

Learning more about yourself to help others

Driver/operator Darryl Takerei (Ngāti Raukawa) works for Downer in the Taranaki region. In 2015 he completed the Downer Māori leadership programme, Te Ara Whanake, and found that he learned more about himself than he expected.

As a youngster, Darryl had some trouble with the law and spent time within the Corrections system before being employed by Downer. Since working at Downer, he has worked hard to change his life around.

Darryl was approached to participate in the Māori leadership programme but was hesitant to accept because he hadn't been to a marae since he was a child and he couldn't speak Māori. Despite this, he has no regrets about going to his first marae-based wānanga in rural Whāngārā on the East Coast.

One of the learnings that he took away from the 'Talking Horses' workshop was learning how he came across to others. He was self-conscious at the workshop but he identified ways he can improve his demeanour by changing his body language, altering his physical presence and increasing or decreasing his energy levels.

All skills that he has consequently taken back and implemented at work where he mainly deals with staff older than he is. He now has a better understanding of why his colleagues do things the way they do and how he can adapt his own personal style to suit them.

Learning more about his pepeha

He had no idea what a pepeha was. It wasn't until he spoke with his colleague Jonno Webster who told him it was about reciting your ancestral connections to the land, who you are and where you're from.

Darryl was the first to give his pepeha at the wānanga and once this was done he felt settled, "I felt really peaceful and relaxed like I had been away for a three-week holiday. It felt like a spiritual experience. It was humbling."

After the first wānanga he contacted his whānau and started to learn about his whakapapa (genealogy). Jonno also helped Darryl with his pronunciation and he practised it until he had it down pat.

Darryl was proud to give his pepeha in te reo Māori at the final wānanga adding that the process gave him a real grounding in who he is and it felt "amazing".

"Brilliant", is the word Darryl used to describe his experience during the final wānanga held at Hongoeka marae. "It completely opened my mind."

"Learning my past and where I come from and who my ancestors are gave me a grounding and now I can go on from here," he said.

Making a difference

Darryl wants to make a difference and be a good influence for others in his family. "I never had good mentors around me when I was growing up and by the time I found one, it took me a long time to change," he said.

He is now taking ownership of his own decisions and growing in confidence at work and personally. A sentiment that is supported by Dan Gerrard the facilitator of the leadership programme.

"Darryl has been a surprise package, his background hasn't been easy, hearing about where he has come from to where his is now after completing the programme. It's been a privilege to hear the journey," Dan said.

Even his partner thinks that he is completely different since being on the programme. She has noticed that he is much more confident and more open about their lives and their family. He has changed the way he treats his tamariki. Even though they are very young, he gives them a chance to speak and challenges them to think.

He was recently asked by Corrections to speak to a group of troubled youth to share his story about how he has turned his life around.

Reflecting on the programme, Darryl said that he is surprised about what he learnt. He thought it would be more about work and helping others but he ended up learning more about himself and that is a much better place to be able to help others from.

In total Te Puni Kōkiri has supported 1767 cadets through the Cadetship Programme, which was implemented in 2009. The Cadetship programme came about following the Māori Economic Summit and the Prime Minister's Job Summit.

Te Ara Whanake – a pathway to development

Te Puni Kōkiri sponsors Te Ara Whanake Leadership Programme that supports employers to develop, mentor, train and grow full-time permanent Māori staff in order for them to take on more senior roles within an organisation.

The course has been running since 2014 and has 135 personnel have been through the training.

Downer provide leading engineering and infrastructure services in Australia and New Zealand. Their company has a strong focus on personal development for their staff and promoting diversity in the workforce.