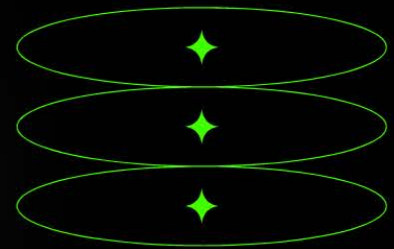


# THE MEKE INITIATIVE



# REPORT 2023





Te Manga Kaupapa Mātauranga, Ahurea, Hauora  
Faculty of Education, Humanities and Health Science

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## *The M.E.K.E. Initiative*

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***“Positive wellbeing by promoting the unity in community”***

***Waiho i te toipoto, kua i te toiroa***

This project was funded by a Health Research Council of New Zealand

2020 COVID-19 Equity Response Community Action Grant

## Final Report

## 2023

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## Rāranga Kupu Māori: Glossary of Māori Terms

Aotearoa	Used as the Māori name for New Zealand. Often translated as 'land of the long white cloud'
Hauora	A mode of wellbeing encompassing the interconnected aspects of social, spiritual, mental, and emotional, and physical health
Hinengaro	Mind, thought, intellect, consciousness, awareness
Hui	Focus group, meeting
Kaumātua	A person of status within the whānau, older person
Kaupapa	The principle of collective philosophy
Koha	Gift
Kotahitanga	Unity
Kuia	Female elder
Mana	Power and prestige
Manaakitanga	Hospitality, support, kindness, caring for others
Marae	Māori meeting grounds
Mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge, wisdom, understanding
Maunga	Mountain
Mauri	Life force in people, animals, environmental elements, and objects
Mauri ora	Cultural identity, belonging
Meke	means to strike (with the fist). Also, the shortened form of the colloquial phrase tu meke meaning “too much” or awesome
Ngā mihi	Introductions/greetings
Pākehā	People who are not of Māori descent
Papatūānuku	The earth mother
Pūrākau	Māori storytelling
Rangatahi	Younger generation, youth, adolescent, an emerging leader
Tamariki	Children
Taonga	Gifts
Tautoko	Support
Te ao Māori	The Māori world
Te hinengaro	To the deep mind
Te reo Māori	The Māori language
Te Tiriti o Waitangi	The Treaty of Waitangi
Te Whare Tapa Whā	A model of Māori health and wellbeing that uses the analogy of a whare with four walls that was developed by Sir Mason Durie in 1984
Tikanga	Correct procedure, custom
Tinana	Body, physical being
Tino rangatiratanga	Self-determination
Tīpuna/ Tūpuna	Ancestors
Tuakana-teina	Elders brother, sister or cousin/youngest brother, sister, or cousin
Waiora	Total health
Wairua	Spirit, soul
Wananga	Discussion
Wero	Challenge
Whakapapa	Genealogy
Whakawhanaungatanga	Process of establishing relationships, relationship, kinship, sense of family connection
Whānau	Family
Whanaungatanga	A sense of family connection and belonging, extended family
Whare	House, building
Whenua	Land, place, roots, placenta



## 1. Background

The community-PATU-Eastern Institute of Technology (EIT) research partnership has been pivotal in the evolution of the M.E.K.E Initiative. PATU Aotearoa™ (PATU) provides a sustainable healthy lifestyle intervention in the form of group exercise within local communities, particularly for Māori. Research with the PATU whānau (PATU staff and clients) led to the development of the Meke Meter™, a tool to capture an individual's perception of their health and wellbeing that is not dependent on a high level of literacy. The Meke Meter™ was developed to help PATU whānau assess their own health and wellbeing holistically so that they could use the information to set goals. The cost of leasing a gym and lack of appropriate space in high deprivation communities, such as Maraenui, led to the birth of the Domynis - a mobile container gym or POD. PATU, the Meke Meter™ and the Domynis are all social enterprises developed by Māori, for Māori and these were brought together to create the M.E.K.E (Move, Engage, Konnect, Evolve) Initiative that takes health and fitness to the people (Figure 1). The research presented in this report used a kaupapa Māori approach to investigate whether the placement of the POD in the Maraenui community centre increased whānau engagement in PATU health and fitness activities and captured the community's perception of the impact of this initiative on wellbeing. How the research helped to inform local policies and ongoing support to facilitate the successful and sustainable implementation of the M.E.K.E. initiative in Maraenui and for it to be rolled out into other high deprivation communities was also explored.



Figure 1. The M.E.K.E. Initiative - Bringing together three social enterprises to serve the community in Maraenui.

## 2. Introduction

Health and social inequities increase the vulnerability of Māori to the negative wellbeing impacts of a crisis such as the pandemic (Wiki, 2021). Māori adults have higher rates of most health conditions (most notably diabetes, high blood pressure and asthma), and both Māori adults and children are almost twice as likely to be obese as non-Māori (Ministry of Health [MOH], 2019). Along with the detrimental health outcomes, long-term conditions, regardless of ethnicity, can impact an individual's ability to work and interact socially, which can cause people's lifestyles to change dramatically (National Health Committee [NHC], 2007). Financial worries can become a struggle for an individual living with a long-term condition, especially in low decile areas (MOH, 2009). Fear, anxiety, and frustration can result in the individual isolating themselves from friendships and work commitments leading to low self-esteem and self-worth (NHC, 2007). It is, therefore, not surprising that depression is a common comorbidity with long-term conditions, and it is predicted that depressive disorders will be the greatest cause of disease in the world by 2030 (WHO, 2011). In New Zealand, Māori and Pacific adults experience higher rates of psychological distress than other adults (14% and 12%, respectively compared with 8% for European/Other ethnicities; MOH, 2019). This is further exacerbated by residency factors; people living in the most socio-economically deprived areas were 2.1 times as likely to experience psychological distress as people living in the least deprived areas after adjusting for age, gender, and ethnicity (MOH, 2019).

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and resulting lockdown have and will continue to test the wellbeing and resilience of people living in Aotearoa New Zealand. It has been acknowledged that there is and will be a marked inequity in the impact of COVID-19 on indigenous people worldwide due to the existing social and health inequities stemming from colonisation (Hall, et al., 2020; McLeod et al., 2020; Power et al., 2020). Also, many cultural practices were forced to comply with the restrictions imposed by the Government (Power et al., 2020). As a result, increased socio-economic division, mental health issues, substance misuse, and gambling are all noted as indigenous negative impact concerns of the COVID-19 pandemic (Espiner & Houia-Ashell, 2020; Hall., et al., 2020; Power et al., 2020). This is consistent with data from the Christchurch Wellbeing Survey after the Christchurch Earthquakes which identified vulnerable communities, such as all those with chronic health issues, Māori with low income, and all those in temporary accommodation were slower to recover (Morgan et al., 2015). Fiorillo and Gorwood (2020) have compared COVID-19 to natural disasters, such as earthquakes or tsunamis. In addition, residents of high deprivation neighbourhoods have lower mobility and access to resources outside their communities with COVID-19, and the resulting lockdown has exacerbated these existing inequities through job losses, financial insecurity, increased mental health concerns and addictions, and limitations on gatherings and travel creating further isolation (Babalola, 2020; Espiner & Houia-Ashell, 2020; Hall et al., 2020; Power et al., 2020). Vulnerable communities such as Maraenui need greater support to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic in a culturally-appropriate and empowered way that fosters sustainable health and wellbeing.

The M.E.K.E Initiative is a pro-equity intervention developed by Māori for Māori that utilised a holistic, culture-centred community-based approach built on an existing community partnership. The M.E.K.E Initiative was borne out of a desire by Levi Armstrong (Ngāti Kahungunu) to bring health and fitness to the people when the people cannot get to the gym or afford gym fees. As mentioned in the previous section, the M.E.K.E. Initiative brings together three social enterprises: PATU, the Meke Meter™, and the Domyinis.

PATU (Figure 2) is an award-winning, innovative social enterprise business ([NZ Herald, 2015](#)) founded by Levi Armstrong. At the time, he was an EIT Bachelor of Recreation and Sport graduate (Levi shares some of his journey [here](#)). PATU aimed to provide sustainable healthy lifestyle interventions within local communities based on group activities (exercise, educational and social) that had Te Ao Māori woven through them. PATU

is a positive gang fighting against health and social inequities ([Patu Up! with Levi Armstrong](#)). Together with Iron Māori, PATU has put Hawke’s Bay on the map as being the place where significant Māori health initiatives start. This is evident from media coverage over the years (e.g. Te Karere TVNZ [Patu Aotearoa hits the mark on positive fitness change](#) and [Māori fitness programme 'Patu' taking kaupapa hauora nationwide](#)). Research with the PATU whānau funded by the Health Research Council (HRC, ref: MHDG 13/994) identified that there was a need for a way to capture an individual’s perception of their wellbeing in a holistic, culturally-appropriate manner that was not dependent on literacy skills so that positive goals could be established and needs identified. This led to the development of the Meke Meter™ which is a tool whānau can use to reflect on their quality of life.



Figure 2 PATU™ Aotearoa logo

The Meke Meter™ (Figure 3) embraces the elements of Te Whare Tapa Wha (Durie, 1998) and does not require the user to write but instead score themselves out of 10 (1 feeling awful and 10 feeling ‘tu meke’ or excellent) on characteristics that contribute to mental, physical and social (including whānau) wellbeing (Forrest et al., 2019). The Meke Meter™ is used extensively by PATU whānau and has also been used in education (Forrest et al., 2019) and health (Harvey et al., 2019) settings. The Meke Meter™ started as a paper-based tool and an online app has since been established.

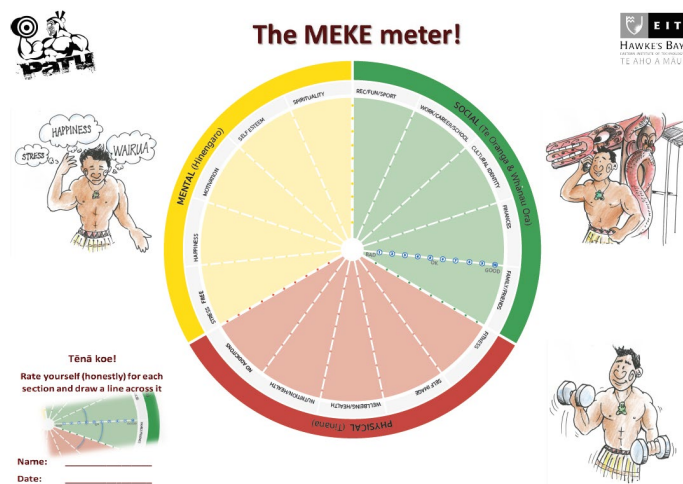


Figure 3 The original paper-based Meke Meter™ was co-designed with the PATU whānau to capture a person's perception of aspects of their wellbeing to help them set achievable goals.

The Domytis completes the M.E.K.E. Initiative triad. The Domytis is a prototype wellbeing POD (Figure 4) that is a mobile container gym and flexible-use space that stores all the necessary equipment for the particular target group, including training equipment, lighting, and a speaker system. The Domytis was named after Domanique Lamberg-Jones, a member of the PATU whanau who sadly died from brain cancer at 34 years of age in 2019. Domanique’s mother, Celeste, also part of the PATU and POD whanau, and her husband were diagnosed with cancer 15 months later. Celeste has made it her mission to encourage people to be proactive about their health and wellbeing.

The POD has been uniquely designed by top architect Whare Timu. Whare is a Principal and senior design lead and cultural advisor with over 15 years experience across a range of sectors in the built environment. He leads Warren and Mahoney’s Advanced Indigenous Design Unit – Te Matakīrea, dedicated to empowering indigenous architecture in Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia and the Pacific. The uniqueness of the POD’s design is that it allows people to ‘come together and move together’ where there may not be any existing infrastructure because it can be slotted into a community depending on need and can then be moved to another location when its service is no longer required.



Figure 4. Whare Timu and Levi Armstrong standing in front of the DomyNIS before and after completion.

The first prototype was fully funded by The Wellington Boys and Girls Institute (BGI). The Wellington Boys’ and Girls’ Institute (BGI) is a youth development organisation, established in 1883. The contribution that BGI have given to LWConfederation Ltd for the development of the POD has been immense. Ross Davis, CEO of BGI, has been a huge driver of the kaupapa, through his knowledge, mentorship and resources.

The M.E.K.E Initiative has been supported by the Napier City Council (NCC) Recovery Projects Fund, aimed at supporting a range of projects that will positively influence Napier’s recovery and renewal post-COVID-19. The social mission driving the M.E.K.E. Initiative (PATU, the Meke Meter™ and the DomyNIS) is to use a holistic pro-equity approach to health and wellbeing and provide Māori-driven innovations to facilitate and empower communities to improve their wellbeing, especially during the pandemic by providing a culturally-centred healthy lifestyle intervention that is accessible, and achievable for people living in high deprivation areas of Aotearoa New Zealand. Maraenui is a community in a high deprivation area with a predominantly Māori residency and NCC supported the placement of the POD in the Maraenui community centre. The research presented in this report built on an existing PATU-EIT research partnership, with PATU staff and whānau in the Hawke’s Bay having strong links into the Maraenui community as reported by Te Karere TVNZ Patu Napier Reptember challenge encourages clean living.



Figure 5. Levi Armstrong, Ross Davis (middle) and Whare Timu standing in front of the DomyNIS with whānau from BGI.



### 3. The Study

#### 3.1 Aim

This research aimed to capture the community's voice about the M.E.K.E Initiative and how it has impacted on the wellbeing of the community. In doing so, the research provided a means by which the community's voice could be recorded and amplified and their collective health and wellbeing successes and needs acknowledged with the hope of maintaining, reinforcing, and increasing positive outcomes.

#### 3.2 Research question

What is the community's perception of the impact of the M.E.K.E initiative on people's wellbeing in Maraenui?

#### 3.3. Design/Methodology

A case study approach was undertaken that used appreciative inquiry to capture people's perceptions (Adefila et al., 2020; Reed, 2007) of the M.E.K.E. Initiative. Appreciative inquiry is a collaborative approach that asks participants to focus on what works and is "compatible with Kaupapa Māori concerns that whānau strengths be recognised and built upon in order to facilitate whānau ora (wellness)" (Cram, 2010. P1). Participants were asked what they perceived the impact of the M.E.K.E Initiative was on people's wellbeing in their community and what factors shaped their perception. In addition to the qualitative data gathered from the appreciative inquiry, POD utilisation and Meke Meter™ data collected as part of the M.E.K.E. Initiative from the Maraenui community members were also considered when assessing the impact of the POD in the Maraenui community (Figure 5).

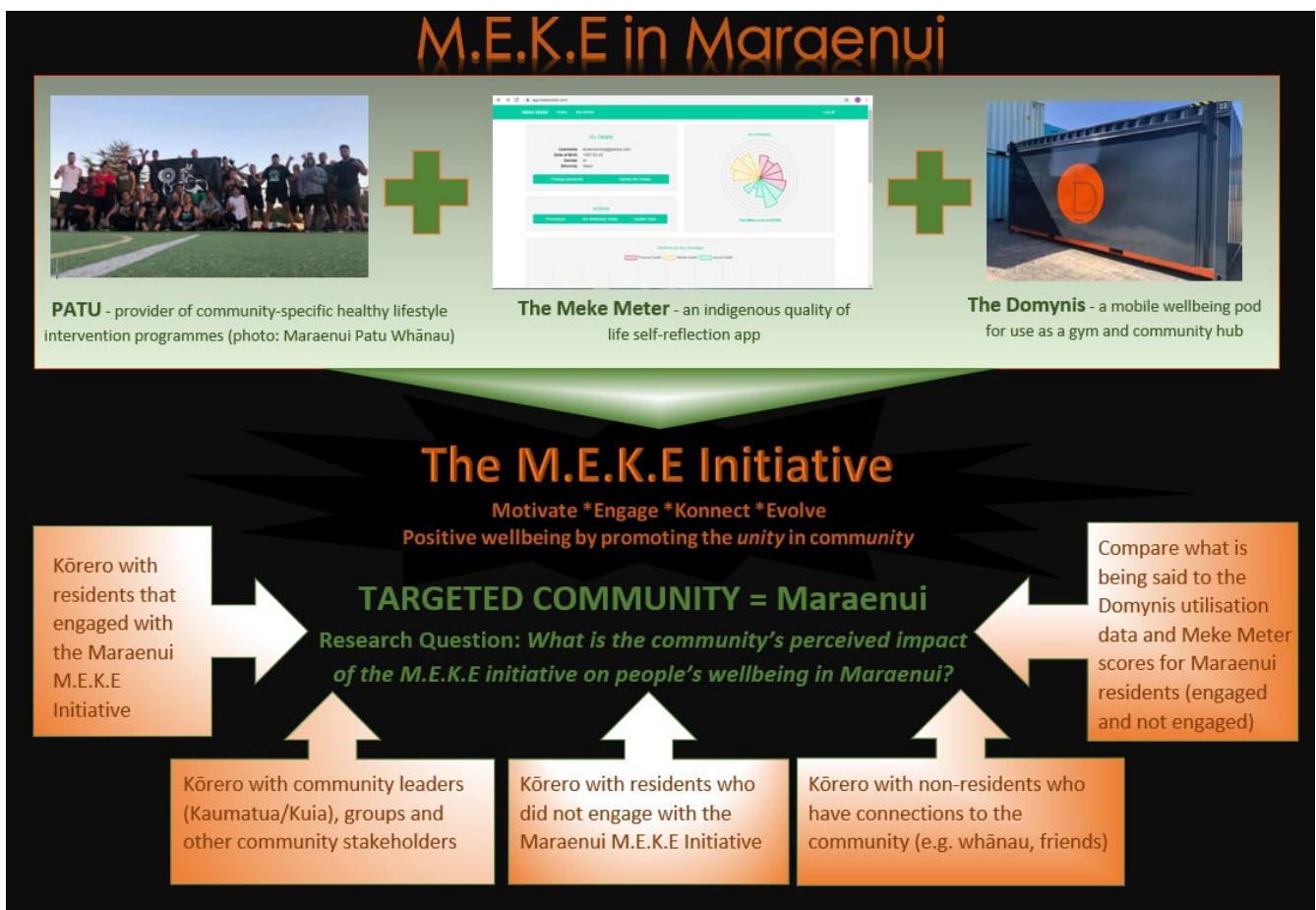


Figure 6 The M.E.K.E. Initiative



Appreciative inquiry, as applied to this case study (the Maraenui M.E.K.E. Initiative) assumed the solution to improving the community's wellbeing lies within home-grown initiatives designed by the people for the people and sought to illuminate the positives of the M.E.K.E Initiative and identify where refinement and adaptation would better serve the community promoting even better wellbeing outcomes. This approach reinforces a positive approach to finding pro-equity solutions and is not perpetuate existing inequities.

Integral to this research was consulting with Māori (both community and research leaders and participants) to ensure a Kaupapa Māori methodology was followed to evaluate the programme from a Māori perspective acknowledging taha tinana, taha hinengaro, taha wairua, and taha whānau as critical elements of any Māori health intervention. In keeping with tuakana/teina, the lead investigator was committed to supporting and nurturing the growth of emerging Māori researchers in the community and during the research period, Assoc. Prof. Forrest supervised the Masterate research projects of both Community Research Facilitators (Levi and Dana Armstrong).

The research team (Figure 6) worked collaboratively with the Maraenui community and those connected to it, along with Māori research mentors, to collect the qualitative data in a way that accommodated the needs and preferences of those that are willing to share their perceptions of the POD.

POD utilisation/community engagement was captured via Facebook posts (Section 4). Qualitative data was gathered from individual or group interviews and anonymous feedback forms. All interview participants were provided information sheets and written consent forms (Appendix A). Qualitative data were analysed thematically and interrogated using the four core principles of appreciative inquiry (Section 5). The findings from the qualitative data analyses were then compared to Domynis utilisation/PATU participation records, and Meke Meter™ scores. For each data set, methods are detailed below, followed by the findings (qualitative) or results (quantitative).



Figure 7 Keeping the researchers connected with Maraenui POD users using social media posts.

#### 4. POD Utilisation/ Community Engagement

The POD has a strong physical presence in the community centre and online presence, with the 'POD IN THE MARAENUI' Facebook Group having 1.6K followers. As part of building whanaungatanga, a photo of those attending each session at the POD is taken and posted in the Facebook group. This also captures the level of community engagement with the M.E.K.E. Initiative (Figure 8). Members also regularly share photos of their food, especially if a challenge (wero) was on. Challenges occurred (and still occur) regularly along with Whānau days to motivate members to stay engaged with the M.E.K.E. Initiative (Figure 7). The POD IN THE MARAENUI Facebook Group reinforced the connections made at the POD by celebrating those attending exercise sessions, promoting POD-specific clothing that created not only identity but also sales of which provided funds for community activities, and promoting education and the importance of nutrition (Figure 9). The Facebook group was also crucial for community engagement during COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, such as Level 3 in September 2021.

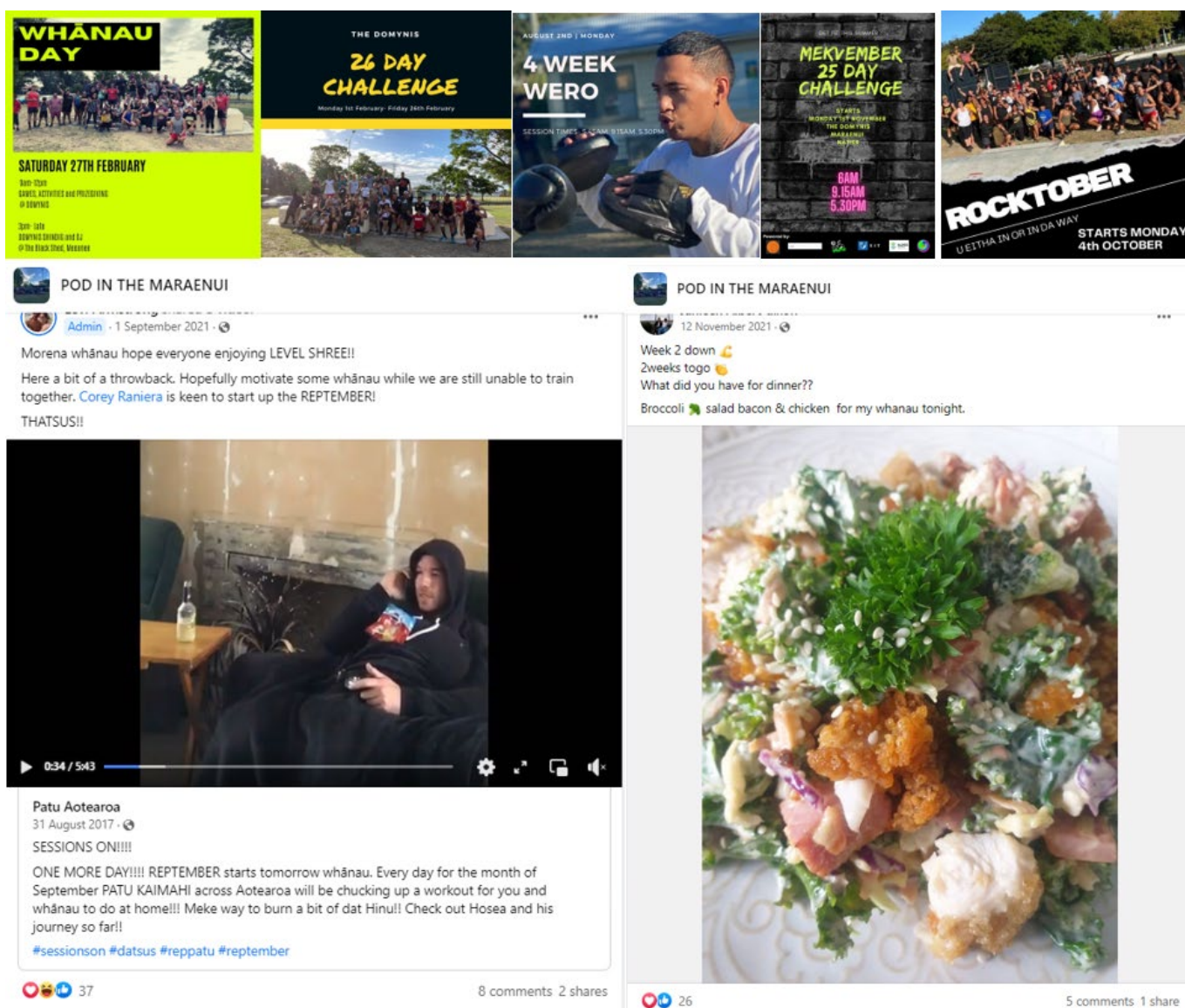


Figure 8. Challenges, whānau days, and social media posts enhance community engagement with the M.E.K.E. Initiative even during a COVID-19 lockdown





Figure 9 Representative photos from a session for each week of 2021 to reflect POD participation





Figure 10 The POD IN THE MARAENUI Facebook Group reinforced the connections made at the POD by celebrating those that attended exercise sessions, promoting POD-specific clothing that created not only identity but also sales of which provided funds for community activities, and promoting education and the importance of nutrition.

## 5. Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

### 5.1 Participant recruitment

Four main cohorts of people associated with the Maraenui community were approached to take part in the study:

1. residents that engaged with the Maraenui M.E.K.E. Initiative
2. residents who did not engage with the Maraenui M.E.K.E. Initiative
3. community leaders (kaumatua/kuia), groups, and other community stakeholders
4. non-residents (of Maraenui) who had connections to the community (e.g. friends, whanau)

Adults (18 years and over) were invited to take part in this project in a variety of ways – via community hui (Whanau Day in February 2021), a Facebook group (POD IN THE MARAENUI, Figure 10), and stakeholders (such as NCC, police, and local Maraenui businesses) were directly approached for comment. A snowball sampling method was used to recruit non-resident people connected to the Maraenui community.



Figure 11 The POD IN THE MARAENUI Facebook group was used to recruit participants.



## 5.2 Data collection

Participants were able to share their stories, experiences, and perceptions relating to the guiding question via one-on-one interviews, focus groups and written on anonymous feedback forms. The variety of data collection methods, some of which did not involve the presence of a research team member, meant that if individuals wished to participate, they could do so in a way that suited them, and with or without the research team members knowing. All data were stored in a de-identified (by participant number) or anonymous (by feedback form number) fashion. Thus, the researchers did not know who had not participated and thereby alleviated any pressure a potential participant may feel to take part, as anyone can engage with the M.E.K.E. Initiative regardless of whether or not they took part in this research study.

*Anonymous Feedback:* Feedback boxes were placed at the Domynis and within the Maraenui community shopping centre to allow anonymous feedback about the M.E.K.E. Initiative. The Poster (Figure 1) and Participant information sheet (Appendix A) were displayed with the feedback boxes, and submitting feedback was regarded as consent to use the information. The feedback forms had a form number on them that the participant was advised to record somewhere in case they wished to withdraw their contribution later. On the form was an open-ended question “What impact do you think the POD has had on Maraenui? Why?” along with the following questions:

- Are you a Maraenui resident? Yes/No
- Have you taken part in the fitness session run out of the Domynis wellbeing POD? Yes/No
- What gender are you? Female/Male/Gender Diverse
- Are you: Māori/Pacifica/Other
- Are you over 18? Yes/No
- What is your age (optional)?

A total of 54 handwritten feedback forms (anonymous) were collected (Table 1). To analyse the data, all responses to the 54 feedback forms were manually typed into an Excel spreadsheet.

*Table 1 Demographics of anonymous feedback form respondents.*

Maraenui Resident	POD User		Grand Total
	No	Yes	
No	15	14	29
Female	14	10	24
Male	1	4	5
Yes	7	18	25
Female	4	10	14
Male	3	8	11
Grand Total	22	32	54

*Interviews:* The qualitative interview data was collected by all research team members, except Dr. Fiona Cram. An EIT researcher (Assoc. Prof. Rachel Forrest or Maria Pearson) was present at all of the interviews, guided by the questions below. Levi and Dana Armstrong (Community Research Facilitators) facilitated some of the interviews (both individual and group) with residents of Maraenui. Maraenui is a community with predominantly Māori whānau and is renowned for its Mongrel Mob affiliations. As well as being a community leader promoting positive life choices, Levi (Ngāti Kahungunu) grew up in a Mongrel Mob family. His father

is in the Mongrel Mob, and his uncle is the president of the Hastings chapter. Levi was, therefore, uniquely placed to facilitate research with this traditionally “hard to reach” community to improve health and wellbeing.

Interview facilitation by Levi and or Dana ensured a safe and supportive environment for both interviewers and interviewees. Given that this is an appreciative inquiry looking for the strengths and positives of the M.E.K.E. Initiative, any personal biases for the success of the M.E.K.E. Initiative (and the Social Enterprises from which it is composed) will align with the objectives of this study. This type of study provides the community with a means of co-constructing the M.E.K.E. Initiative, thus upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles of participation, partnership, and reciprocity.

As mentioned above, the interviews were group or individual depending on preference and at a location of the interviewee’s choice. Participants could complete the email questions via email if they chose to. For in-person interviews, Māori protocol was followed with appropriate introductions (Ngā Mihi) being made and koha (food and refreshments) being provided. Participant information and consent forms were provided (Appendix A). The project was outlined verbally, allowing time for questions and written or audio-recorded consent obtained from those who chose to participate. Each participant was given a unique participant number which they were encouraged to keep as the participant number could be used to identify their narratives should they wish to have access to them or withdraw from the study.

The following open-ended questions guided the semi-structured interviews (group and individual):

- What is your connection to the Maraenui Community?
- With what ethnic group(s) do you identify?
- What does health and wellbeing (hauora) mean to you?
- How has/did the pandemic impacted on your health and wellbeing (social and family, physical, mental, spiritual)?
- Did you take part in the Meke Initiative?
  - If so, why? What impact do you think the M.E.K.E. Initiative has had on your wellbeing?
  - Of not, why not? What impact do you think the M.E.K.E. Initiative has had on people’s wellbeing in Maraenui?
  - What do you think the strengths of the M.E.K.E. initiative are?
  - How do you think the M.E.K.E. Initiative could be improved?
- Is there anything else related to the M.E.K.E. Initiative you would like to share?

A total of 17 one-on-one individual interviews (in person and email) and nine focus group interviews were conducted. These interviews were electronically transcribed using the Otter.ai transcription tool. A member of the research team then checked the transcripts for accuracy.

Appreciation for participation was always expressed, and our Community Research Facilitators acknowledged the value of the contributions (e.g. Figure 11).

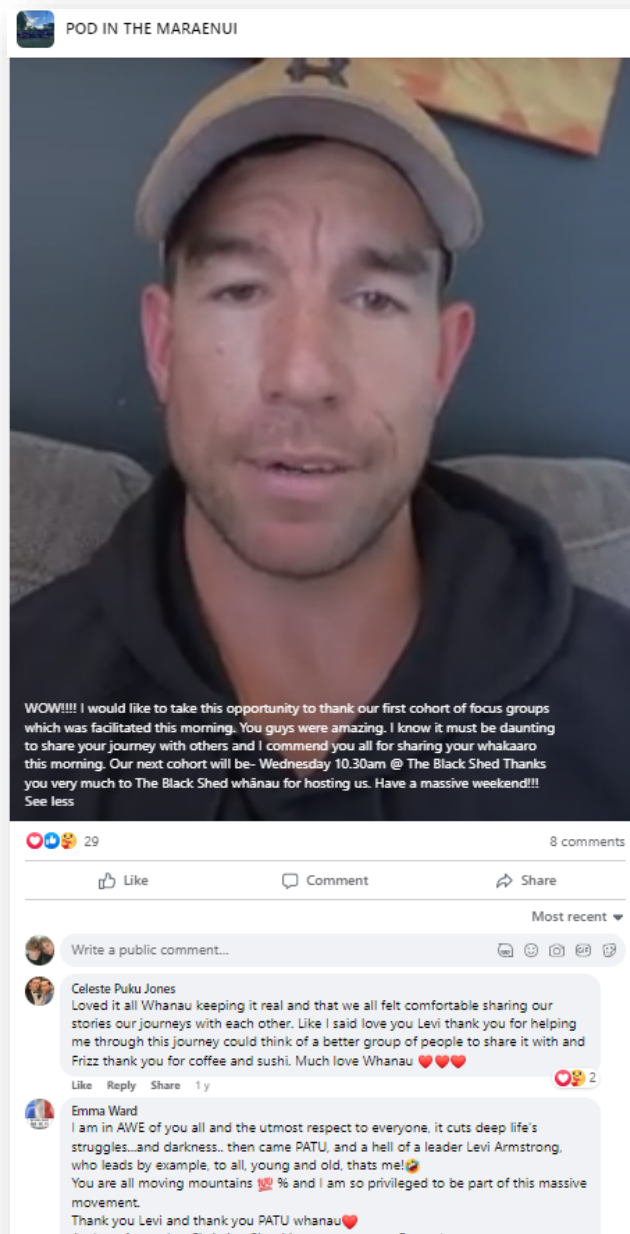


Figure 12. Facebook posts express gratitude to research participants and reciprocal gratitude in return.

### 5.3 Data analyses

The qualitative data was initially analysed for emergent themes by at least two research team members independently and categorised using a general inductive approach (Thomas, 2006) before a collaborative thematic analysis.

In a second qualitative analysis, the data were interrogated using the four core principles of appreciative inquiry (Reed, 2007) to:

1. identify existing positive aspects of the M.E.K.E. Initiative for promoting community wellbeing
2. explore how the M.E.K.E. Initiative can be improved for better community wellbeing outcomes
3. co-construct with the Maraenui community ideal circumstances to improve community wellbeing, prioritising the dimensions that work best
4. seek ways to implement the M.E.K.E Initiative in a sustainable way

## 5.4 Findings

*Anonymous Feedback:* The anonymous community feedback was overwhelmingly positive from both POD users and non-POD users, and both Maraenui residents and non-residents. The only negative impact noted was from one shop owner who wrote, “Sales of unhealthy food have decreased. This has impacted the business in a negative way.” The following two quotes, however, captured the positive sentiments of many,

*Its brought people together with a common interest, to get fit and healthy. There's all difference ages, weights, and personalities. Some whanau are utilising the Domynis to help them get off drugs and/or alcohol. To bring some structure and routine into their daily life struggles. This is a place where together we are strong and we tautoko each other. Whakawhanaungatanga, kotahitanga, and manaakitangi are all part of what Levi and the Domynis bring to our community. (POD User, Resident)*

*As a non-resident of Maraenui, I have not had reason to come to Maraenui, other than to pick people up or drop them off (Teacher). Since the pod has been here, I have seen so many people in the park, they are all happy, the music is blaring and it has a great vibe! I attended two sessions and really enjoyed it!! The whānau members are all positive and encouraging. I was surprised at how fit and energetic they are! I attended a BBQ here and there was so many people and so much kai!! You could really feel the "whānau" vibe when there. I have met a lot of new friends. (POD user, non-resident)*

Table 2 presents all the comments made on the anonymous feedback forms. Fig. Figure 12 highlights some of the key aspects of the M.E.K.E. Initiative that brought the community together either as users or supporters of the POD. The M.E.K.E. Initiative achieving its goal of **“Positive wellbeing by promoting the unity in community”**.



Figure 13 Key aspects of the M.E.K.E. Initiative that brought the community together.

Table 2 Comments made on the anonymous feedback forms about the M.E.K.E. Initiative.

	Resident	Non-Resident
<p>POD User</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive, gets out whānau together in a positive way that promotes health.</li> <li>• I think its a great idea, good for community spirit, great for health benefits as well, brings our community together for positive outcomes. AWESOME KAUPAPA!</li> <li>• The pod and Levi made a impact cause it gets the whānau out of bed and motivated surrounded by positive people. It being free is just a bonus.</li> <li>• Its had a really positive impact on people's wellbeing and Maraenui. Anybody and everybody is welcome and feels welcome. Having a sense of belonging in a place where you can work on yourself works wonders. Setting goals with the WERO that are set keeps each of us working towards our physical health needs/wants and we do this together as whānau. "We all up the Maunga together!" A lot of us have brought whānau/friends to come along with up to train and we have been able to stay consistent in attendance and has positive impacts within out whānau units! Some whānau have goals of coming on drug and alcohol and the POD is where are come to keep away. All in All its MASSIVE at the POD. HUI in the NUI. Thats us!</li> <li>• Its brought people together with a common interest, to get fit and healthy. There's all difference ages, weight, and personalities. Some whanau are utilising the Domynis to help them get off drugs and/or alcohol. To bring some structure and routine into their daily life struggles. This is a place where together we are strong and we tautoko each other. Whakawhanaungatanga, kotahitanga, and manaakitangi are all part of what Levi and the Domynis bring to our community.</li> <li>• A positive proactive good attitude and sense of well being. The more I have attended these classes, I have become closer with the other associates/members and I have made new friends. This POD, Levi and his sessions have been an amazing opportunity for our community. Its very good to see for all our community members, young and old. My family and friends have knowledge and have participated and I'm so happy to be part of it. Thank you so much :-)</li> <li>• Big impact on social well-being, emotional well-being. Supportive atmosphere.</li> <li>• I think it has had a positive impact because people felt welcome and motivated because Levi made us all feel like we could anything.</li> <li>• I think its been positive, giving people something to do.</li> <li>• About time. Need this to bring the people together to improve health and wellbeing</li> <li>• Its been real positive helped me be more mindful and helps me start the day off good</li> <li>• It's massive, its the best thing thats happened down here.</li> <li>• Made me get to know more people in Maraenui and made me want to actually want to go to the pod</li> <li>• Got me fit for basket ball and i got a little skinny for Iron Māori</li> <li>• The Pod are really help on people around the nui, the body soul and mindset, that keep them moving to good stuff and stay away from fat food.</li> <li>• Motivating the young to start training. Motivating the community, Nui Hard!!</li> <li>• Tu Meke!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Its awesome! Everyone can see good vibes and positive encouragement. So glad this is here for me and exercising is a bonus :-).</li> <li>• Massive impact, very positive atmosphere and whānau focused. Nothing but good buzz.</li> <li>• As a non-resident of Maraenui, il have not had reason to come to Maraenui, other than to pick people up of drop them off (Teacher). Since the pod has been here, I have seen so many people in the park, they are all happy, the music is blaring and it has a great vibe! I attended two sessions and really enjoyed it!! The whānau members are all positive and encouraging. I was surprised at how fit and energetic they are! I attended a BBQ here and there was so many people and so much kai!! You could really feel the "whānau" vibe when there. I have met a lot of new friends.</li> <li>• A positive one that is full of encouragement to do better and not accept things as they are just because they have always been so. Positive mental change. Great environment to help those who struggle to have support to carry on with physical exercise. It's great to be able to go at my own pace as well as be placed in groups that are evenly matched fitness wise to push one another to do better. I personally enjoyed my exercises, I cant wait to continue to see my progress evolve further.</li> <li>• It has got whole families involved and the community. The environment is friendly and welcoming and very positive.</li> <li>• My experience has made many changes in my life motivation myself every morning to get up and achieve, a self discovery - attention I needed to look at. My mind and my wellbeing has more settled/stability to it. I have been yearning for a long time for the energy, frequency of community support. Has a major influence to it. I am grateful. Kia ora</li> <li>• I have benefited personally from the POD, I will continue to participate again this week.</li> <li>• Sessions at the POD motivate and energise me. They help me with fitness and to get to know new people. Everyone is very supportive and non-judgmental. It has changed how I think about the Maraenui community. They are lovely people. I hope the pod stays in Maraenui permanently.</li> <li>• The POD has given an immense amount of confidence not only to myself but to those that I spend my morning workout with other that at times are twice if not three times my junior. It makes me work harder, however past injuries hampers my 100% input. The effect longterm has helped with my other sporting activity of waka ama which demands strength of endurance and I have put it down to the POD activity. For me its done wonders for the community is has build confidence, given people ability to move mountains.</li> <li>• For me, the POD has been a positive group to come to every morning. I'm not a morning person, but I love starting my mornings here. I have come to love fitness and hove finally understood how it contributes to my overall happiness and wellbeing. The POD has become a tool that brings people together in a very healthy way. For people who want/need to feel connected and loved, the Pod is able to fill that need to come extent.</li> <li>• Community/ connection, Discipline - fitness/wellbeing, Aspirational, Christian principals the builds positive people/ whānau</li> <li>• Keeping people out of trouble. Getting people active. Fun</li> <li>• Social aspect of fitness and wellbeing for the whole whānau. Positive whānau focus on te taha Māori additional to health goals. Goal setting and achievement of goals</li> <li>• Fitness and discipline, combined with a sense of community. People feel connected- and challenged, with the sessions being worthwhile and valuable. The fact that this is free and community based removes barriers for people also.</li> </ul>



	Resident	Non-Resident
Non-POD User	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Massive</li> <li>• good for locals cause its free, and people love it</li> <li>• Community get togethers for our kaumatua and young people</li> <li>• Massive impact. People well being (community). Mentally and physically. Health benefits = losing weight, eating healthy, reverse illness. Great environment, safe, friendly and supportive.</li> <li>• Just getting community together</li> <li>• I see a lot of people using the POD all thru the day. People are happy and enjoying it. It should be made a permanent feature in Maraenui.</li> <li>• Its helping the young people. Keeping them out of trouble. il dont take much notice of it, it doesnt affect me as I dont exercise at my age.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uplifted every one, make every one motivated, made working out fun, everyone has a good time</li> <li>• I think POD impacts positively on youth behaviour and physically as well. By taking part into the fitness classes they will be mentally and physically strong. Its good to see that its happening in Maraenui and I think its definitely required in this area to keep the young generation productive. (Shop Owner)</li> <li>• Keeping people fit and active, giving them something good to do. Being free is good too so it isnt limited for the people who wouldnt be able to afford it.</li> <li>• I think it is a positive and encouraging tool to have here in Maraenui. I see only good things coming from it and think its awesome.</li> <li>• Increased health and wellbeing</li> <li>• I think the POD has had an impact on participants hauora because it allows adults and children to have fun and train for free. The physical activity increases out taha hinengaro energy and personally the POD sessions always enhance my positive mood.</li> <li>• POD seems like a really positive focal point for the community. The participants bring a lot of energy to the area, which is contagious. The POD has a positive effect on both physical and mental wellbeing!</li> <li>• Always seems to be used when I see it open. Good area for people to access. Would like one in my area. Would be good if it had someone to answer questions on general health/nutrition to go with fitness.</li> <li>• I think it has had a positive impact on peoples wellbeing. Every time I come to the Maraenui shopping centre I see the people working out at the POD. They seem to be really enjoying their sessions and are a great positive role model to the community.</li> <li>• Easy access to fitness is one positive but seeing the people hangout after shows that it is also about making friends with like minded people.</li> <li>• I think people would like to do it if they could buddy up with someone. I think its overwhelming to go by yourself if you don't know anyone</li> <li>• I think it has a positive impact, its not forced and you dont have to go and use it if your not willing to. If i wasn't "allergic" to exercise I would definitely use it. But really do thinks it good, i love watching people use it. Its awesome!</li> <li>• Good especially for kids, before that they do not have anything to do but now they do exercise and watch them how they can do physical activity. Overall it is good for everyone. (Shop Owner)</li> <li>• If we knew the dates and times it would be very helpful. How hard are the exercises? Can pakeha also come? I would like an update on this matter please.</li> <li>• Sales of unhealthy food have decreased. This has impacted the business in a negative way. (Shop Owner)</li> </ul>

*Interviews:* POD users and non-POD users, both Maraenui residents and non-residents along with stakeholders such as the NCC and NZ police provided comments and feedback (creating hundreds of pages of narrative) regarding the M.E.K.E. Initiative. Again, the collective voice was overwhelmingly positive. Many felt that the M.E.K.E. Initiative was needed in the community, for example, a representative of the Youth Centre in the Maraenui Shopping Centre stated,

*Now there's actually something positive and productive going on there in the heart of the Nui, which is what's needed really...that's what's needed. So I think it's done nothing but good things for the hood P51*

A NZ police representative summed up the sentiments of many non-POD users and stated,

*I have not been a part of the MEKE programme myself but have seen the turnout that it gets from many diverse members of the Community. They seem to very much enjoy it and I believe that it can only be a good thing for the Maraenui Community. It promotes group exercise that brings the Community together and creates a sense of unity and common purpose. That can only have a positive effect on the hauora of the individuals and Community as a whole P56*

A NCC representative acknowledged that the M.E.K.E. Initiative was community-lead and aligned with Council plans and has also provided benefits that were not anticipated as reflected in this quote,

*Because it's, you know, run by, really, ostensibly by the community in that community...we thought, you know, it's a win win probably for both of us to have something sustainable down there...In so aligned with that is the council's intention to, to have more opportunity for these kinds of things happening locally ....*

*....It's giving people the opportunity to become trainers and actually encouraging them and mentoring them to join courses at EIT or whatnot to, to progress that... I think that's awesome you know, and at the end of the day, you know, in all likelihood they'll get jobs in that area and you know, it just kind of adds from, adds to that as a, yeah as a positive. So that's huge...cos I, that's maybe an unintended, well, maybe Levi intended it, but that's something we hadn't anticipated...when we contributed the funding...so I think that's an awesome approach and yeah, opportunity for people P26*

Levi's connection to Maraenui has been highlighted as an important part of the success of the M.E.K.E. Initiative,

*Cos a stranger couldn't come in and start training us. We'd all be down here going "who does he think he is" and sort of stuff like that. So yeah, Levi's connection is good...he's just got a wonderful way with people, you know, and he's encouraging and supportive. And yeah, nah, he's a good guy. It may not have worked with somebody else P17*

Other emergent themes and subthemes are presented in Table 3. Inclusiveness, accessibility, and whanaungatanga were identified as key strengths which resulted in significant engagement with the Initiative and positive impacts at both the community and personal levels. Community impacts included social unity and community revitalisation due to having easy access to, and engaging with fun, and constructive group activities resulting in noticeable change that is breaking down community stereotypes and providing positive role modelling as well as creating education and job opportunities. At a personal level people found that the M.E.K.E. Initiative provided them with motivation and challenges, and that committing to the health and fitness sessions was uplifting and empowering, which resulted in personal development, improved health and wellbeing, and opportunities to become a positive role model.

Table 3 Emergent themes and subthemes of the narratives collected from interviewees about the M.E.K.E. Initiative

Theme	Sub-themes	Representative quote/s
Inclusiveness	All ages	So it goes from children, to teenagers, to people when they're probably in the prime of their life in their 20s and 30s. And in midway through and then older people, and there's one lady that 83 that does it...So I buy into the concept because it encompasses people of different, a wide range of people P47
	All types	I've seen heaps of people come from every walk of life P2 I seen people who I didn't think would be out training coming to training every day P19
	Non-residents (feel safe)	And he welcomes everybody in to do it and the people that go there, they welcome everybody in as well... It's not just Maraenui. It's everybody come, so you know, a lot of people. It's not just and those people that come from out of our suburbs, they're safe. They feel safe to come here when it's like that P2
	Respectful	Yeah, so I think it's doing things in whanau groups and there's a kaumatua and respect, being respectful...Respectful towards women is a big thing as well P4
Accessible	Highly visible (people can see what's going on)	I like standing there watching them P2 (Kuia) Yeah, they're still seeing it. They're still like "what's happening over there?" and then they'll eventually come and take part P3
	Free	the best thing I think about, I must say, is that it's free P2
	Convenient location	It's been centered in a place where it's needed. So obviously, there's, it's targeting people in need, I think that's huge P52 Kids go to the park...that's one of the, that's why I hardly get gym time cos I've got all the kids P51
	Convenient times	And the times, Levi's times have always suited me around my job. So yeah, it's been good and it keeps me grounded. So it's good stuff P17 And then there's the nine fifteen, that's for the mums...You know and that's good for them so they can have that little bit of time to themselves. P2
Whanaunagtanga / bringing people together	Welcoming/friendly	And he welcomes everybody in to do it and the people that go there, they welcome everybody in as well so P2
	Caring	So I'm from the Maraenui community. I've lived here all my life. Yeah. And I've actually brought quite a few people into the, the PATU training, especially people that are looking for recovery of some sort P17 You know how we come in as a group, you know, and it reminds me a lot of being on the marae...cos we look after each other...we look after our babies... It's like one of your own. You know, that's what I love about it P25
	Non-judgemental	It's non-judgmental and it's fun P47 Nobody's here to judge. We're just all here to help uplift each other P19
	Positive vibe/energy/atmosphere	It was just the whole positive atmosphere... And just the energies that we all gave each other. You know, we'd all, we'd be sitting there, you know, we're doing the exercises and we're pumping it out and hearing everyone "good work sis, keep going". You know like "you got this", like "well done" like just that positive energy, just constant...I've had no negative experiences with this place P2
	Fun	... I don't want a serious one. I want a fun one, where people are cool. That's one thing about the POD is like people just cool. Everyone's just like, don't take himself too seriously. And keen to have a joke, like CS1
	Connected to the whenua	I think he's tapped into something too that a lot of other... gyms that are based in one place can never really do....He's using the environment. They're running around in the park... their walls are trees. You know, they've got birds flying around P52 It's that I've always preferred to be a little bit more outside to do activities. I haven't, haven't liked it so much in a gym. P24

Positive impact - community	Social unity	<p>Connection, bringing everybody together for a better outlook in life. Not just physically, within the body, but so in the community. Bringing people together. And that's huge because some people don't have family. And that's, that's like a [hub of] family when you go there and meet people, new people and people that you know. So yeah, it's great P1</p> <p>Yeah, it's brung camaraderie to the Nui and we're all getting to know each other better than we did P19</p> <p>Probably one of the best things that's happened in Maraenui, a positive thing, health-wise, community-wise, cos if you have a look at it socially, there's not many communities like this, that come together...and do stuff together. But Maraenui's always been like that...It's been a really close community, it's always worked together cos they've had to P1</p>
	Community revitalisation	<p>That container out there. It's good to see. It brings the people in. If that container wasn't here, there'd be no-one out there. Telling you that now. Speaker 7 Pakeke group male</p> <p>But yeah when I was around their age, like the Nui was alive and it's just, it's back again... Oh, it's just, it feels like, the Nui's back, Maraenui's back and everybody's just happy like it was when I was [young] P19 (Kaumatua)</p>
	Noticeable change (due to visibility)	<p>And just seeing how revived they are. How awake they are, how happy they are to have been doing something for themselves by the looks of things and comments that people put on Facebook. Been really good P46</p>
	Fun/enjoyable	<p>And it's good seeing the little kids out there playing, running around with their parents. And enjoying themselves Speaker 7 Pakeke male</p>
	Constructive activities	<p>It would be able to help the kids focus their energy on something positive instead of, you know, breaking windows. The shop windows and stuff like that. P1</p> <p>It's something positive in the environment. So not only personally you know, people having an impact on them personally but just the vibe you know, it's a good vibe and well, people previously before the POD were known for doing down here around the shops is smoking synthetics P51 Youth Centre male</p>
	Breaking down stereotypes	<p>Because you know, he's shifting people's mindsets. And he's opening them up to different horizons, physical, nutritional, he's personifying Maraenui in a positive light, you know, constantly going on Lives, talking about it, you know, so just thinking all and all personally, it's positive and it's needed P52</p> <p>Our community gets a bit of a bad, you know, sort of rep from outsiders, but there's some wonderful people in our community. And wonderful stuff happens here. P17</p> <p>But actually meeting them and how people look at them, from an outsider's perspective, "oh that's Maraenui, it looks pretty rough", but when you actually get to meet some of these gang members, they are lovely people...I've always been open to things like that anyway...don't judge a book by it's cover until you actually talk to people, eh?...that's what I like about this P23</p>
	Role modelling	<p>It's just been wonderful for our community even like. Look at today how many children are here running around so children are seeing us, you know doing, exercising, eating healthy, being together and there's no alcohol or drugs. So it's just really beautiful role modelling for our community P17</p>
	Creates opportunities	<p>It's giving people the opportunity to become trainers and actually encouraging them and mentoring them to join courses at EIT or whatnot to, to progress that... I think that's awesome you know P26</p> <p>I can see him training trainers, training people to train...so that's a great thing about a leader too, it's letting go and leading...empowering other leaders to continue his legacy, really. This is his legacy. I'm so glad he's doing his masters P4</p>

	Re-connections	And not only that, that place brings everybody together and makes you feel welcome and just gives Maraenui a better feel to come, it's okay to come back here. It's okay P1 So I kind of drifted away but since the POD's come back, I've come back to Maraenui
Positive impact - personal	Become positive role models	But it's nice here too cos we're role modeling to our community P17
	Self-awareness	But just like with the whole fitness POD, like I felt like it was, it was a stepping stone, like it was a drive to make me think about everything P2
	Motivation/commitment	I think it's just the commitment, well, I'm not trying to be like "oh my God, it's changed my life" but it really has. P2 People are actually wanting to come and do and like, some of the people that I see come to the POD, usually I don't see them doing anything P3 .. it's part of my lifestyle now. I want to keep you know, coming and keeping myself fit and you know, my wellbeing, you know, there P21
	Uplifting/empowering	So that's why I think I came more because everything was just so uplifting, you know P2
	Personal development	So yeah, for my, my personal journey and my whanau's journey, it's just been amazing P17 And since I've been here, my self esteem increased P25 Female
	Improved wellbeing/healing	And the POD and the guys in Maraenui have been a big part of the healing...to get me strong again and I feel really strong today P1 I started last year, and I think it is greatly enhanced my wellbeing P6
	Wero/challenges	... massive cos it keeps you back on your focus.... It's just a challenge for me...challenging myself...the whole goal set. You know, in those short, the mini ones are great P25
	Community concerns/ suggested improvements	Sustainability/permanence
Environmental considerations (grass, noise)		... it's worn the grass out. Major. Yeah. You know, dust bowl, now. Now that doesn't worry me. But I mean, it does I don't know if they can put a mat down P47 We should also be able to look after our land that we've got, you know, and try and make sure we can at least have some sort of balance...she's looking a bit, looking a bit damaged at the moment...she does get a lot of use and that's why I really, yeah, that's what I really like about [not sure what was said here], don't know how, how that could be improved P2 We have had some complaints of noise from nearby residents, just FYI. Because of where it's situated and where it's facing P26 ( <i>note the POD has been moved with Council funding</i> )
Bad weather provision		...we definitely need some sort of cover...to keep us going P17 Having a covering, still have the POD in there, covering. It's still cold outside though but at least you're not getting rained on P4
Advertising/community information		If you feel it's a good initiative, why not let as many people know, as possible?...All the shops should've known about it... It was just plonked on the site one day, and then nothing for a little bit. And then it started happening. And you started seeing what was going on. But yeah, no information given out beforehand P46
Health and safety considerations		There's probably a lot of safety aspects from that, that sort of, you could end up getting into quite a bit, which is quite difficult, I suppose. Just the fact that the gear's exposed and like if Levi's running a training, but if a kid goes in there and lifts up something and drops it, what are you going to do?... Whereas at least in a gym, they can monitor that a bit more P24



*Appreciative Inquiry Interrogation:* Figure 13 summarises the key aspects highlighted for each of the four principles (expressed as: Existing positives, Possible improvement, Co-construction, Sustainability) by the appreciative inquiry interrogation of the data gathered about the M.E.K.E. Initiative. The findings show that research (formal or informal) and multi-organisational partnerships are crucial for a responsive community-centred initiative that serves the needs of the people and promotes positive change.



Figure 14 Appreciative inquiry summary for each of the four principles of key aspects of the M.E.K.E. Initiative for moving forward.

One of the strengths of the M.E.K.E. Initiative is that it has strengthened the relationship between Maraenui and the NCC and Kirsten Wise states:

*The POD/Domynis Gym and Meke Meter wellbeing initiative brings a unique offering to the Maraenui community. It ensures easy, affordable, achievable access to fitness and wellbeing. The multiple offerings appeal to a range of people of all ages and stages, including extended whānau, tamariki and rangatahi.*

*I have been particularly struck by the community ownership of the POD and how this occurred within a relatively short period of time. An additional benefit of the initiative is the motivation it has provided to a number of POD participants who have entered pathways into education and employment.*

*I see this approach as having a strong future in our communities.*

Kirsten Wise, Mayor of Napier

## 6. Meke Meter™ Data Collection and Analysis

### 6.1 Participant recruitment

Domytis users were encouraged to create an online a Meke Meter™ account and if they consented to their data being used for the M.E.K.E. Initiative research project, the user was asked to enter the promo code “DOMNUI” when they signed up. Only those over the age of 18 could use the “DOMNUI” promo code. The promo code could be removed from their account at any time, should the participant change their mind about their data being used for the M.E.K.E. Initiative research project. This was the project-specific consent process, however, when users established a Meke Meter™ account, they are advised that all data “may be used for research purposes” (The Meke Meter™ Privacy Policy, 2020, p.1).

### 6.2 Data collection

Data was collected via the Meke Meter™ on various devices, e.g., smart phones, tablets, laptop computers, and desktop computers, in real-time. Quantitative data was collected throughout 2021. The Meke Meter™ data was stored and accessed via the Azure Cloud (public cloud computing platform) where it was stored securely, and data was then exported and collated into Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS Statistics spreadsheets following the EIT research policies and guidelines (EIT Code of Research Ethics – Guideline AG210-2). Where the full Meke Meter™ user dataset was used for comparisons, all data from those under the age of 18 years and all users who had not disclosed their age were removed.

### 6.3 Data analysis

Analysis of the quantitative data collected from the Meke Meter™ was completed by using IBM SPSS Statistics version 25. Demographic data (age in years; gender – female, male or other; indigenous status – Māori or non-Māori) and Meke Meter™ scores were analysed using descriptive statistics including frequencies, means (reported with their standard error) and correlations (Pearson's and Spearman's Chi-square). One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) for age against gender (female, male), indigenous status (Māori, non-Māori) were also performed. Only main effects were tested.

Individuals were able to complete the Meke Meter™ whenever they chose to throughout the research period (2021). It was intended that the Meke Meter™ scores for each individual would be averaged by month, however due to a low completion rate across for 2021 the mean for each of the Meke Meter™ score totals (Mental, Physical, Social, and Overall) was calculated for each individual and changes across time not assessed. The mean scores were correlated with age. General linear mixed-effects models (GLMMs) were then employed to detect associations, if any, between the demographic data, and the mean Meke Meter™ scores of POD users. Only the main effects were tested. GLMMs were also used to determine if there were any differences between POD and non-POD user scores.

### 6.4 Results

Of the 30 individuals that entered the DOMNUI promo code, a total of 27 completed the Meke Meter™ at least once during 2021. Most POD users (n = 18, 66.7%) completed the online Meke Meter™ once or twice (Table 4) thus changes over time could not be assessed. Of these, the majority were Māori (85.2%, n = 23) and female (77.8%, n = 21) (Figure 14). For Māori and non-Māori the gender proportions were not significantly different at  $\alpha = 0.05$  (z-test,  $P > 0.05$ ) therefore these factors are not confounded and can be used together in the GLMM analyses. The ages of the participants ranged from 22 to 63, with the mean age being  $36.6 \pm 2.19$  years. Gender ( $P = 0.604$ ) and indigenous status ( $P = 0.152$ ) were not main effects on age, therefore age was not confounded by either of these factors. Thus age, gender and indigenous status were included in the GLMM analyses.

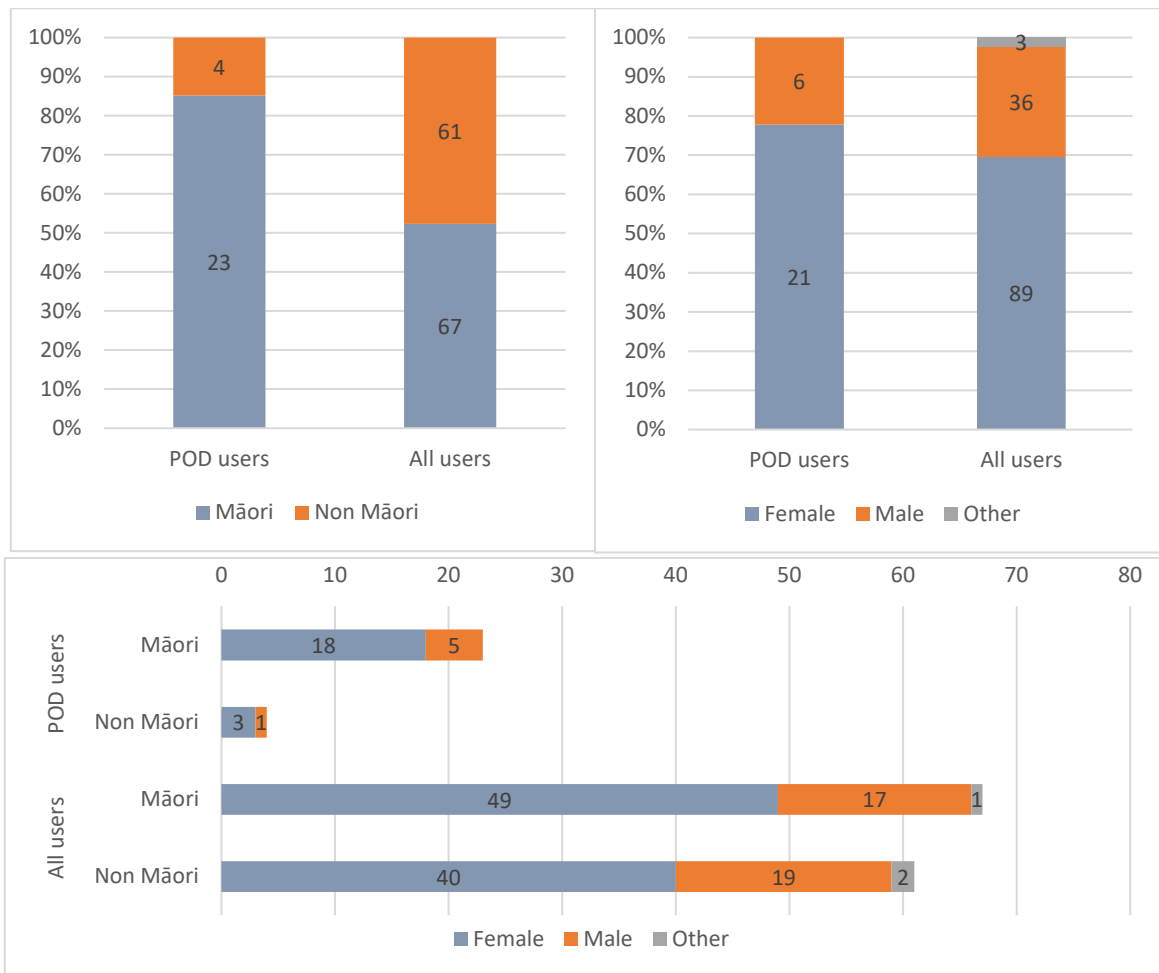


Figure 14 Gender and indigenous status of Meke Meter™ users (POD users n = 27; All users n = 128)

Table 4 Number of Meke Meters completed per user for 2021 (n = 148)

Number completed	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
	All Users	All users	POD Users	POD users
1	92	71.9	18	66.7
2	24	18.9	7	25.9
3	7	5.5	0	0.0
4	1	0.8	0	0.0
5	1	0.8	0	0.0
6	0	0.0	0	0.0
7	1	0.8	1	3.7
8	2	1.6	0	0.0
9	0	0.0	1	3.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>100.0</b>

For 2021, there were a total of 128 adult (over 18 years of age) Meke Meter™ users that provided demographic details. Of these users, 69.5% (n = 89) were female, 28.1% (n = 36) were male and 2.3% (n = 3) selected “other”; 52.3% (n = 67) were Māori (Figure 14). The ages ranged from 18 to 71, with the mean age being  $37.6 \pm 1.13$  years. Gender (P = 0.158) and Indigenous status (P = 0.099) were not main effects on age. When the three participants were removed due to the low numbers for the gender group “other”, Gender (P = 0.542) and Indigenous status (P = 0.098) remained not significant. There were no significant correlations for each of the mean total scores (Mental, Physical, Social, and Overall) with age for the POD users or all users (P > 0.100).

Figure 14 shows that a higher percentage of POD users were Māori when compared to all users (85.2% versus 52.3%, z test significantly different  $\alpha = 0.05$ ) and a higher percentage of POD users were female when compared to all users (77.8% versus 69.3%, z test significantly different  $\alpha = 0.05$ ). The frequency of online Meke Meter™ completions during 2021 for POD users is similar to that of all users (Table 4), with the majority of users only filling the Meke Meter™ out once (POD users, 66.7% versus all users, 71.9%) or twice (25.9% versus 18.9%).

No significance correlations were detected between any of the Meke Meter™ score means and age (P > 0.100) thus age was not included in any subsequent models. Gender and indigenous status were not found to be main effects for any of the mean Meke Meter™ Scores (Mental - Gender P = 0.426, Indigenous status 0.397; Physical - Gender P = 0.823, Indigenous status 0.968; Social – Gender P = 0.200, Indigenous status 0.819; Overall - Gender P = 0.510, Indigenous status 0.677). Given none of the demographic factors were main effects, a two-sample T-test were used as opposed to GLMMs to explore if there were differences between the mean Meke Meter™ scores of POD and non-POD users. No significant differences were detected (Table 5).

Table 5 Comparison of POD and non-POD user mean Meke Meter™ scores

	Mean total score $\pm$ Standard error of the mean			
	Physical	Mental	Social	Overall
POD users (n = 27)	30 $\pm$ 1.8	33 $\pm$ 1.7	34 $\pm$ 1.6	98 $\pm$ 4.5
Non-POD users (n = 128)	30 $\pm$ 0.8	30 $\pm$ 0.9	32 $\pm$ 0.8	92 $\pm$ 2.2
<i>T-Test P value</i>	<i>0.888</i>	<i>0.101</i>	<i>0.181</i>	<i>0.232</i>
All Meke Meter™ users	30 $\pm$ 0.7	31 $\pm$ 0.8	32 $\pm$ 0.7	93 $\pm$ 2.0



*The above analysis should be repeated with the 2022 Meke Meter™ data when it becomes available to ascertain if a difference exists between the Meke Meter scores of POD and non-POD users.*



## 7. Outcomes Facilitated by the M.E.K.E. Initiative Research

Many of the outcomes facilitated by the M.E.K.E. Initiative research go beyond the health and fitness of the Maraenui community, some of which are listed below and many of which are captured as part of Levi's written personal reflection which can be found at the end of this section.

This HRC-funded initiative has enabled the nurturing of new and emerging Māori researchers, provided opportunities for increased the media coverage and positive influencing, inspired academic success and the development of both learning and new business opportunities in the Maraenui community.

### 7.1 Growth of emerging researchers

Levi and Dana both completed postgraduate study and achieved EIT Masters with Distinction. This would not have been possible without HRC support of the M.E.K.E. Initiative research as a Masters stipend was included in the HRC funding. Figure 15 shows Levi and Dana with their tamariki on EIT-Te Pūkenga Graduation Day 9<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

- Dana's thesis can be viewed at <https://www.researchbank.ac.nz/handle/10652/5779>
- Levi's thesis can be viewed at <https://www.researchbank.ac.nz/handle/10652/5666>



*Figure 16 Levi and Dana and their tamariki on EIT's Graduation Day 9th Sept 2022*

7.2 National and local media engagement – Positive press for the Maraenui Community  
 The POD and achievements of the Armstrongs has given Maraenui positive press (examples are provided in Figures 16- 22). The positive press for the Maraenui community with associated wellbeing benefits.

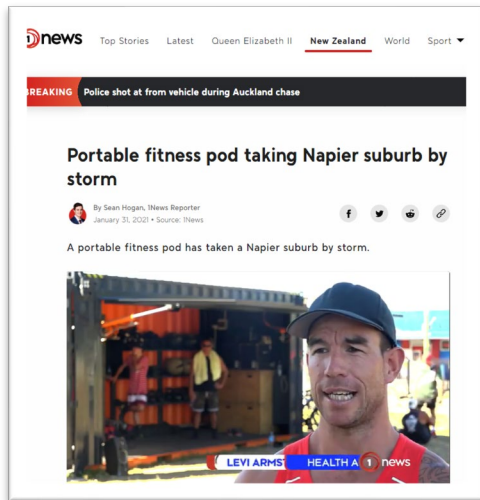


Figure 17 TV One News an item on the POD in Maraenui.  
 The full item can be found here  
<https://www.1news.co.nz/2021/01/30/portable-fitness-pod-taking-napier-suburb-by-storm/>



Figure 18 Andrew Austin interviewed Levi and Dana for his show Austin on Air on Radio Kidnappers

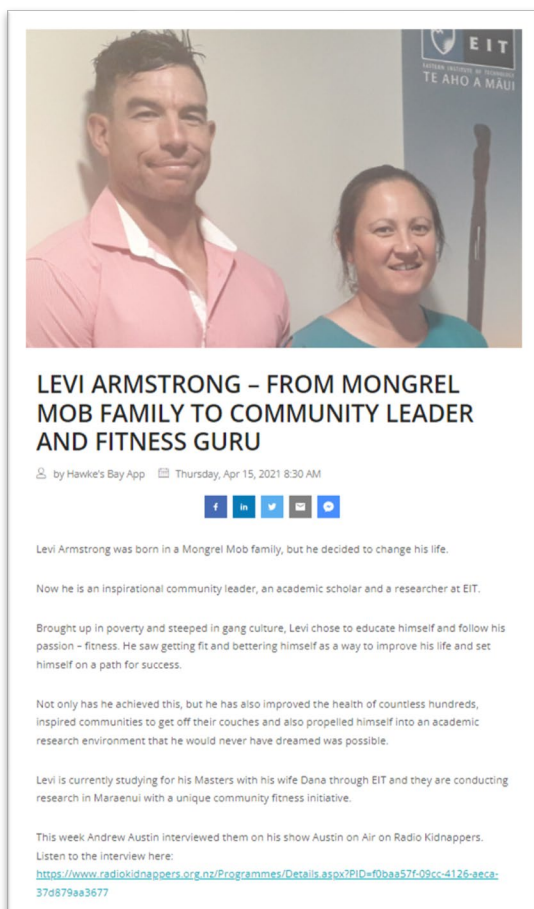


Figure 19 A Hawke's Bay App story featured Levi and Dana  
 See <https://cdn.hbapp.co.nz/news/lifestyle/levi-armstrong-from-mongrel-mob-family-to-community-leader-and-fitness-guru>

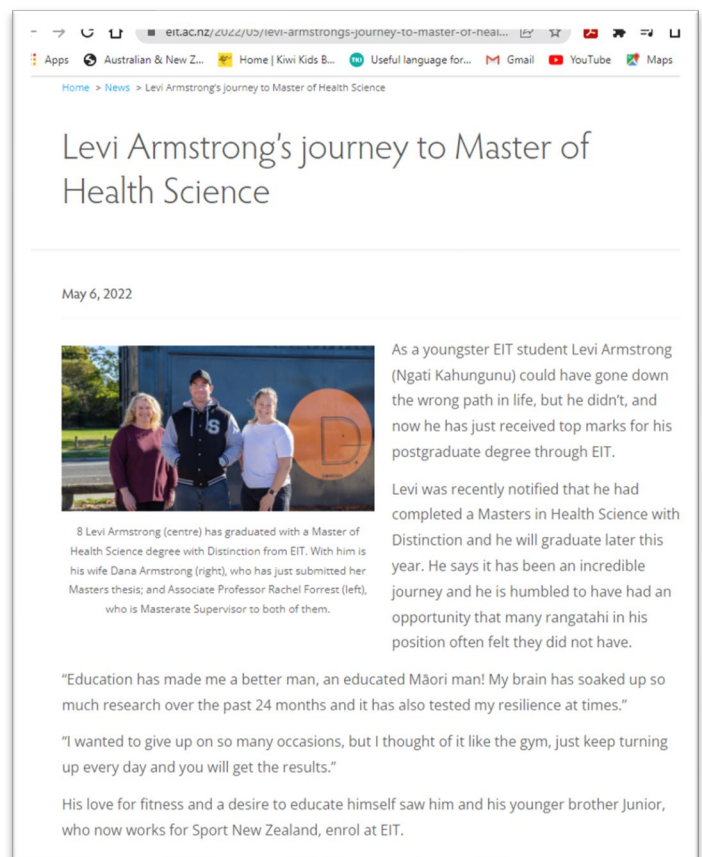


Figure 20 EIT published Levi's story as an inspiration to others. The full story is here  
<https://www.eit.ac.nz/2022/05/levi-armstrongs-journey-to-master-of-health-science/>



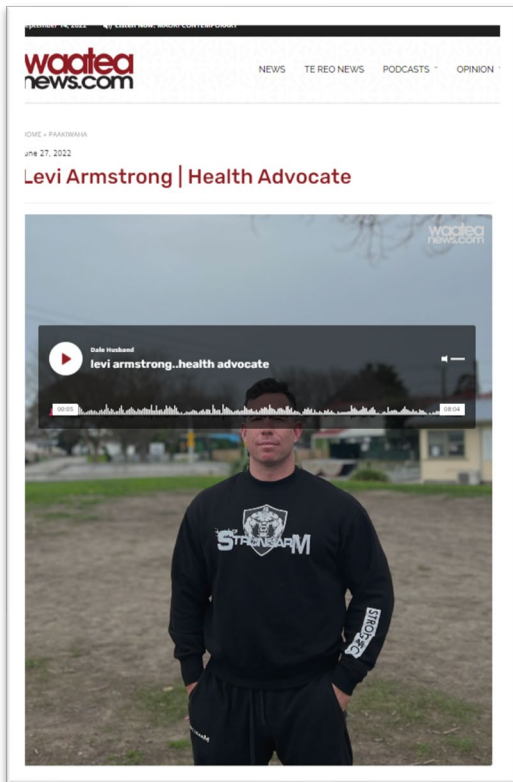


Figure 21 Levi interviewed by Dale Husband for Waatea news.com. Listen to the interview at <https://waateanews.com/2022/06/27/levi-armstrong-health-advocate/>



Figure 23 Hawke's Bay App story. Read it here [https://cdn.hbapp.co.nz/news/news/hawkes-bay-community-leader-unveils-inspirational-video?fbclid=IwAR20azo\\_Dj76H6M7qmtBOmp9k\\_RiiTEDTSJz7dT8VbHoOCsZ9DZvfHhmsjk](https://cdn.hbapp.co.nz/news/news/hawkes-bay-community-leader-unveils-inspirational-video?fbclid=IwAR20azo_Dj76H6M7qmtBOmp9k_RiiTEDTSJz7dT8VbHoOCsZ9DZvfHhmsjk)

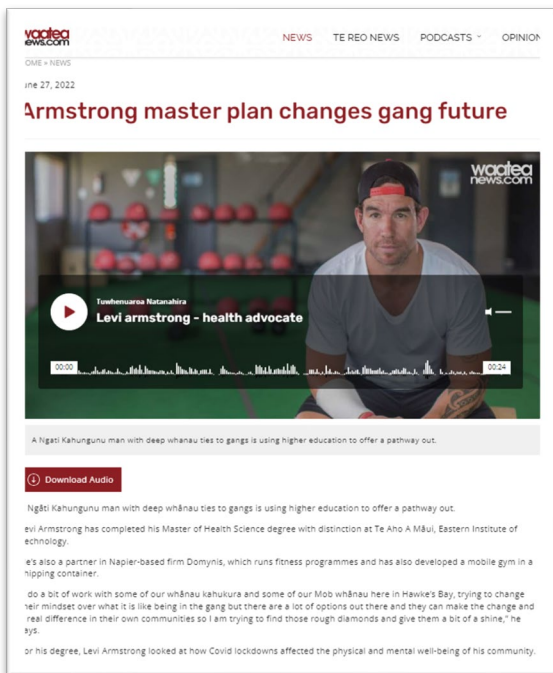


Figure 22 Levi interviewed by Tuwhenuaroa Natanahira for Waatea news.com. Listen to the interview at <https://waateanews.com/2022/06/27/armstrong-master-plan-changes-gang-future/>

### 7.3 Academic success of M.E.K.E. Initiative participants

Four M.E.K.E. Initiative participants completed the Health and Fitness Level 4 Certificate at EIT in 2021 (Figure 23).



Figure 24 Maraenui POD and Strongarm whānau graduates of the EIT Health and Fitness Level 4 Certificate

In response to community demand, EIT is now providing NZ Certificate in Foundation Skills – Exercise and Wellbeing (level 2) (Figure 24) from their learning hub in Maraenui and Levi is one of the tutors. This course is well subscribed to (18 enrolled in semester 2, 2021) and allows a pathway for the people of the Maraenui community to upskill and is part of the vision whereby trainers are grown from within the community and able to create their own businesses and give back to the community.

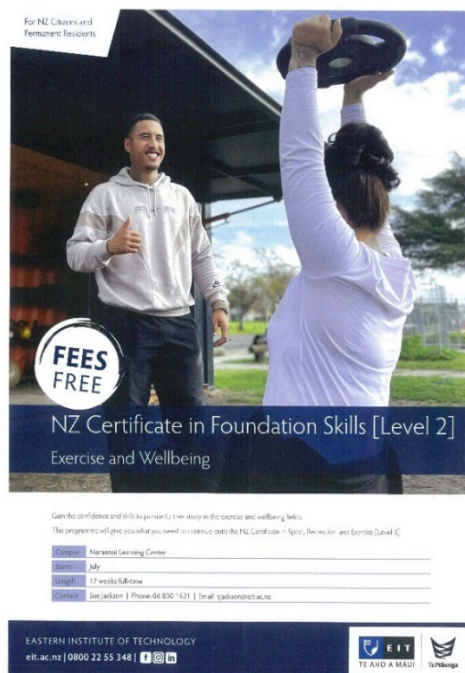


Figure 25 EIT-Te Pūkenga flyer advertising the Level 2 Exercise and Wellbeing course being run from the Maraenui Learning Hub.



## 7.4 Sustainable funding models explored

*“I think that's a real bonus of this whole initiative is having the evaluation alongside it. So that, you know, it gives funders and others evidence that they're always looking for...and hopefully building a bit of a momentum for it.” P26 NCC female*

The NCC facilitated a stakeholder meeting where an interim report on the M.E.K.E Initiative (Appendix B) was presented. There was a significant amount of interest and the NCC developed a funding model/mechanism to enable multiple stakeholders to contribute funds to ensure that the POD remains in Maraenui and is able to continue to provide free health and fitness for the community. Napier Mayor Kirsten Wise acknowledged this in a Facebook Post which Levi shared with the POD Facebook Group (Figure 25) helping to continually improve the relationship between the NCC and Maraenui community. NCC is currently working with other Councils in the North Island to help them implement PODs in their underserved communities.

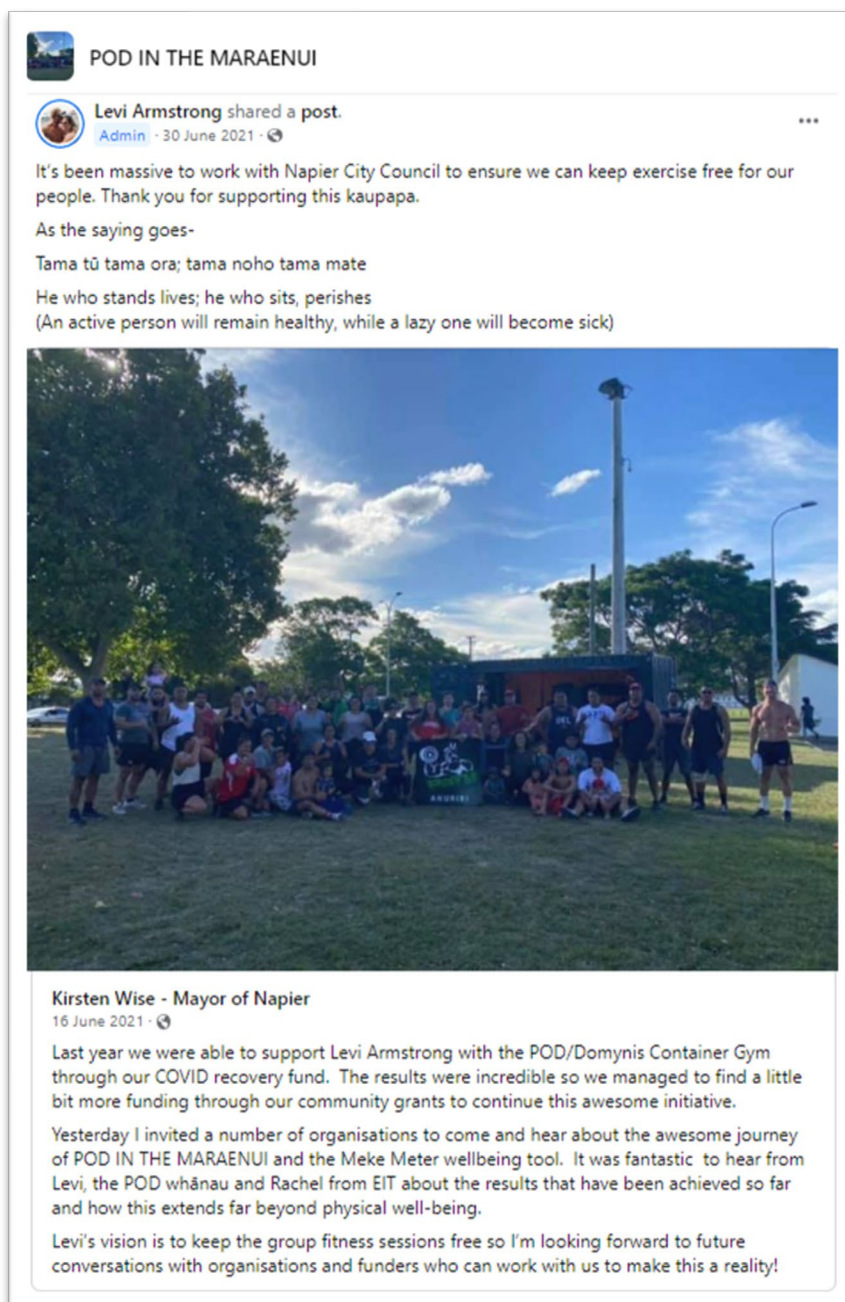


Figure 26 A Facebook post by Napier Mayor Kirsten Wise expressing support for the POD in Maraenui.

## 7.5 Tane Ora – The Strongarm Brotherhood

As part of the M.E.K.E. Initiative the Tane Ora group named Strongarm was established to focus on the hauora of the tane of the whānau, to inspire the older members to be positive role models and the younger members to aspire to a healthy future. An inspiring YouTube video that Levi put together about the M.E.K.E. Initiative and the importance of supporting and nurturing rangatahi can be viewed [here](#).

## 7.6 Levi is now a considered a positive influencer and national celebrity

Levi is an invited member of Celebrity Speakers (Figure 25) and can share his story and that of the M.E.K.E. Initiative more widely.

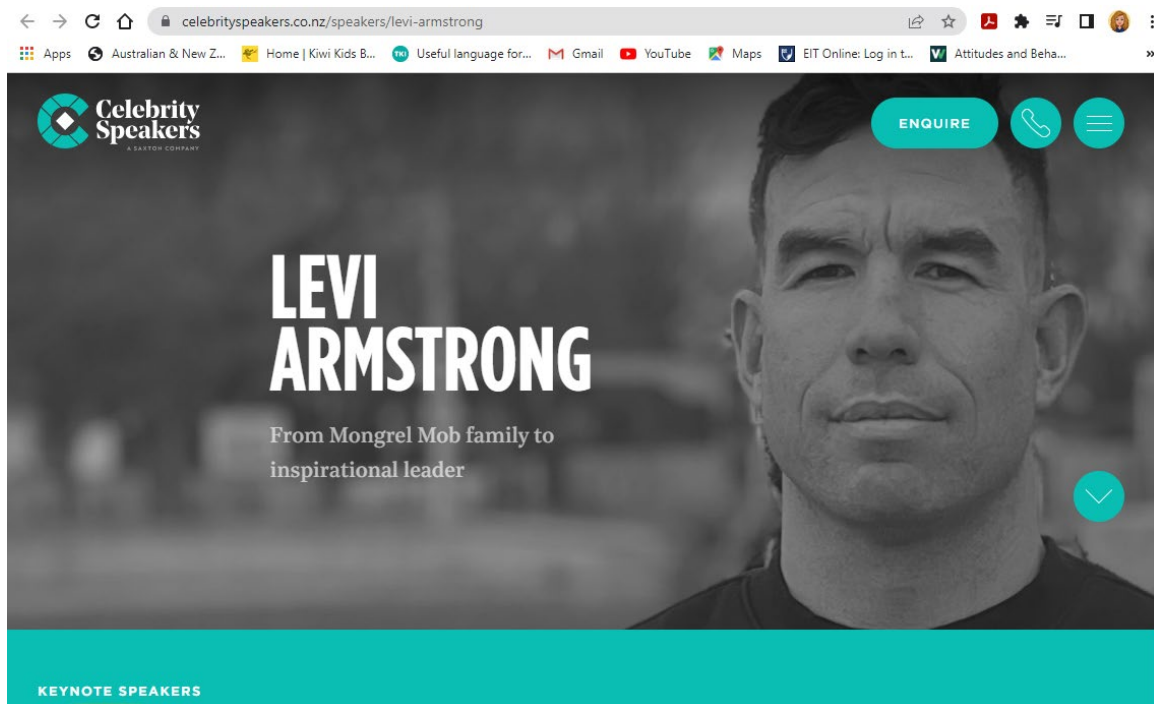


Figure 27 Celebrity Speakers webpage for Levi Armstrong <https://www.celebrityspeakers.co.nz/speakers/levi-armstrong>



*He aha te mea nui o te ao?  
He tangata! He tangata! He tangata!*

*What is the most important thing in the world?  
It is people! It is people! It is people!*

## Levi Armstrong – Personal Reflection

Experience. My personal experience with the M.E.K.E. initiative has been incredible. The initiative was only supposed to be in Maraenui for several months but is approaching two years. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with the people and the community as a whole. The PATU kaupapa has been running for 10 years. While there were plenty of learning experiences and navigating through difficult waters over the decade, finding solutions to problems such as unaffordable leases and overheads has been quite a journey. We had difficulty running group exercise sessions in a big warehouse which would cost 4-5k per month and it was incredibly hard to keep costs at a minimum for clients while lease prices were increasing. A light bulb moment arose and the concept of a portable container was talked about while having a coffee with my cousin Whare Time (architect). The POD called Domynis was born and the rest is history.



*Levi and Dana Armstrong in front of the Domynis in Maraenui.*

While the M.E.K.E. initiative has been in Maraenui bring health and fitness to the people, it has also allowed our team to plant seeds in other areas. These include working with dis-engaged rangatahi living in Maraenui and in Oranga Tamariki care. It has also seen the establishment of a Tane Ora group named Strongarm which focuses on the health of the tane of the whanau with 4am workouts and the creation of a brotherhood. Re-connecting the community and enhancing whanaungatanga in the Nui by providing gathering places both in the community and online has been crucial to the success of the M.E.K.E. Initiative which is nothing without the people.

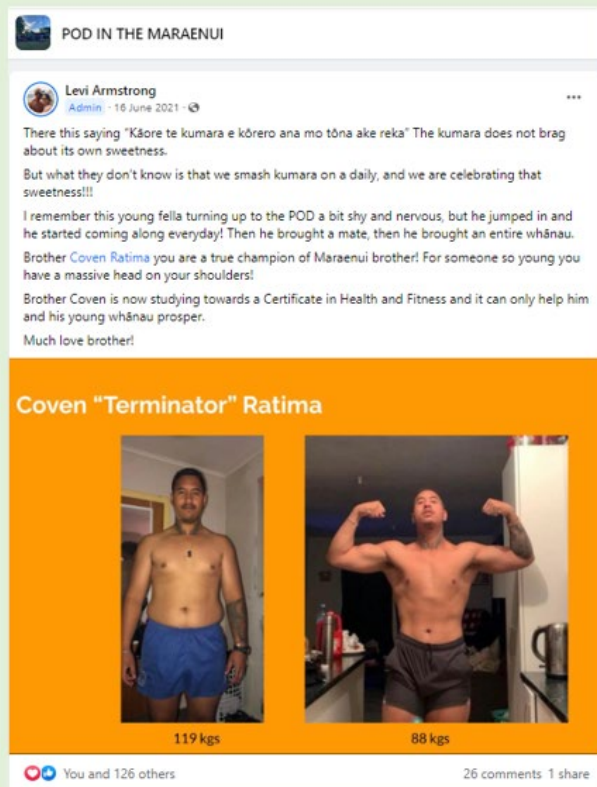


*The Strongarm Brothers. Strongarm camp and 4am gym session (above) earning their new gang patch (below).*



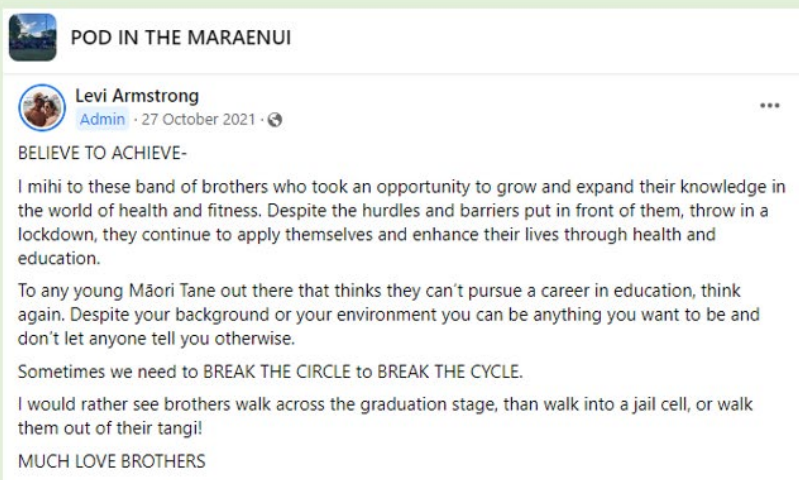


Education: The impact of the initiative has gone beyond taking health and fitness to the people. It has not only enhanced the hauora of individuals but has inspired some to become a trainers and help others - Brother MAS and Coven journeys have been MEKE! Snapshots of their journeys have been captured in the Facebook posts as a celebration and inspiration (see below).



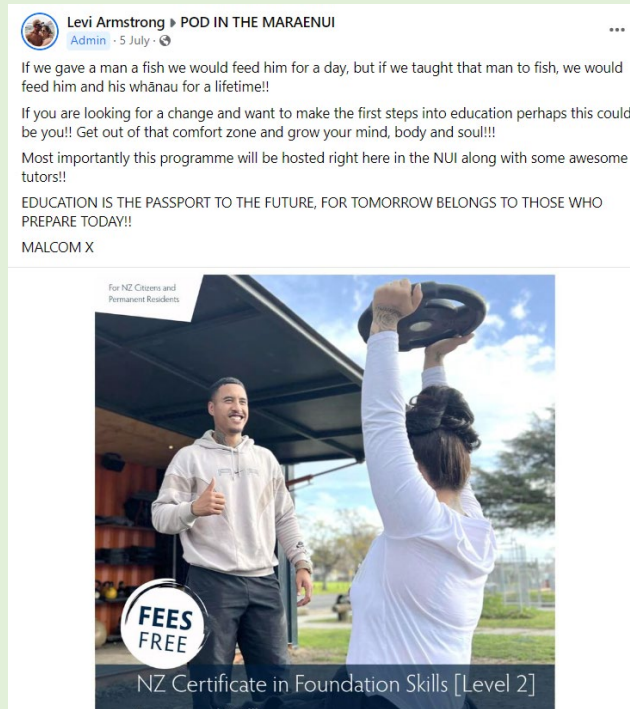
Facebook posts the celebrate and inspire POD whānau

In 2021 we had four M.E.K.E. Initiative participants enrol into the Health and Fitness Level 4 Certificate at the Eastern Institute of Technology (EIT). All four Maori tane graduated through the programme (photo below), and two of these tane put their qualification to immediate use. Sam Utiera (Mongrel Mob member) achieved highly and continued his study and pursued a Health and Fitness Level 5 Certificate which he has recently passed. At the conclusion of his Level 4 study Coven Ratima had been groomed to take over the POD activities and begin his own group exercise training business.



Celebrating education successes – using social media to change attitudes towards studying

Education has been a barrier for many whanau within Maraenui. In 2021 there were several incidents on the main campus in Taradale between opposing gangs. This was a health and safety issue for staff and students. The EIT Campus in Maraenui had been underutilised and provided a great opportunity to co-ordinate with Vicky Truman and EIT to bring the Exercise and Wellbeing Level 2 Programme to the community (fees free) and eliminate any health and safety barriers for whanau. The programme has seen an uptake of 18 students in 2022 from Maraenui with 70% of students being participants from the POD.



The desire to be equipped as well as possible to better serve our community also resulted in me and my wife Dana completing our Masters degrees which we graduated this year with distinction. It was a lot of hard mahi and tempting to throw it in at times but didn't want to let myself, whānau and the community whānau down so hang in there and smashed it!





Entrepreneurship: PATU Aotearoa was established over a decade ago. Throughout its existence there has been an expression of interest for further opportunities to grow the kaupapa in other communities. It is in this period of time that testing and trailing of potential trainers and entrepreneurs to take hold of the PATU brand and run it as their own. A good leader grows leaders and observing the transformational change of Coven Ratima (pictured in the EIT flyer above) has been amazing. Coven is born and bred Maraenui and has seen health and fitness has an opportunity to lose weight, and enhance his wellbeing and empower others to do the same by becoming a trainer.

**POD IN THE MARAENUI**

**Levi Armstrong**  
Admin · 3 January · 🌐

NEW YEAR. NEW CAP. SAME KAUPAPA. DIFFERENT BRAND.

This week will mark the PODS 1 year anniversary in the Nui and what a year it has been. It was a great opportunity to bring exercise to the people, to make it **ACHIEVABLE. ACCESSIBLE** and **AFFORDABLE** for the people of Maraenui. I thank Napier City Council for making this happen, without you guys the POD wouldn't be here.

It's has be amazing to see whānau gravitate to the POD for their own health and well-being. Exercise should be a daily regime incorporated into your life. It allows you to escape the stresses of life, the hard times and the tough times. Exercise is a drug, a free drug, that gets you high in life. Witnessing the transformations that have occurred over the past 12 months have been incredible, with plenty more to come. The brother **Coven Ratima** is one of them.

I remember when Coven first arrived on the scene at the POD and have watched your journey and you have developed into a fantastic young Māori leader. From transforming your own life, taking the risk and quitting your job, to enrolling at EIT, to growing your whānau and now establishing your own brand and kaupapa. It has been a privilege and an honor brother to be by your side on this journey. **BACKYARD MOTIVATION IN THE WHARE!!**

The past 12 months have been very full on for myself and my whānau with 6 other kaupapa on the go and they all need some TLC. It's only right to hand the captaincy over to a new breed of warrior. They say a good leader, grows leaders. This has always been a vision. To show our young Māori brothers that we can be better and that we can break the shackles that hold us down.

We have some exciting new projects happening over the coming months. Particularly with our rangatahi. We need to build a fence at the top of our maunga before our rangatahi end up in the the ambulance at the bottom. We need to be at the table and not on the menu so watch this space!!!

THATSUSSSSSS

**Dana Armstrong, Aurora Akauola and 203 others** · 18 comments 20 shares

*Coven takes on a leadership role at the POD January 2022*

Environment: While the initiative has been in Maraenui there has been a quiet shift into the health and wellbeing space and many of the participants have seen exercise as a lifesaver. Turning up day in day out rain, hail and shine, exercise has been an escape from reality for many. Even the cold and wet couldn't keep whānau away but it has also highlighted barriers. While using the grounds, wear and tear has taking its toll on the whenua and also participant's shoes. Because of the support of the community we were able to use the shop fronts. There are plenty of pot holes from the weights being used and there is no more grass due to the many games and running that is being done during sessions. It has been critical to have a strong relationship with the Napier City Council and voice the concerns of whānau and the environment, the research interview have played an important role in capturing the voices of the community. This has facilitated the implementation of a concrete pad and basketball court for the POD which has been a great addition to the park.



*Rain never dampened the wairua*

The HINAKI: Throughout the duration of The M.E.K.E. Initiative we have witnessed an increase in health and fitness. The POD has been a stepping stone for those who have found it too hard or uncomfortable to attend mainstream gyms in Napier. Many gyms have certain restrictions, particularly for those who belong to a gang. These barriers are slowly breaking down for whanau with gang affiliations and there seems to be more acceptance from gym owners. Further work is required for the general users who may feel intimidated by gang members. The POD has been a kickstart for many on their fitness journey and it has also seen them further develop their wellbeing by enrolling with other gyms who have a wider range of equipment eg, CityFitness, Crossfit, Audina Fitness etc.

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## 9. Appendices

Appendix A: Participant information sheet and consent form

Appendix B: The M.E.K.E. Initiative (Interim report June 2021)



**Participant Information Sheet: M.E.K.E in Maraenui**

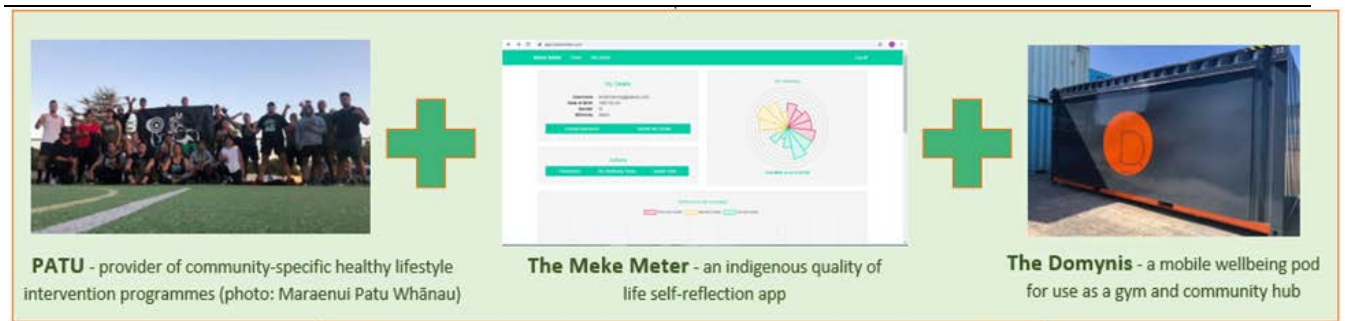
Please let us know if you would prefer this document in Te Reo Māori or require an interpreter.

**Formal study title:** The M.E.K.E. Initiative: Taking health and fitness to whānau.

**Lead Researcher:** Rachel Forrest, Eastern Institute of Technology

**Contact phone number:** (06) 830 1524

**Ethics committee ref.:** WTFE01150221 (Wintec - Human Ethics in Research Group)



The M.E.K.E. Initiative brings together the Patu healthy lifestyle programmes, the Meke Meter (a wellbeing self-assessment tool which embraces Te Whare Tapa Whā) and the Domyntis wellbeing pod (a mobile container gym) that takes health and fitness. Each of these was made by Māori, for Māori to help people to make positive life choices. As an adult (18 years or over) that is part of, or connected to, the Maraenui community you are invited to take part in this study that aims to find out what people feel the impact of the M.E.K.E Initiative has been on the health and wellbeing of the Maraenui community.

This Participant Information Sheet will help you decide if you'd like to take part in this study. It explains why we are doing the study, what you can do to take part, and what happens after the study ends. We will go through this information with you and answer any questions you may have. This information sheet is four pages long, including the Consent Form. Please make sure you have read and understood all the pages.



## VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL FROM THIS STUDY

Whether or not you take part in this study is your choice. You do not have to decide today. If you don't want to take part, you don't have to give a reason and it won't stop you taking part in the M.E.K.E. Initiative. Before you decide you may want to talk about it with other people, such as whānau, or friends. Feel free to do this. If you do agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign the Consent Form which is on the last page of this pamphlet. You will be given a copy of both the Participant Information Sheet and the Consent Form to keep.

If you do choose to take part in this study you will be given a participant number to identify your contribution to the study and you can access any of the information you have given at any time provided you know this number. Only the research team will have access to your information which will be stored by participant number (and not your name). No one else can access your information which will be kept private and confidential. If you change your mind, you may withdraw any information you share as long as you know your participant number and it is before the final report has been written (August 2021). To withdraw information please contact [rforrest@eit.ac.nz](mailto:rforrest@eit.ac.nz)

## WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY INVOLVE?

You can choose how you would like to take part in this study. Your choices include:

- being interviewed either by yourself or as part of a group (about 8 people)
- providing written thoughts to a member of the research team
- providing anonymous comments on a feedback form and posting it in a feedback box
- providing any other form of expression such as waiata/songs, art and poems

**Interviews:** These will occur at a location of your choosing. Individual interview may take 20- 30 minutes while group interviews may take up to 1 hour (maybe longer). You will be given a unique participant number which will be used to identify your contribution to the study. The interviews will be audio recorded and the research will also take notes. You are welcome to bring friends and or whānau to the interviews as support. The following questions will guide the interviews (group and individual):

- What is your connection to the Maraenui Community?
- With what ethnic group(s) do you identify?
- What does health and wellbeing (hauora) mean to you?
- How has/did the pandemic impacted on your health and wellbeing (Social and family, Physical, Mental Spiritual)?
- Did you take part in the Meke Initiative?
  - If so, why? What impact do you think the M.E.K.E. Initiative has had on your wellbeing?
  - Of not, why not? What impact do you think the M.E.K.E. Initiative has had on people's wellbeing in Maraenui?
- What do you think the strengths of the M.E.K.E. initiative are?
- How do you think the M.E.K.E. Initiative could be improved?
- Is there anything else related to the M.E.K.E. Initiative you would like to share?

**Self-reported comments/feedback:** Paper and pens will be provided at interviews so that you can write down your answers if you prefer. You may also email your answers to [meke@eit.ac.nz](mailto:meke@eit.ac.nz)

**Anonymous Feedback:** Feedback boxes will be placed at the Domynis and within the community shopping centre. The feedback forms will have a feedback form number on them which we encourage you to record

somewhere in case you wish to withdraw your contribution at a later date. The feedback form will also ask for the following information to be recorded:

- Are you a Maraenui resident? Yes/No
- Have you taken part in the fitness session run out of the Domytis wellbeing Pod? Yes/No
- What gender are you? Female/Male/Gender Diverse
- Are you: Māori/Pasifica/Other
- Are you over 18? Yes/No
- What is your age (optional)?

**Other forms of expression:** If you wish show what you think the impact of the M.E.K.E. Initiative has been through a poem, song, or some other forms of art we encouraged you to contact the research team so that you can share it in a way you want to. If you wish for your creativity to be personally acknowledged please let the researcher know as usually we do not use peoples names when carrying out research.

#### WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?

Your contribution to this study is very important for the future development of the M.E.K.E Initiative to better serve the people of your community and our researchers will work together with you to share knowledge in a respectful, caring and safe environment. There are no foreseeable risks to you as a result of being part of this study.

#### WILL ANY COSTS BE REIMBURSED?

You will not incur any costs related to this study. You will not be paid for being part of this study though a koha (food and refreshments) will be provided at interviews.

#### WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE STUDY?

We hope you will continue to work with local researchers to come up with ways to improve community health and wellbeing. All the information collected from this study will be stored securely by Dr Rachel Forrest at EIT. All data will be stored in an anonymous or de-identified form (by participant number) and kept for five years and then destroyed.

The findings of this study will be presented at a community hui where a summary will be available and as a Final Reports to the Health Research Council of New Zealand and Napier City Council. We will also seek to publish the research in an academic journal.

#### WHO IS FUNDING THE STUDY?

This study is supported by the Health Research Council (HRC) of New Zealand, Napier City Council, and the Eastern Institute of Technology.

#### WHO HAS APPROVED THE STUDY?

This study has been approved by an HRC accredited ethics committee (the Wintec Human Ethics in Research Group), who check that studies meet established ethical standards.

**WHO DO I CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION OR IF I HAVE CONCERNS?**

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about the study at any stage, you can contact:

*Name:* Rachel Forrest, Lead researcher  
*Phone:* (06) 8301524  
*Email:* [rforrest@eit.ac.nz](mailto:rforrest@eit.ac.nz)

If you want to talk to someone who isn't involved with the study, you can contact an independent health and disability advocate on:

*Phone:* 0800 555 050  
*Fax:* 0800 2 SUPPORT (0800 2787 7678)  
*Email:* [advocacy@advocacy.org.nz](mailto:advocacy@advocacy.org.nz)  
*Website:* <https://www.advocacy.org.nz/>

For Maori health support please contact:

*Name* Te Wāhanga Hauora Māori Health Services  
*Phone:* 06 878 1654 or 0800 333 671  
*Email* [admin.maorihealth@hawkesbaydhb.govt.nz](mailto:admin.maorihealth@hawkesbaydhb.govt.nz)

You can also contact the Wintec Human Ethics in Research Group that approved this study on:

*Name* Megan Allardice, Research Coordinator  
*Phone:* 07 834 8800 ext 3582  
*Email* [Megan.Allardice@wintec.ac.nz](mailto:Megan.Allardice@wintec.ac.nz)

**Consent Form: M.E.K.E in Maraenui**

**Please let us know if you would prefer this document in Te Reo Māori or require an interpreter.**

The M.E.K.E. Initiative: Taking health and fitness to whānau.

**Please tick to indicate your consent to the following.**

---

I have read or have had read to me in my first language, and I understand the Participant Information Sheet.

---

I have been given enough time to consider whether to take part in this study.

---

I have had the chance to use a legal representative, whānau/ family support or a friend to help me ask questions and understand the study.

---

I am satisfied with the answers I have been given regarding the study and I have a copy of this consent form and information sheet.

---

I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study (including any information I have provided) at any time before the final report is published.

---

I understand that my taking part in this study is confidential and that no material, which could identify me personally, will be used in any reports on this study.

---

I know who to contact if I have any questions about the study in general.

---

I understand my responsibilities as a study participant.

---

I wish to receive a summary of the results of the study. Yes  No

**Declaration by participant:**

I hereby consent (agree) to take part in this study.

Participant's name: \_\_\_\_\_

signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Declaration by a member of the research team:**

I have given a verbal explanation of the research project to the participant and have answered the participant's questions about it. I believe that the participant understands the study and has given informed consent to participate.

Researcher's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# THE M.E.K.E INITIATIVE

MOTIVATE.  
ENGAGE.  
KONNECT.  
EVOLVE.





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# THE PROBLEM

- Māori are disproportionately affected by chronic disease and inequitable health outcomes, thus are more vulnerable to the negative wellbeing impacts of a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Māori adults have higher rates for most health conditions (most notably for diabetes, high blood pressure and asthma) and both Māori adult and children are almost twice as likely to be obese as non-Māori (MOH, 2019).
- Along with the detrimental health outcomes, long-term conditions can impact on an individual's ability to work and interact socially which can cause people's lifestyles to change dramatically (NHC, 2007).
- Financial worries can become a struggle for an individual living with a long-term condition especially in low decile areas (MOH, 2009).
- Fear, anxiety and frustration can allow the individual to also isolate themselves from friendships and work commitments leading to low self-esteem and self-worth (NHC, 2007). It is therefore not surprising that depression is a common comorbidity with long-term conditions, and it is predicted that depressive disorders will be the greatest cause of disease in the world by 2030 (WHO, 2011).
- In New Zealand, Māori and Pacific adults experience higher rates of psychological distress than other adults (14% and 12%, respectively compared with 8% for European/other ethnicities; MOH, 2019).
- People living in the most socioeconomically deprived areas were 2.1 times as likely to experience psychological distress as people living in the least deprived areas, after adjusting for age, gender and ethnicity (MOH, 2019).
- Māori make up 51% of the prison population



# THE STATS

- Maraenui is a Hawke's bay community in a high deprivation area with a predominantly Māori residency.
- Maraenui had 3504 residents, 59% of whom were Māori
- Less than half of the residents are employed full time (44%, c.f. Napier city 47%).
- The median income is \$20,200 with 3% over \$70 000 (c.f. Napier \$31,300 with 18% over \$70, 000).



# THE SOLUTION

## CREATING A UNIQUE SPACE FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO ENJOY AND EMPOWER

The social mission driving this initiative is to use a holistic pro-equity approach to health and wellbeing and provide Māori driven innovations to facilitate and empower communities to improve their wellbeing, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This will be achieved by making healthy lifestyle interventions culturally-centred, accessible, and achievable for people living in high deprivation areas of Aotearoa New Zealand.





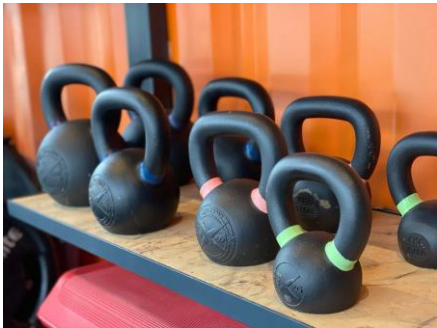
# DOMYNIS



The wellbeing pod is designed as a mobile gym or flexible space that stores all the necessary equipment for the particular target group including lighting and a speaker system within it. The uniqueness of the pod's design is that it allows people to 'come together, move together', with a focus on the mental, physical and social wellbeing of whānau. This container gym or urban marae concept is also unique because it can be slotted into the community depending on need and can then be moved to another location when its service is no longer required.

As a POD, it can also be utilised by micro-business operators such as Zumba or CrossFit, personal trainers, yoga or pilates, enabling small businesses to develop without the huge costs involved in renting traditional spaces in existing gyms.

As a social hub, the pod can be a meeting place led by youth with a Māori kaupapa but for everybody. When thinking about young Māori and mental health, the wellbeing pod is way of reaching those in need who might not seek support from counselling or mental health due to the stigma surrounding it. However, when speaking with them, they have told us they are likely to be drawn to a gym and social youth hub that is designed for Māori by Māori.



# PATU



A group exercise programme with a difference. The aim is to engage with whānau and decrease inactivity rates in New Zealand in particular Māori and Pacific Island. The programme is delivered by Māori, for Māori, using te ao Māori concepts. By taking exercise to people, they are able to reach people who find it difficult to attend a gym and offer programmes in places where they are more comfortable.

## Urban marae and physical space that is open and accessible for all

The physical space has been found to be critical to the model working as has including all levels of the community. It is through pitching the service at a whānau and community level that patu create whānaungatanga (bonding and kinship that provides people with a sense of belonging). "The difference between what patu does and what an ordinary gym does is exemplified in the manner in which participants relate to one another" (Goodwin et al., 2014, p.6).

## A sense of belonging

The patu approach is proving to build whānau capability through a strong sense of cultural identity reflected in the iconic Māori warrior logo that is promoted as a patch worn proudly by patu

Members, creating a positive place for whānau to thrive both individually and collectively. It is the patu patch that members are now committed to, beyond other patches that members may be affiliated to.

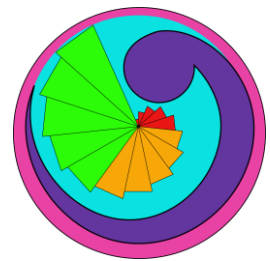
## A strong tikanga and the interweaving of te atuaanga, te reo, and Māori culture.

Being Māori is "embraced as natural, valid, and legitimate in every aspect... and the results of this are astonishing" (Goodwin et al., 2014, p.6). For example, cardio exercises stem from Tawhirimatea and his domain as god of the winds, while core exercise stems from Papatuanuku as earth mother as whānau complete all core exercises on the ground. Te reo Māori and te reo Pakeha (English) are used throughout the sessions. A holistic approach addressing all levels of development including: tinana (body/physical), hinengaro (mind/psychological), wairua (spirituality) and whānau (family/kinship).

## *Patu is achieving some outstanding results in terms of positive life changes for participants" Evaluation commissioned by Te Puni Kokiri*



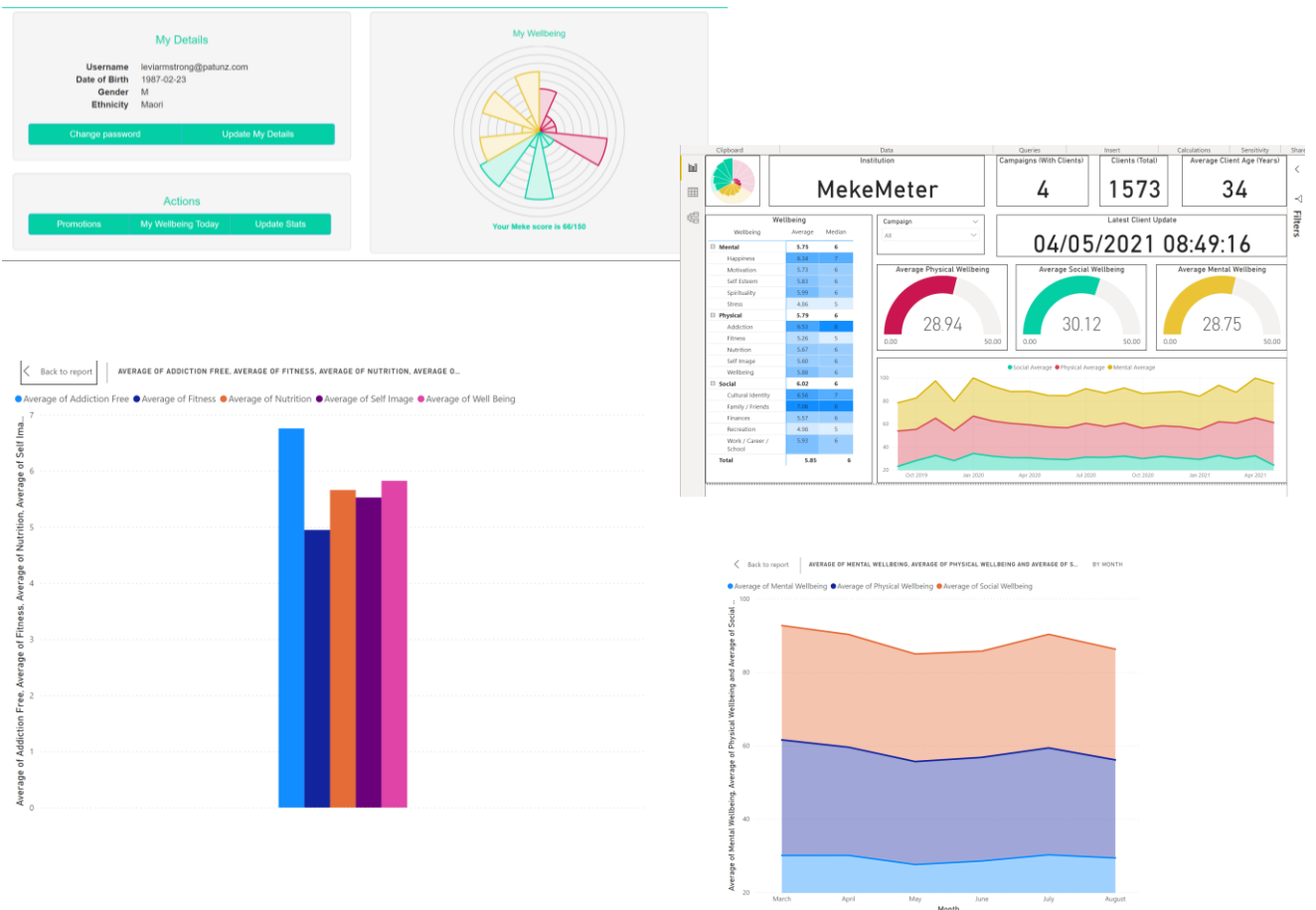
# THE MEKE METER



**The Meke Meter™ encompasses the WHO philosophy, "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (WHO, 2020 )."**

The Meke Meter™ is a Quality-of-Life Indigenous Instrument (QOLII). The holistic measurement tool was developed in consultation with Māori and indigenous communities who attended PATU (Forrest et al., 2019). The instrument is an image-based, holistic, self-reflection tool with minimal text. It does not require the user to write but instead scores themselves out of 10 on Mental Well-being, Social Wellbeing, and Physical Wellbeing (Forrest et al., 2019). In 2019 an online platform was established for The Meke Meter™ to capture basic demographics, including age, ethnicity, and location, along with participants wellbeing.

Te Whare Tapa Wha translates as the four sides of a house, each linked and co-dependent to create a sustainable structure (Durie and Kingi, 1997). Te Whare Tapa Wha and the understanding that the four pillars of a whare (house) represent mental (hinengaro), physical (tinana), social (whanau), and spiritual (wairua), respectively (Roachford, 2004). Taking a holistic approach to Maori health and well-being ensures all pillars of Te Whare Tapa Wha complement each other to achieve optimal health and well-being (Durie and Kingi, 1997). The Meke Meter™ uses a continuous approach whereby the user will rate themselves on a scale from 1-10 (1 feeling awful and ten feeling "Meke" or excellent). The scale is rated in equal



# THE RESEARCH TEAM

## The M.E.K.E. Initiative: Taking health and fitness to whānau

HRC Research Grant  
Year: 2020  
Duration: 12 months



### Lay summary

The isolation experienced by people in high deprivation communities has increased after the COVID-19 pandemic with job losses and fears for health for people with chronic diseases. The M.E.K.E. Initiative brings together three innovations developed by Māori, for Māori: Patu healthy lifestyle programmes, the Meke Meter (a self-reported wellbeing tool which embraces Te Whare Tapa Whā) and the Domynis (a mobile container gym or 'wellbeing pod') that takes health and fitness to the people. This project will pilot an approach to imbed the Domynis in the middle of a shopping centre in a high deprivation neighbourhood, running Patu programmes from this pod and tracking community wellbeing using the online Meke Meter app. We will use a kaupapa Māori approach to investigate whether the placement of the pod in the community increases whānau engagement and capture the community's perception of the impact of this initiative on their wellbeing.

Assoc Prof Rachel Forrest - Ngāti Maniapoto; Associate Professor, EIT; PhD in Molecular Genetics, Postgraduate Diploma in Laboratory Technology, BSc in Zoology. Rachel has had 20 years of research experience in the areas of human and animal health. As a member of the EIT research community, Rachel has been involved in researching and evaluating various locally-based human health interventions and initiatives such as Smokefree Schools, Bike On, Maraenui on the Move, Healthy Lifestyle Nurse Led Clinics, Continuity of Cancer Care, Nutrition in Older People, Patu Healthy Lifestyle Interventions and the Meke Meter. Rachel has more than 50 peer-reviewed publications to date.

Fiona Cram Ngāti Pahauwera - Fiona has a PhD in social and developmental psychology from the University of Otago. She has lectured in Social Psychology and has also been a Senior Research Fellow within IRI (the International Research Institute of Māori and Indigenous Education), at the University of Auckland. In the middle of 2003 Fiona established Katoa Ltd. The over-riding theme of Fiona's work is Kaupapa Māori (by Māori, for Māori). Fiona has an existing research partnership with EIT and Levi and has used the Meke Meter in her research projects. Fiona is Editor-in-Chief of the Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluation Association (ANZEA) new evaluation journal, Evaluation Matters - He Take Tō Te Aromatawai, published by the NZCER.

Maria Pearson – Senior Lecturer and Research Associate, EIT; MphEd University of Otago. Maria's research interests lie in facilitating healthy communities in a holistic manner. This research requires both qualitative and quantitative research methods and data analysis. Maria is currently involved in the following research projects: Nourishing Hawke's Bay: He wairua tō te kai, companion animal welfare, funding women's sport, oncology specialist referrals, and Patu initiatives. She has also been involved in research on nurse-led care, missed nursing care, and registered nurse prescribing.

Levi Armstrong Ngāti Kahungunu – Co-Founder, PATU, The Meke Meter and Domynis. Completed a BRS in 2011 and has worked for Sport Hawke's Bay. Since 2014 has worked closely with EIT to establish ongoing research that will benefit the Patu Whānau and help grow Patu grow as a social enterprise business focused on addressing Māori health issues associated with sedentary lifestyles. Currently studying towards a Masters in Health Science

Dana Armstrong Ngāti Kahungunu – BEd in Secondary School Physical Education & Health, Diploma in Teaching, Postgraduate Certificate in Digital and Collaborative Learning. Dana has 16 years of teaching experience in Hawke's Bay Co-Ed secondary schools. During this time, she has been involved in specialist pastoral care of students as a Dean. She has also gained Middle Management experience through her role as an in-school teacher within the Ahuriri Kāhui Ako. Currently studying towards a Masters in Health Science





## **THE JOURNEY SO FAR IN AHURIRI...**

**THE M.E.K.E INITIATIVE WAS SUPPORTED BY THE NAPIER CITY COUNCIL AS A COVID RECOVERY PROJECT**

- **THE POD SPENT TWO MONTHS ON MARINE PARADE AND SIX MONTHS IN MARAENUI.**
- **8 MONTHS, 512 SESSIONS, 10,240 VISITS**
- **FREE TO THE COMMUNITY**
- **HRC COVID EQUITY GRANT TO THE VALUE OF \$130000**
- **\$13200 FROM NAPIER CITY COUNCIL COVID FUND**

# THE IMPACT

The presence of this initiative in Maraenui has enabled the community and whanau to improve their overall quality of life, physically, mentally and socially. Through the research and evaluation conducted both external and internal, the pillars of success have been identified as critical to how this initiative creates longitudinal and sustainable impact

## Some key themes:

- Promotes whanaunagtanga and kotahitanga (enhanced social wellbeing) – connectedness and unity.
- Inclusive (enhanced social wellbeing) – young and old, residents and non-residents, all ethnicities, all levels of fitness, free so money is not a barrier.
- Positive emotions (enhanced mental wellbeing) – people feel welcomed, enjoyment, fun, love, supported, encouraged, energetic, motivated, more confident/empowered, thankfulness, belonging.
- Positive goal setting (enhanced physical, mental and social wellbeing) – individual and group goals, improving fitness, losing weight, eating better, coming off drugs and/or alcohol, forming new friendships.





## Representative quotes from:

### Non-resident, non-POD users

*I have not been a part of the M.E.K.E. programme myself but have seen the turnout that it gets from many diverse members of the Community. They seem to very much enjoy it and I believe that it can only be a good thing for the Maraenui Community. It promotes group exercise that brings the Community together and creates a sense of unity and common purpose. That can only have a positive effect on the hauora of the individuals and Community as a whole.*

*POD seems like a really positive focal point for the community. The participants bring a lot of energy to the area, which is contagious. The POD has a positive effect on both physical and mental wellbeing!*

### Non-resident, POD users

*Sessions at the POD motivate and energise me. They help me with fitness and to get to know people. Everyone is very supportive and non-judgmental. It has changed how I think about the Maraenui community. They are lovely people. I hope the pod stays in Maraenui permanently.*

*For me, the POD has been a positive group to come to every morning. I'm not a morning person, but I love starting my mornings here. I have come to love fitness and have finally understood how it contributes to my overall happiness and wellbeing. The POD has become a tool that brings people together in a very healthy way.*

### Resident, POD users

*A positive proactive good attitude and sense of wellbeing. The more I have attended these classes, I have become closer with the other associates/members, and I have made new friends. This POD, Levi and his sessions have been an amazing opportunity for our community. Its very good to see for all our community members, young and old. My family and friends have knowledge and have participated and I'm so happy to be part of it. Thank you so much.*

*Its brought people together with a common interest, to get fit and healthy. There's all difference ages, weight, and personalities. Some whanau are utilising the Domynis to help them get off drugs and/or alcohol. To bring some structure and routine into their daily life struggles. This is a place where together we are strong and we tautoko each other. Whakawhanaungatanga, kotahitanga, and manaakitangi are all part of what Levi and the Domynis bring to our community.*

### Resident, non-POD users

*I see a lot of people using the POD all through the day. People are happy and enjoying it. It should be made a permanent feature in Maraenui. (Shop owner)*

*Its helping the young people. Keeping them out of trouble.*

The innovative model of offering free group-based exercise, within an urban marae setting, that incorporates tikanga and Māori culture and targets the holistic development, including belonging to the patch was found to ultimately translate into members wanting to attend the Pod sessions and undertaking further positive and healthy activities.



Weight loss for people with obesity is not about looking better. A modest weight loss of 5% to 10% is an achievable way to prevent type 2 diabetes in susceptible individuals. Weight losses in this range is also associated with significant improvements in cardiovascular disease risk factors and has been found to improve pain and function and decreases low-grade inflammation.



Building capability and capacity within the Maraenui community while creating education and employment opportunities. These members have recently enrolled at EIT to pursue a Certificate in Health and Fitness. Beyond physical benefits, research has shown the initiative to significantly impact the psychological wellbeing of whānau members.

- 85% are more connected as a result of the initiative.
- 100% reported an improved sense of worth.
- 85% felt the initiative helped them achieve their non fitness life goals- including education and employment.





There have been many whanau who have chronic illnesses such as cancer, that attend the POD and have seen drastic improvements and a faster recovery rate from their treatment plans

***“If it wasn’t for the POD, I don’t think I will be here”***



The POD has given the community a great vibe being centred right in the heart of the shopping centre and given tamariki and rangatahi a safe place to hang out after schools.

***“A kid in sport, is a kid out of court”***

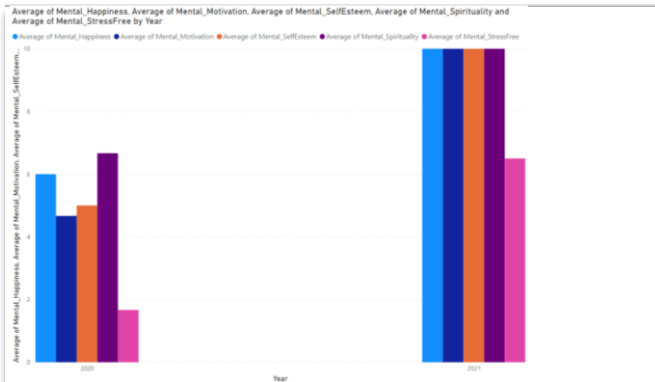
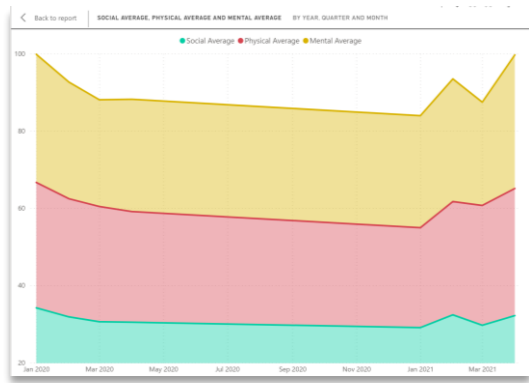
The POD has provided whanau with a sense of belonging and enabled further participation in other exercise.

The STRONGARM Kaupapa is a group for Maori male looking to advance their training and also look for support and advice through a tane ora lens. The POD has been a stepping stone for many.

***“It’s a brotherhood, getting muscles is a bonus”***

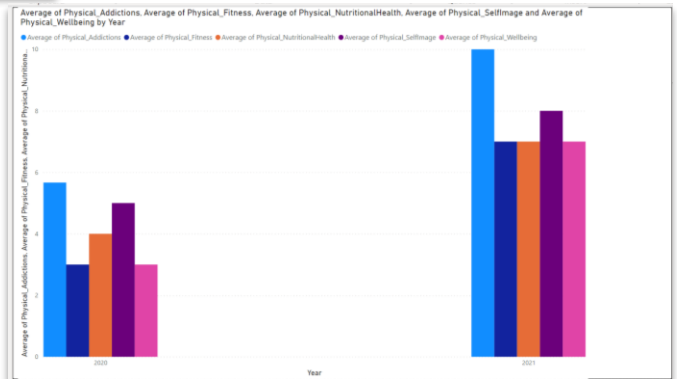


Whanau that reside in Maraenui that have been using The Meke Meter during the Covid-19 Pandemic have seen a significant improvement in Mental, Physical and Social Wellbeing since the POD has been placed in the Maraenui community in January 2021.

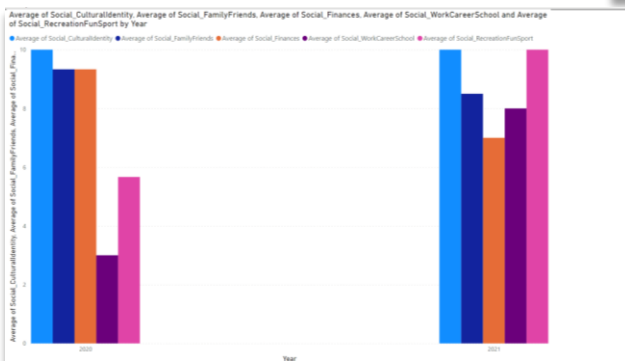


## Mental Wellbeing Snapshot

## Physical Wellbeing Snapshot



## Social Wellbeing Snapshot

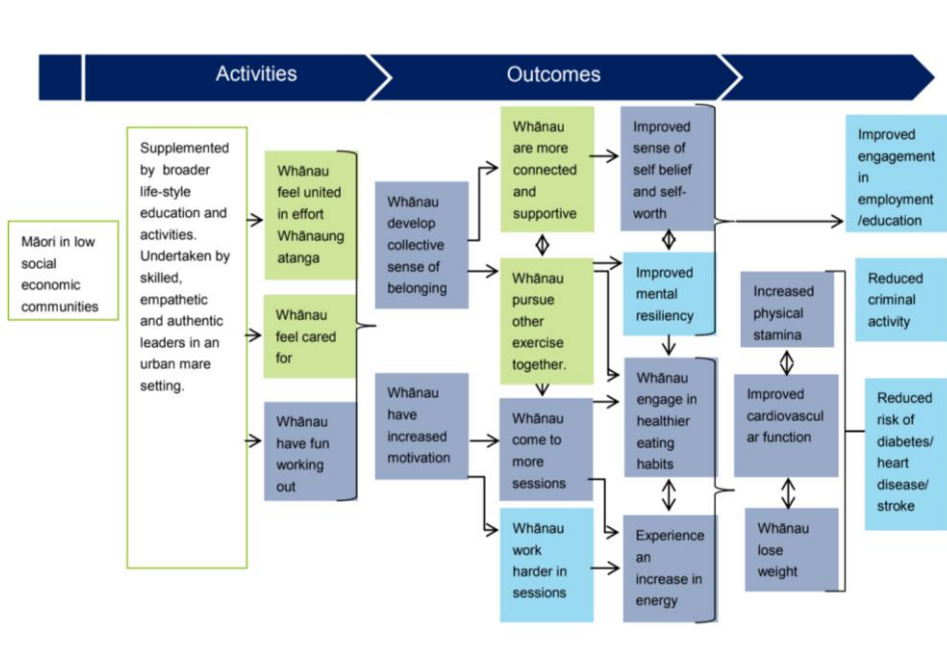


# THE LOGIC MODEL

In addition to building an urban marae and helping whānau achieve personal education and employment related goals, the expansion of PODS into new region creates new job opportunities for the community.

Through using a social enterprise model, this model incorporates the generation of wealth at a local level. This occurs through:

- Helping whānau achieve employment related goals.
- Empowering a community leader to own a POD.
- Providing employment opportunities to local trainers.
- Determines material wellbeing and living standards.
- Increases long term employability of employee.
- Lower death rates and improves physical health including lower rates of long standing illness.
- Enhances future job prospects for children.
- Lowers heavy use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs.
- Lowers rates of depression.
- Boost life satisfaction and perception of wellbeing. Shapes self-respect, individual identity and social identity.
- Helps people gain meaning in their life.
- Increases resources available to a community.





# THE ASK



## The POD and the programme

- Includes fully equipped fitness POD
  - Access to full training and workshops
- \$95000.00

## The deployment of local trainers to facilitate sessions at the POD

\$40320 per annum x 3 years= \$120,960

**TOTAL= \$215,960**

## Regionally

4 PODs in Hawke's Bay

Maraenui, Wairoa, Flaxmere and Waipukurau

## Nationally

We currently have interest in

Taupo

Auckland

Wellington

Whanganui

