

Setting standards for herself and others around her

Ongelle Fincham (Ngāti Kahungunu) is a Programmer for Downer based in Wellington. Ever since she saw the company's promotional video about Te Ara Whanake, the Māori leadership programme, she was keen to go on it. When she was asked to attend, her only answer was "Yes!"

From day one, Ongelle knew she would be pushed out of her comfort zone. As part of the programme you need to deliver your pepeha (ancestral connection) in front of a group at the marae. She had always been afraid of public speaking, and found it confronting.

She knew her pepeha from when she was younger but she chose to read it off her phone at the first wānanga. She took every opportunity she could to improve, carefully planning for the next time so she could convey what she wanted to express. It wasn't until she was more comfortable and relaxed that at the last workshop it just all came back to her and she didn't need any help to deliver it.

Ongelle says that the learning during the programme has been huge for her. One of the catchphrases that has stuck with her is 'the standard you walk past is the standard you set'. Meaning you work to exceed the standards required and you will be a role model to others.

She now understands that her behaviour and the way she acts and responds to different situations makes a difference, especially to more junior members of her team. She has grown in confidence and is more likely to set standards and expectations for the team and will voice these comfortably now.

During the 'Talking Horses' workshop, Ongelle also learned a valuable self-reflection lesson. She was the only participant not captured on video for the first feedback session.

This was a revelation for her as she realised she tended to stand in the background and avoid putting herself forward, this was a behaviour she wanted to change.

Ongelle's Manager had previously spoken with her about being more authoritative and delegating more of the work so Ongelle has decided that she needs to 'step up and step forward'.

During the course, Ongelle was promoted into her current role as a Programmer, this meant moving out of an administrative role and in to Operations.

It had been a goal of hers for some time and she says that she would not have taken up this opportunity if she had not had the 'a-ha' moment about needing to put herself forward.

Ongelle's family have noticed a difference too, she is also more confident at home. Her husband says he has witnessed how she has developed from being in the programme and he is very proud of her.

Jarrod Telford, Māori Leadership Programme Facilitator, agrees saying that Ongelle has an inner determination that was hard to pick when she first arrived on the course.

"She has used this programme as a springboard for her development within the company. Ongelle is a wahine toa and an inspiration to those around her," he said.

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.



