

# FINDING YOUR WHAKAPAPA

A step-by-step guide to reconnecting with your whakapapa - especially if you don't know where to start

---



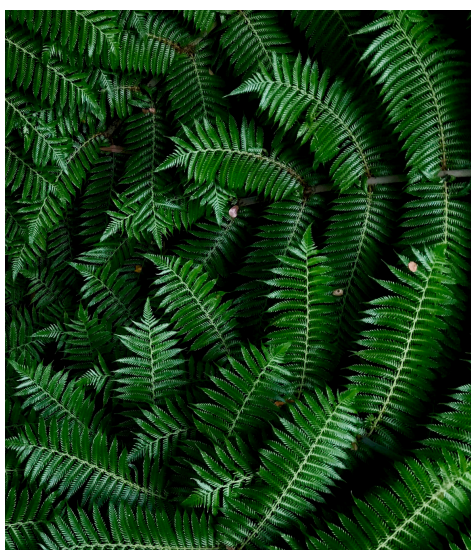
# TE WHARE DIGITAL

## A Note for Educators Attending the CATE Māori Careers Conference

This guide was created with people like your taura in mind—those who are early in their whakapapa journey, or who may be disconnected from their whānau, raised in care, or unsure where to begin. We know that for many Māori students, verifying iwi affiliation can be a significant barrier to accessing support, scholarships, or entrance pathways. At the same time, we never want students to feel like they're 'not Māori enough.' This guide aims to walk gently alongside them, with clear, step-by-step support that respects their lived experience.

Finding Your Whakapapa helps educators provide tautoko for students navigating this space. It gives them a culturally safe, practical starting point for building confidence and connection, even if they don't yet know their iwi or hapū. It also reminds taura—and the adults supporting them—that it's okay to start with what they know, and that every small step counts.

Feel free to share this guide directly with taura or whānau. It works well in pastoral care settings, as a careers resource, or alongside kaupapa like Ko Wai Au or Tuakiritanga. There is also a free companion resource called the Tūhonohono Guide, which includes email templates, phone tips, and supportive language to help students and whānau reach out to iwi, marae, or other organisations when they're unsure what to say.



# Overview of the Guide

---

Finding Your Whakapapa is a practical, easy-to-follow guide created for anyone who wants to begin their whakapapa journey, especially those who feel disconnected or don't know where to start. Whether someone has a name, a photo, a general region, or nothing at all, this guide offers step-by-step advice, trusted resources, and culturally grounded support to help them explore their whakapapa in a respectful, informed, and empowering way.

The guide includes:

- An introduction to the emotional and cultural aspects of whakapapa
- Links to iwi, government, library, and genealogy resources
- Specific scenarios and step-by-step support for learners in different situations (e.g. adopted, raised in care, overseas, mixed whakapapa)
- Best practices for organising and protecting whakapapa information
- Tips on reaching out to iwi and kaumātua, even if you're unsure or nervous
- Support for navigating common challenges like whakamā, cost barriers, or unanswered questions

It also comes with a companion resource called The Tūhonohono Guide, which includes email templates, phone scripts, and guidance for making first contact with iwi, marae, or whānau, if one is unsure of what to say.

## Background

---

This guide was created by Tina Harrington (Te Rarawa, Ngāpuhi), a kaupapa Māori digital creator, and digital wellbeing program facilitator based in Ōtautahi. It reflects years of lived experience navigating whakapapa disconnection and reconnection, including being met with silence, confusion, and occasional rejection. Tina created this guide not from an academic distance, but from lived understanding, which is why it resonates with so many.

Since launching in late June 2025, the guide has been downloaded over 600 times and shared across communities, kura, and whānau groups. Its design centres the needs of care-experienced whānau, adoptees, overseas-born Māori, and anyone navigating mixed or unknown whakapapa lines.

# Why This Guide is Helpful for Teachers and Taurira

---

Many Māori students experience disconnection from their whakapapa and don't know where to begin their journey. Teachers often want to support them, but aren't sure what's culturally safe or where to point them. This guide bridges that gap.

It is particularly relevant for identity-based units such as Ko Wai Au, Tuakiritanga, and Matariki, and complements the direction of Te Mātaiaho by supporting culturally located identity, connection to whakapapa, and the wellbeing of ākonga Māori.

The step-by-step format and trauma-informed tone make it suitable for both individual and classroom use. Printed copies can be shared by careers advisors, pastoral care teams, or kaiako who are supporting ākonga on a reconnection journey. The guide can also be used to support whānau engagement at kura kaupapa, wharekura, or mainstream schools.

## How to Access and Share

- The guide is free to download, print, or share in education and community settings.
- Please use the original version without editing or rebranding.
- For printed copies or tailored support, contact Tina directly.

To download, and for more resources: <https://linktr.ee/tewharedigital>



# Contact

---

For feedback, partnerships, or further information, please feel free to contact Tina directly.

**Tina Harrington**

*Te Rarawa, Ngāpuhi*

Te Whare Digital

Email: [tewharedigital@gmail.com](mailto:tewharedigital@gmail.com)

TikTok: [@tewharedigital](https://www.tiktok.com/@tewharedigital)

LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/in/tinamharrington](https://www.linkedin.com/in/tinamharrington)

All content and guide created by and belongs to Tina Harrington from Te Whare Digital - a kaupapa Māori platform that creates free resources to help disconnected whānau reconnect with their whakapapa, identity, and tikanga. PDF provided in collaboration with Mere Mansell from the University of Otago. Photos by photographers on Unsplash. The use and reproduction of any material included in this document must be done so with the permission of Tina Harrington.

**TE WHARE DIGITAL**