

KURA REO TAIAO EVENT REPORT

Waikōhatu Marae March 1st – 5th, 2024


PREPARED BY: Te Tira Whakamātaki



Kura Reo Taiao Event Report

Context and Methodology

From March 1st – 5th 2024, the first Kura Reo Taiao was hosted at Waikōhatu Marae. Sponsored by the Department of Conservation (DOC), the Biological Heritage National Science Challenge and implemented by Te Tira Whakamātaki (TTW), its purpose was to help revitalising environmental and pest management te reo Māori and mātauranga. From the outset, interest in attending the Kura Reo Taiao was high. To help us choose who could attend, a set of selection criteria was created that favoured individuals who worked in environmental fields, were active in pest management, and were at various levels of te reo Māori fluency. These selection criteria were put in an expression of interest form (EOI), which was open for one hour on December 1st, 2023. It received over 300 responses and 140 people were selected to attend based on the criteria created and the space that was available. Importantly for this report, the information garnered from the EOI form has helped us to better demonstrate the need for and interest in Kura Reo Taiao. It has also given us a well-rounded idea of who is applying to participate in them.



“Highlight of the Kura Reo Taiao [was] absorbing some of the absolute wealth of knowledge about the environment, and the reo that is derived from the environment, to whakamāori the reo we use, rather than whakaaro pākehā in te reo Māori. **The calibre of kaiako and tauira was outstanding, and the learning environment was so supportive and conducive for the kaupapa.**” – Respondent

Before and after Kura Reo Taiao, pre and post surveys were sent to the 140 attendees to gather feedback on the event and determine the outcomes they experienced. 73 individuals responded to the pre-event survey and 55 responded to the post-event survey, for a total of 128 respondents across both. An incentive draw for three \$150 gift cards to PAK'nSAVE was used to help boost response rates. It should be noted that we did not compare individual comparisons across the pre and post surveys. Rather, we relied on overall patterns in results to determine any differences because of attending Kura Reo Taiao. We intentionally made this choice to ensure that we had as much usable data as possible because this event was the first of its kind. The results from this analysis are covered in detail throughout this report. If you have any questions or wish to view the questions we used, please contact micheal@ttw.nz.

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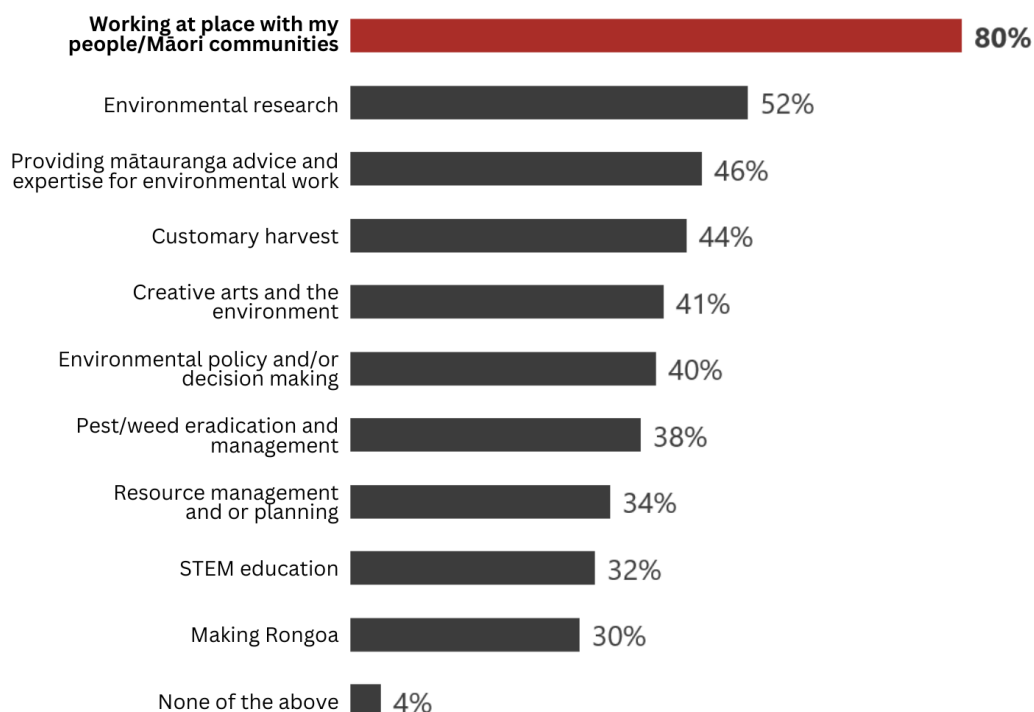
Who Wanted to Attend Kura Reo Taiao?

Using the data from the EOI form, we are able to report patterns from individuals who wanted to attend the Kura Reo Taiao. Specifically, we asked participants if they were familiar with Predator Free 2050 (PF2050), pest management, and what type of work they did with the environment (among other demographic questions). These questions, among others, helped us to target specific people to attend as well as provide us with useful information to help kaiako (teachers) plan their lessons.

Diving into the results, most respondents self-identified as Māori (92%), with the next highest percentage being Pākehā (26%; participants were able to select more than one choice). Approximately 5% of respondents selected tauwi (2%) or international Indigenous (3%) to self-identify themselves. Interestingly, the average age of respondents to the EOI form was 36.1, which indicates a relatively young group of people interested in Kura Reo Taiao. Just over half of all respondents (60%) indicated that they had attended another kura reo, meaning that 40% of the people who wanted to come to Kura Reo Taiao had not been to one yet. This is a good indication that the topic, the environment, drew a lot of interest from newcomers to this event.

We also asked respondents to identify the type of environmental work that they do. As is seen in the graph below, 80% of respondents indicated that they are working at place with Māori communities. Over half (52%) revealed that they were doing environmental

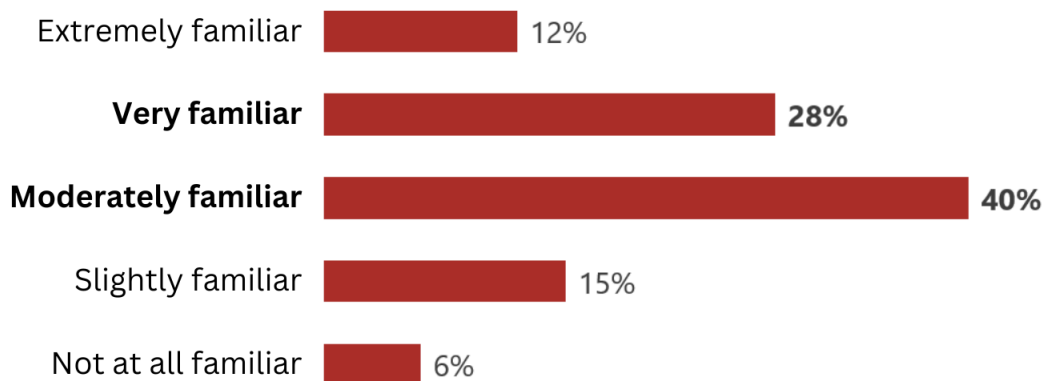
Most of those who wanted to come to the Kura Reo Taiao are **working at place with Māori communities.**



research and just under half (46%) said that they provide mātauranga advice and expertise for environmental work. Other popular options included customary harvesting (44%), creative arts (41%), and environmental policy and decision making (40%). Together, these results suggests that the Kura Reo Taiao drew interest from a variety of fields, reflective of a holistic approach to environmental work.

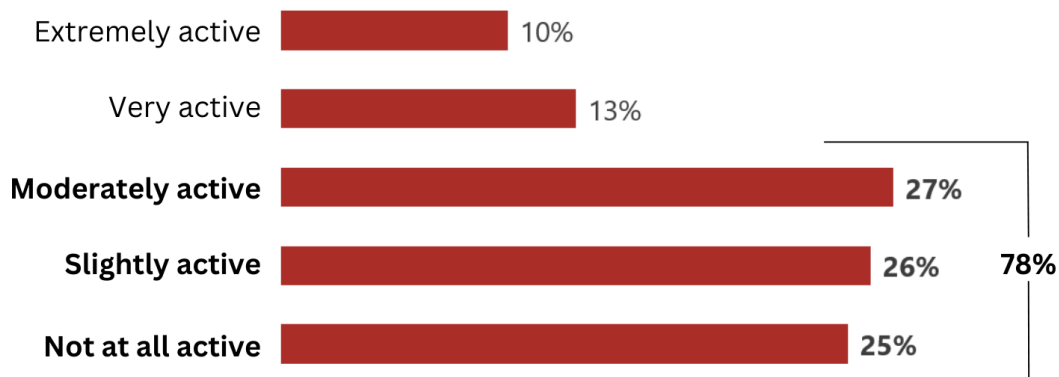
As the Kura Reo Taiao was financially supported by DOC, we also asked EOI respondents to indicate how familiar they were with the goals, processes, and desires of PF2050. This was done, in part, to assess how versed attendees may be with general pest management language and behaviours as we thought it would be useful information for kaiako and DOC. As is seen below, a combined 68% of respondents were either moderately (40%) or very familiar (28%) with PF2050 goals, desires, and processes. A further 12% indicated that they were extremely familiar.

Of those who expressed interest in Kura Reo Taiao, many were either **very** or **moderately** familiar with the **goals, desires, and processes of Predator Free 2050**.



Related to this, we asked those interested in attending to indicate how active they were in pest control (including policy, research, and trapping). As is seen below, 78% of respondents indicated that they were only moderately (27%), slightly (26%) or not at all active in pest control (25%). Together with the previous results this suggests that, while respondents were familiar with the PF2050 space, they weren't overly active in pest management.

Just over **three-quarters** of those who registered interest in Kura Reo Taiao were either **moderately, slightly, or not at all** active in pest control (including policy, research, and trapping).



What Did Kura Reo Taiao Change? Pre and Post Survey Results

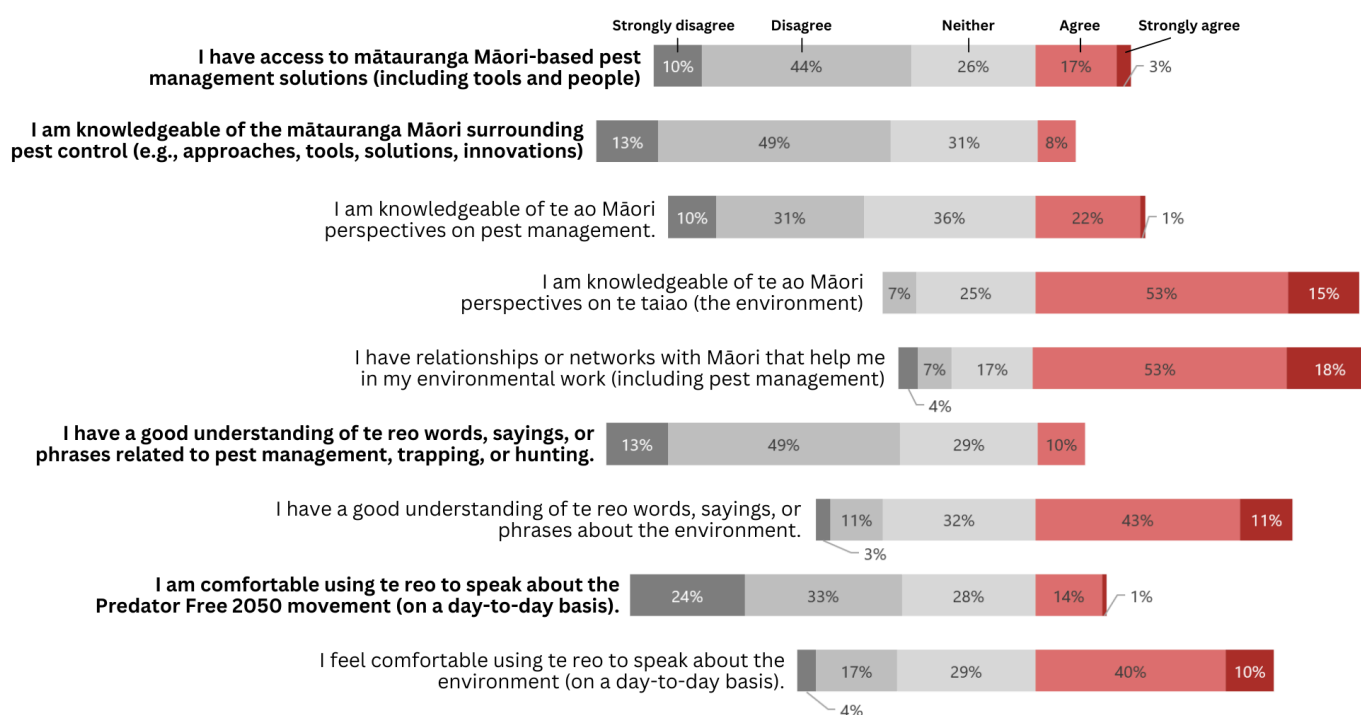
To more easily compare between times, we designed the pre and post surveys to have similar questions with a few extra questions added to the post survey only*. We deliberately crafted questions that reflected outcomes that we anticipated would be facilitated by attending Kura Reo Taiao. This included increases in te reo fluency, environmental and pest control mātauranga, and comfort using te reo to speak about the PF2050 movement. Across both surveys, we used a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) on each item. In the pre-event survey, many respondents answered neither, disagree, or strongly disagree to nearly all of the questions we asked (seen below). Most notably, a combined 54% of respondents either disagreed (44%) or strongly disagreed (10%) that they had access to mātauranga Māori-based pest management solutions (a further 26% selected neither for this question). Similarly, only 8% of respondents agreed that they were knowledgeable of the mātauranga Māori surrounding pest control (the rest selected neither [31%], disagree [49%], or strongly disagree [13%]) and 10% agreed that they had a good understanding of te reo words, sayings, or phrases related to pest management, trapping, or hunting (the rest selected neither [29%], disagree [49%], or strongly disagree [13%]). Finally, nearly a quarter (24%) of respondents strongly disagreed that they were comfortable using te reo to speak about the PF2050 movement daily (33% selected disagree and 28% chose neither).

*This was because some questions didn't make sense to have in the pre survey. The questions added included: 1) attending the Kura Reo Taiao helped reduce barriers that I face to using te reo, mātauranga, or te ao Māori in my environmental work; 2) Kura Reo Taiao was an effective space to advance my knowledge of environmental and pest management te reo; and 3) Kura Reo Taiao has given me ideas or connections to generate additional environmental and/or pest management research projects, community initiatives, or programming.

There were exceptions to this, however, as a combined 68% either agreed (53%) or strongly agreed (15%) that they were knowledgeable of te ao Māori perspectives on te taiao (the environment). Additionally, many agreed (53%) or strongly agreed (18%) that they had relationships or network with Māori that help them in their environmental work (including pest management). These results, as well as all others, can be seen below.

Pre-event Survey Results

Before attending Kura Reo Taiao, **many** respondents either **disagreed** or **strongly disagreed** that they had access to **mātauranga-based pest management solutions**, were knowledgeable of the **mātauranga of pest control**, had a good understanding of **pest management te reo Māori**, and were comfortable using **te reo to speak about Predator Free 2050**.



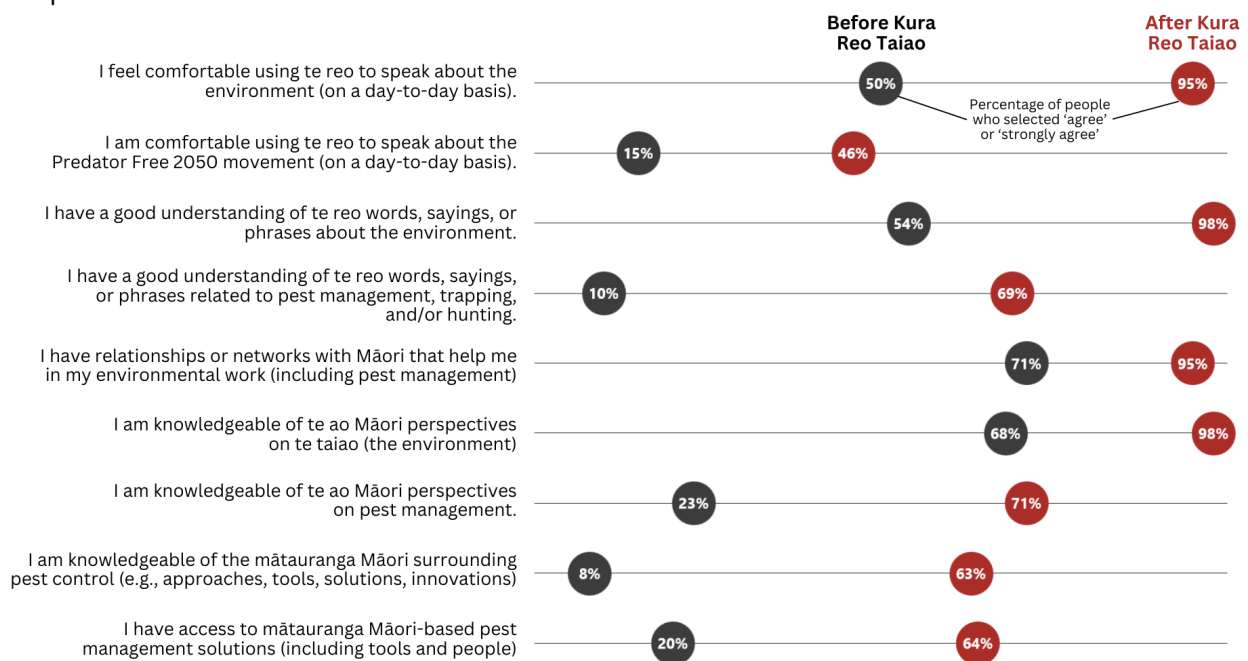
Encouragingly, however, the post event survey revealed a significantly positive set of results. To better see the differences between the pre and post surveys, we combined the number of respondents who selected 'agree' or 'strongly agree' and compared that between surveys. As is seen in the graph below, there were many more respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with each statement after attending Kura Reo Taiao (**red dots**). Notable increases included:

- 95% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they felt comfortable using te reo to speak about the environment daily (compared to 50% in the pre survey, a **45% increase**)

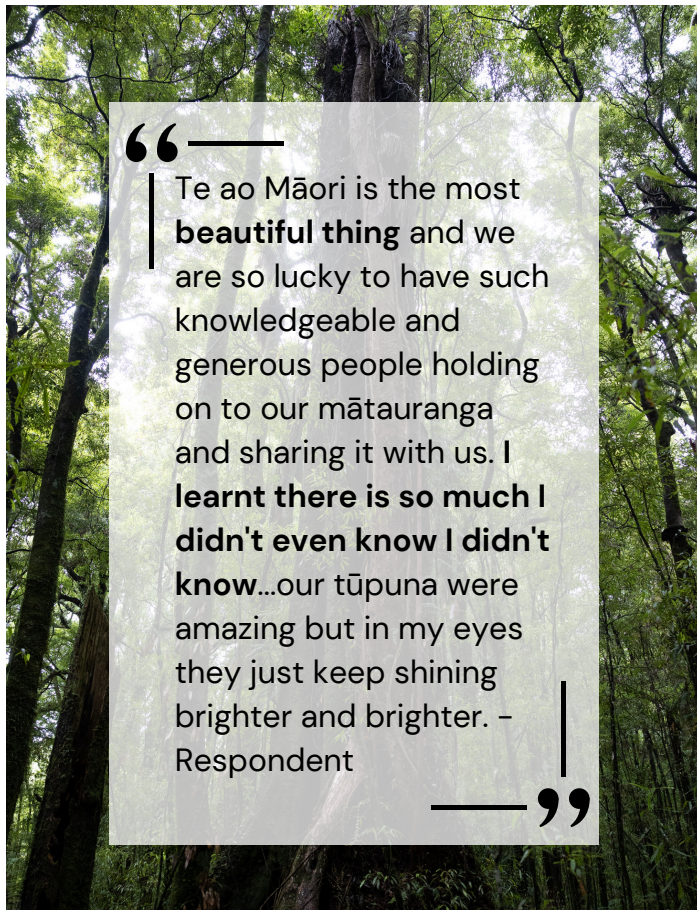
- 98% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they had a good understanding of te reo words, sayings, or phrases about the environment (compared to 54% in the pre survey, a **44% increase**)
- 69% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they had a good understanding of te reo words, sayings, or phrases related to pest management, trapping or hunting (compared to 10% in the pre survey, an **increase of 59%**)
- 71% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they were knowledgeable of te ao Māori perspectives on pest management (compared to 23% in the pre survey, a **48% increase**)
- 63% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they are knowledgeable of the mātauranga Māori surrounding pest control (compared to 8% in the pre survey, an **increase of 55%**)
- 64% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they have access to mātauranga Māori-based pest management solutions (compared to 20% in the pre survey, an **increase of 44%**).

These results, along with other increases, are displayed below. The **black** dots represent those who selected 'agree' or 'strongly agree' in the pre survey and the **red** selecting the same in the post survey.

When comparing responses from **before** the Kura Reo Taiao to **after**, it is clear that it **advanced understandings** of language and perspectives for all targeted areas, including PF2050, pest management and the environment. It also helped increase access to and knowledge of pest control mātauranga Māori and the relationships necessary to implement it.



When analysing the post-event survey numbers closer, it is easy to see a major switch from respondents disagreeing with statements to (in most cases) strongly agreeing with them. This is a solid indication that Kura Reo Taiao was an enormously valuable event for attendees and that it facilitated nearly every outcome it intended to, ranging from increased understandings of te reo and mātauranga Māori in pest management to broadened perspectives on te ao Māori on the environment, to better understandings of how to use te reo in the PF2050 space.



“
Te ao Māori is the most **beautiful thing** and we are so lucky to have such knowledgeable and generous people holding on to our mātauranga and sharing it with us. I **learnt there is so much I didn't even know I didn't know**...our tūpuna were amazing but in my eyes they just keep shining brighter and brighter. - Respondent
”

When analysing the post-event survey numbers closer, it is easy to see a major switch from respondents disagreeing with statements to (in most cases) strongly agreeing with them. This is a solid indication that Kura Reo Taiao was an enormously valuable event for attendees and that it facilitated nearly every outcome it intended to, ranging from increased understandings of te reo and mātauranga Māori in pest management to broadened perspectives on te ao Māori on the environment, to better understandings of how to use te reo in the PF2050 space.

To better understand these results, we asked respondents to describe the most significant change they had

experienced because of the Kura Reo Taiao. First, it was common for respondents to describe that they had a deeper appreciation of te reo and Te Ao Māori as a result of attending Kura Reo Taiao. This included a better understanding the intentionality of environmental mātauranga and a greater awareness of how te reo Māori is inseparable from the environment. Respondents believed that the two helps shape and inform one another, with the environment of Aotearoa shaping much of the te reo Māori still in use today:

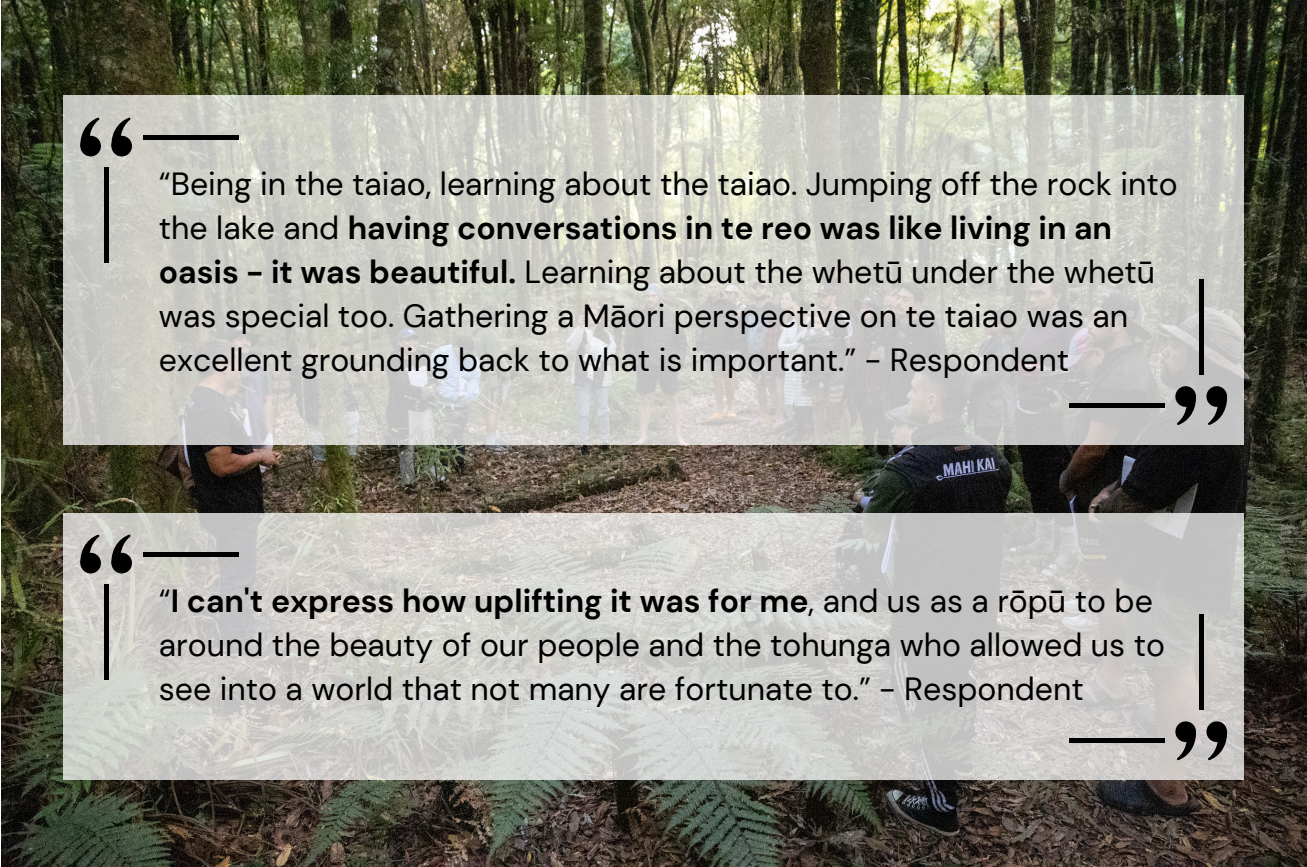
“Increased knowledge of te reo Māori, kiwaha, kupu whakarite and ultimately through a greater understanding if the taiao and even better connection to what kupu whakarite are really saying about something.”

- Respondent

“Highlight of the Kura Reo Taiao [was] absorbing some of the absolute wealth of knowledge about the environment, and the reo that is derived from the environment, to whakamāori the reo we use, rather than whakaaro pākehā in te reo Māori. The calibre of kaiako and taura was outstanding, and the learning environment was so supportive and conducive for the kaupapa.” – Respondent

“He maha. Te whare o ngā atua, ngā tohutohu o te taiao e kitea nei e tātou i ēnei rā he momo i takea mai i tētahi kōrero tuku iho. There is a lot. The realm of the gods, the environmental signals that we can see are things that have been handed down.” – Respondent

Related to this, it was frequent for respondents to note on how the Kura Reo Taiao helped facilitate meaningful connections between attendees. Key to this was that respondents felt free to be uncompromisingly ‘Māori’ during Kura Reo Taiao, which allowed everyone to be themselves without fear of any consequences. This drove relationship (re)connections and, for some, provided hope that meaningful environmental work and kaitiakitanga are still happening despite reduced emphasis on te ao Māori and the environment across Aotearoa.



“Being in the taiao, learning about the taiao. Jumping off the rock into the lake and **having conversations in te reo was like living in an oasis – it was beautiful.** Learning about the whetū under the whetū was special too. Gathering a Māori perspective on te taiao was an excellent grounding back to what is important.” – Respondent

“I can't express how **uplifting it was for me,** and us as a rōpū to be around the beauty of our people and the tohunga who allowed us to see into a world that not many are fortunate to.” – Respondent

Survey respondents also revealed that their understanding of te reo and mātauranga Māori (generally, but also related to pest management) had increased because they attended Kura Reo Taiao. This was a central goal for organisers and evidence here suggests that individuals' confidence in using te reo in daily conversations also increased. The design of the Kura Reo Taiao appears to have led to this (i.e., having separate levels of proficiency but ability to hear from each kaiako) and the kaiako appear to have made a lasting impact on attendees. Overall, respondents often said that they had learned much about te reo Māori that they intend to use in their mahi (including in predator free work):

"My confidence increased immensely to use te reo Māori in general conversation." – **Respondent**

"More holistic approach to pest control, it's not just about killing pests, it's about how we approach taking care of the land and creatures overall. Just a whole change in approach." – Respondent

"Ko te whakaaweawe nunui ki a au nei, ko te maramatanga o ngā kupu whakarite e hāngai ana ki te taiao. The main impact for me was the understanding of the metaphors and their connection to the environment." – **Respondent**

"That there is a whole world of knowledge out there for me to explore. This Kura Reo Taiao opened my mind to that world." – **Respondent**

"Me hoki ano ki etahi korero na matou ano kua rangona. Ki a au ano, kua rangona a taringa au i aua korero, engari kaore au i tino titi ana aua korero ki taku ngakau. He rereke taku whakarongo inaiane. Kei te whakarongo au ki te taka o nga kupu, ki te taki o nga whakapapa, me te mohio noku no hea enei korero, purakau, me nga kupu mo nga ahuatanga o te ao (*I must return to things we have learnt in the past. For me at the time I heard it, but it didn't stick with me. I hear it differently now. I'm listening to the layout of words and the way whakapapa is recited and the understanding of the learnings, the narratives and the words in a way that is more relevant to my world*)." – **Respondent**

This greater understanding of language and knowledge led to three additional outcomes. The first that respondents wrote about was an increased sense of personal connection to the environment. Some spoke of how the Kura Reo Taiao helped revitalise existing connections and, for others, create new ones. These ties helped them further explore their own personal identities and feel more bonded to their ancestors:


"I feel more connected to myself, because through knowing the taiao more intimately I can see where I fit in the world. It was so empowering, and so humbling." – Respondent

"It made me feel more connected to my Māoritanga. It also reminded me how I can weave this into my mahi and future goals." – Respondent

"I feel I have a deeper sense of our ancestral knowledge and understanding of the state of our taiao in the time of our tūpuna and in what areas this still may apply." – Respondent

Secondly, respondents wrote how an increased understanding of te reo and mātauranga led to realisations and reinforcement of how important both are for the protection of the environment. For these respondents, the key to implementing environmental protection lays in the language and in the knowledge embedded in the words they were able to explore at Kura Reo Taiao.

The last result to surface because of the intimate time spent with te reo and mātauranga at Kura Reo Taiao was a pointed sense of feeling grounded and enhanced motivation to protect the environment. Specifically, respondents saw a clearer way to apply te reo Māori and mātauranga to their daily work and some believed that, by doing so, it would help them decolonise spaces that are currently dominated by colonised thinking. The time spent with the language allowed greater reflection on the meaning of it and this helped respondents to identify concrete ways to apply those learnings. As a result, many left with a renewed or strengthened sense of motivation:



“How much knowledge our tohunga have on their kaupapa and how much more you have to learn. It puts you in your place but in an aspirational place of wanting to do better, be better, learn more. **This has had a life changing impact** on my personal and professional spheres, always now thinking of the Māori way of thinking and checking myself on my whakaaro.” – Respondent

“This investment of time significantly reinforced to me why we **must make space for**, respect, benefit from, and whakanui whakaaro **Māori and Mātauranga Māori into the way we work to solve the Conservation challenges** alongside the cultural, social and economic challenges of Aotearoa. It has to be holistic and joined up, grounded and real to that place.” – Respondent

“Me hoki ano ki etahi korero na matou ano kua rangona. Ki a au ano, kua rangona a taringa au i aua korero, engari kaore au i tino titi ana aua korero ki taku ngakau. He rereke taku whakarongo inaianei. Kei te whakarongo au ki te taka o nga kupu, ki te taki o nga whakapapa, me te mohio noku no hea enei korero, purakau, me nga kupu mo nga ahuatanga o te ao. *I must return to things we have learnt in the past. For me at the time I heard it but it didn't stick with me. I hear it differently now. I'm listening to the layout of words and the way whakapapa is recited and the understanding of the learnings, the narratives and the words in a way that is more relevant to my world.*” – **Respondent**

“Ko tenei te mea ahakoa i rapua, i kimihia, kaore i taea e au te kapo. i roto i aku nei ake mahi, e pirangi au ki te honohono te ao Māori (te matauranga o roto) ki te ao putaiao, kia tino mohio wa tatou nei tamariki he wahi mo ratou ki enei pukenga. Ki a au nei, kua taka te kapa inaianei, mohio au ki hea au e haere ana ki te whai te ara tika mo enei mahi. *This is the thing that I was looking for and searching for but didn't quite find. In my work I want to connect the Māori world (the knowledge from it too) to the science world, so that our children innately know they have a place in these professions. For me the penny has dropped, I know now the path to follow for this work.*” – **Respondent**

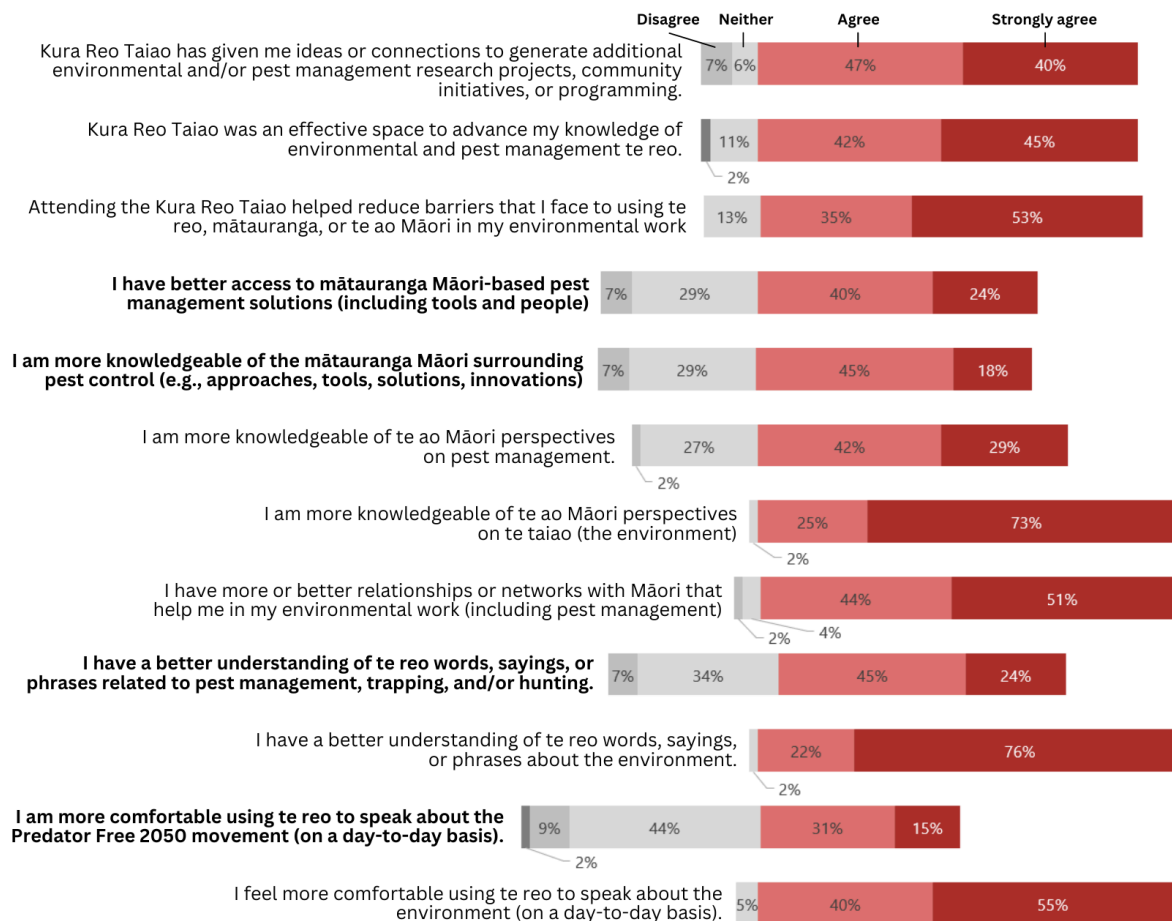
“These learnings are important and matter to me, because in order to understand colonisation, we must understand colonisation. To re-indigenise is to un-colonise – our minds, our behaviour, our existence. To decolonise is to de-mystify, to de-alienate ourselves from a pākehā culture/mindset. We need to understand why we were colonised and how we were colonised. And we all must know this, not just a couple of us or one whānau, we all as Māori need to know, educate ourselves and share the knowledge.” – **Respondent**

Further supporting these comments, the quantitative results from the post-survey are exceptionally positive. For example, a combined 87% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Kura Reo Taiao gave them ideas or connections to generate additional environmental or pest management research projects, community initiatives, or programming (47% agreed, 40% strongly agreed). Additionally, 87% also either agreed (42%) or strongly agreed (45%) that Kura Reo Taiao was an effective space to advance their knowledge of environmental and pest management te reo. 88% also agreed or strongly agreed that Kura Reo Taiao helped reduce barriers that they faced when using te reo, mātauranga, or te ao Māori in their environmental work (35% agreed, 53% strongly agreed).

agreed). When combined with the other post-survey results, it is clear that the Kura Reo Taiao was influential and impactful for respondents.

Post-event Survey Results

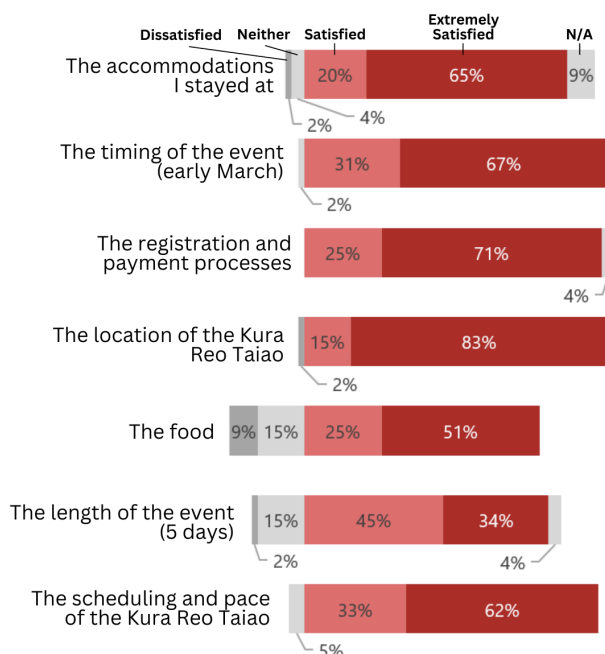
In addition to other positive outcomes, after Kura Reo Taiao many respondents **agreed** or **strongly agreed** that they had **better** access to **mātauranga-based pest management solutions**, were more knowledgeable of the **mātauranga of pest control**, better understanding of **pest management te reo Māori**, and were more comfortable using **te reo to speak about Predator Free 2050**.



How can the Kura Reo Taiao be Improved?

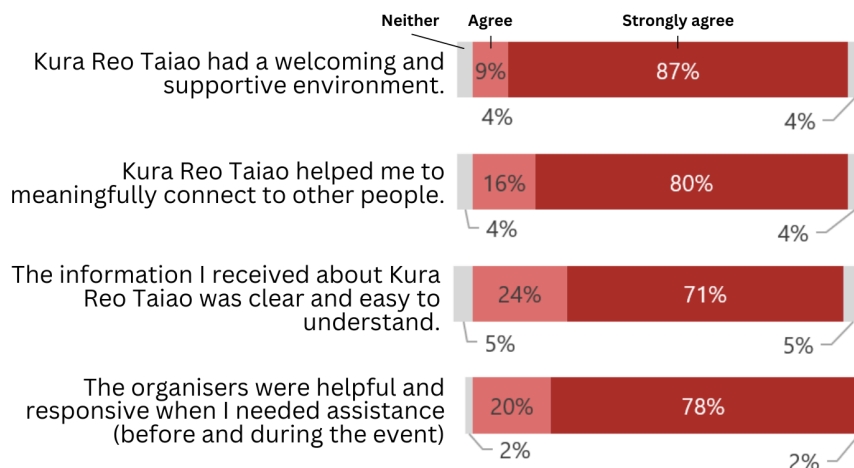
To assist organisers of future Kura Reo Taiao, we asked respondents to rate their satisfaction with various elements of the event in the post survey. As you can see below, most were either satisfied or extremely satisfied with all parts of the Kura Reo Taiao (including the accommodations, timing of the event, registration process, location, food, length, and the scheduling/pace).

The **majority** of respondents were either **satisfied** or **extremely satisfied** with **all aspects** of Kura Reo Taiao.

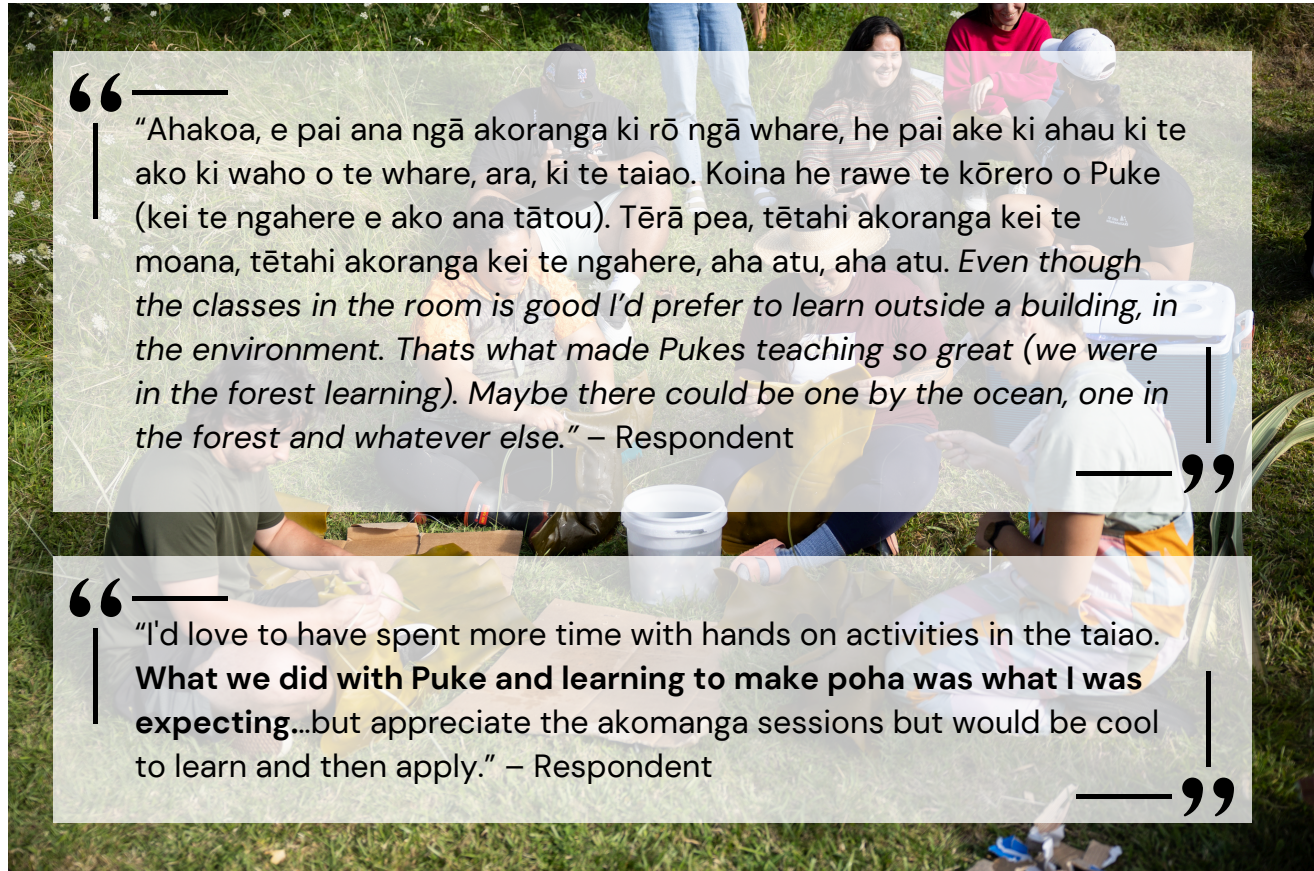


To back previous results, we wanted to assess whether the Kura Reo Taiao had a welcoming environment that fostered connections (including the accessibility of information and helpfulness of organisers). As is seen below, many strongly agreed that the Kura Reo Taiao had a supportive and welcoming environment (87%), that it helped them to connect meaningfully with others (80%), that information received was clear and easy to understand (71%), and that the organisers were helpful and responsive (78%). Taken together with the previous set of results, it is clear that respondents were satisfied with how Kura Reo Taiao was designed and implemented.

The **majority** of respondents **strongly agreed** that Kura Reo Taiao had a **welcoming environment**, that it helped them to **connect** to others and it was **organised well**.



Finally, we asked respondents how future Kura Reo Taiao could be improved in an open-ended question. For many, there was a desire to have more of the teaching and class-time spent in the ngahere (bush, forest) or te taiao itself (as opposed to a classroom). Many found that the classes which did take students outside of the classroom were more effective.



“Ahakoa, e pai ana ngā akoranga ki rō ngā whare, he pai ake ki ahau ki te ako ki waho o te whare, ara, ki te taiao. Koina he rawe te kōrero o Puke (kei te ngahere e ako ana tātou). Tērā pea, tētahi akoranga kei te moana, tētahi akoranga kei te ngahere, aha atu, aha atu. *Even though the classes in the room is good I'd prefer to learn outside a building, in the environment. That's what made Pukes teaching so great (we were in the forest learning). Maybe there could be one by the ocean, one in the forest and whatever else.*” – Respondent

“I'd love to have spent more time with hands on activities in the taiao. **What we did with Puke and learning to make poha was what I was expecting...**but appreciate the akomanga sessions but would be cool to learn and then apply.” – Respondent

Another point of feedback was that respondents advocated for clearer communication from organisers before and throughout the Kura Reo Taiao. Specifically, they commented that it would be beneficial to have clearer instructions on what to bring to the event (e.g., blankets, pillows, etc.), additional information on the kaiako and the topics they would be covering, and general expectations and tikanga for a kura reo (especially for those who had never attended one). The schedule of this Kura Reo Taiao also changed frequently, and respondents expressed that those changes, while acceptable, should be communicated more clearly to them in a timely manner. For example:

“I can understand there were circumstances that changed the scheduling. However, in my opinion, there was a lot of time where we were sitting around waiting for things to happen. More organisation and an itinerary before the wānanga” – **Respondent**

“A list of gear to bring (bedding, pillow, etc).” – **Respondent**

“It would be good to know what to pack so we were prepped ahead of time (I brought sheets and pillow on the plane for example).” – **Respondent**

“While not an issue because the clever people organising it made it less daunting through how it was structured, it might be less frightening to understand the tikanga of kura reo and the expectations of us as tauira.” – **Respondent**

“Additional communications with those of limited Reo about logistics to ensure that they understand changes to timings and other tikanga.” – **Respondent**

“More time with each kaiako, I loved every single workshop but perhaps less kaiako and more time with each would be cool. And perhaps more information around their areas of expertise and the kaupapa they will speak to so we can be more prepared with questions and the correct headspace. I loved Herea and could have listened to him kōrero all day and night, but I need to mentally prepare for that kind of kōrero.” – **Respondent**

Additional, yet smaller, points of feedback to improve future Kura Reo Taiao included:

Better, more sustainable, choices with the food and drink served at Kura Reo Taiao. This would better reflect the intent and philosophy of an environmental kaupapa:

“This is not to whakaiti the mana whenua hosts at all because they provided amazingly, but this was an environmental kaupapa and all the kai was meat & dairy. These are two kino things for our whenua and it would be awesome to at least have some kai goals around reducing meat and dairy at Taiao kaupapa. Being vegan, there wasn’t much kai for us, again not anything against the tunukai, just an opportunity to learn. I brought protein bars and shakes with me to fill up as this is a common thing at these kaupapa. A few of us vegans had a kōrero and we would be happy to cook vegan dishes and offer recipes etc if helpful.” – **Respondent**

“That the tauira don’t bring plastic drink bottles to the wananga in support of caring of our environment and that the marae hosting are advised the same (water/soft drink bottles)” – **Respondent**

To ensure continued connection of participants after Kura Reo Taiao had ended (e.g., through a Facebook group chat). Respondents believed that this would help ensure that conversations and connections started at the event can continue at their own pace.

“The only feedback is rotating the kura reo around to different rohe which is already happening. A Facebook group could be good idea to continually grow awareness of this kaupapa.” – **Respondent**

“He pai te katoa. Engari hanga tetahi roopu pukemata mā te katoa, ka pahupahu kōrero ka patai atu me pehea te mahi penei, te mea te mea. It was all great. But make a facebook group for everyone, to yarn, to ask questions on how to do things and any other things.” – **Respondent**

To feature specific parts of the environment at future Kura Reo Taiao (e.g., the ocean, rivers, rainforest, etc.) to dive deeper into the associated language and mātauranga. This also included utilising local tohunga as kaiako:

“Another thought – while Te ao Māori is holistic, potentially looking at Kura reo taiao based on different wahi e.g. Kura taiao Moana, Kura taiao ngahere etc.” – **Respondent**

“I would love to learn mātauranga Māori perspectives on climate action.”
– **Respondent**