised this latest programme, introducing Koneki to Fusion. She believes that to connect the next generation with their ancestors, they need to be engaged in a way that is meaningful for them.

“For tamariki/rangatahi these days, it’s all about technology. If we want their kaupapa to be relevant for them, we need to use modern channels to connect. Koneki will make our tamariki hungry for more Korero, or stories, from their Whare Tupuna, and have it come to life using virtual and augmented reality. This is going to help it really sink in for the tamariki, rather than using a verbal korero,” she says.

Carl Pavletich, of Fabriko Creative, facilitates Koneki through the organisation’s mandate as a social enterprise.

“At Fabriko, we’re driven to support smaller towns and regions to become more locally productive, through the development of technologies and digital files which enable ‘weightless exports’,” he says.

TPP Chief Executive Alex Cabrera agrees. “This partnership with TPP and Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Waewae is really exciting. It enables the use of cross reality technology to connect and grow communities, and the potential here is enormous. I believe that these sort of technology focused programmes will help West Coasters turn isolation into an advantage by combining emerging technologies with social innovation,” he says.

Koneki will run at the end of the Fusion Wananga Week, 26-27 April at Arahura Marae.

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