

A Forever Language at Ōtorohanga District Council

Last year, Ōtorohanga District Council proudly celebrated the achievement of our Tumu Whakarae – Chief Executive, Tanya Winter, who graduated with her Te Rōnakitanga ki te Reo Kairangi (Level 5) Diploma in Te Reo from Te Wānanga o Aotearoa. This milestone marked not only a personal accomplishment but also a step forward in normalising te reo Māori across our organisation.

A year on, Tanya reflects on how her reo journey has continued. After completing her studies, she has focused on weaving te reo Māori into everyday conversations and encouraging others to do the same. “I feel very blessed to work in an organisation where I can use te reo Māori every day and it is encouraged and valued,” Tanya says. From engaging with the community on the main street of Ōtorohanga, to ordering her morning coffee, she has made te reo Māori part of her daily life.

That doesn't mean the journey is without challenges. Tanya acknowledges the hesitation many learners feel about making mistakes or being judged. “I think that's one of the biggest barriers for people learning te reo Māori – what will people think of me? What if I get it wrong?” she says. Yet she remains firm in her belief that te reo Māori is a taonga unique to Aotearoa and worth championing and celebrating, even when others may not share the same view.

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Importantly, Tanya's leadership has sparked a ripple effect. The Council's Leadership Team have embraced te reo Māori and tikanga in their own ways, whether through formal study or collective learning. “We are nearly at a point where we all know a karakia off by heart!” Tanya says with pride.

Across the wider organisation,



Tanya Winter, Tumu Whakarae, Ōtorohanga District Council

the past year has seen more and more staff using greetings and kupu in emails, practising waiata, and observing tikanga in their work. A new initiative – mihi whakatau for welcoming new staff – has been warmly received, and Tanya takes joy in acknowledging staff when they speak te reo Māori for the first time.

Looking ahead, Tanya has a clear aspiration: “I want us to be an organisation that is widely known and admired for how we embrace the use

of te reo Māori and how we weave important aspects of tikanga into our everyday mahi – manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, kaitiakitanga, aroha.”

This Te Wiki o te Reo Māori, Ōtorohanga District Council celebrates the progress made and the leadership shown, while looking forward to continuing the journey of keeping te reo Māori alive, thriving, and part of everyday life.