WORLD INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION

introducing He Pā Harakeke

He Pā Harakeke: supporting transformative educational change for thriving communities.

He Pā Harakeke (a flax plantation) is a metaphor for a holistic, relational, Te Tiriti-honouring approach to decolonising education. Each part of the flax plant — from the pakiaka (roots), rito (shoots), awhi rito (parent leaves), as well as external elements like the wind and pollinators — are interdependent. No element thrives in isolation; all growth depends on active reciprocity, protection and nurturing.

Similarly, education must be designed as a living system — its elements seen as interconnected and dynamic — where learners enjoy strong relationships, a sense of belonging, are (re)connected to the natural world and given opportunity to revitalise Māori knowledge and their own identities as Kaitiaki (Environmental Caregivers).

This poster presentation includes feedback from three secondary schools who have piloted the use of He Pā Harakeke as an educational planning process alongside mana whenua. In one programme, students are actively engaged in kaitiakitanga (conservation work) alongside iwi (tribes), embedding learning in real-world cultural and ecological restoration. Early evidence from stakeholders affirm the process's multiple applications and its transformative potential.

He Pā Harakeke seeks to reclaim general stream education as a site of Indigenous flourishing — where rangatahi (youth) engage in kaupapa that reconnects, revitalises and regenerates, upheld within the living, breathing systems that will sustain them into the future.



Kārena is a School Teacher and Tertiary Lecturer specialising in Te Tiriti o Waitangi. With a Master in Contemporary Education and a degree in Māori and Pacific Development, Kārena works to advance equitable educational outcomes for Rangatahi Māori in settler colonial education.

Kārena has extensive experience in educational governance, has worked in curriculum writing groups, and is an executive member of the NZ History Teachers' Association.

A vocal advocate for culturally sustaining and relational pedagogies, Kārena co-leads the implementation of a process she developed in her school to support a kaupapa Māori in integrated Science and Social Sciences pilot programme based on *He Pā Harakeke*.