

Media Release

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Waka ama paddles ready, hoe!

The purchase of two six-man outriggers canoes has given young people in the Eastern Bay the chance to get out on the water as their ancestors did.

Mataatua Sports Trust Kaiwhakahaere/Manager Tui Edwards says they've waited a long time for the waka ama which have been jointly funded by the BOPDHB and SPARC as part of the 'He Oranga Poutama Programme' for at-risk youth.

"We've had to beg and borrow waka up to now, so it's wonderful for us to finally have our own," says Tui.

The students learn about waka safety, safety in water and the history of waka.

"The Rangatiri River is a very safe environment to teach them respect for equipment, each other and the water, as well as team work, responsibility, confidence, self esteem, and paddling techniques," says Tui.

Tui ran the waka ama programme for students at Te Ara Kowhiri, an alternative education school in Kawerau, earlier in the year and they attended the blessing ceremony for the new waka ama on September 12.

"They have been asking all winter when they can start rowing again," says manager Rhonda Conner.

Next term the waka ama will be used by students at Edgecumbe College and teacher Mandy Narwin says that it's a fun way for the students to learn valuable life skills.

"The waka will only go if everyone works together, but each person has their own responsibility within the team. It's a great opportunity for them to learn about individual

leadership as well as respect for the environment and equipment. They will have to look after these!”

The 'He Oranga Poutama Programme' will be available to other secondary schools in the future. The waka ama will also be used by the Mataatua Sports Trust's Whanau/Hapu Healthy and Active Challenge Groups.



14 year old Nikita Tautuke (left) and 15 year old Paora Karepa from Te Ara Kowhiri alternative education school unveil the new waka ama named 'Wairake' at the blessing ceremony on September 12.

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