



Te Manu Ka Rewa

Case study as part of an evaluation of Auckland Council's investment into Arts and Culture in Auckland.

November 2025





Mihi and acknowledgement

Our grateful thanks are extended to all who provided their input and assistance to this project and the preparation of the report.

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa.

This case study forms part of a broader evaluation of the Value of Auckland Council's investment in the arts and culture sector. This project was commissioned and funded by Auckland Council.

The overall project has been undertaken by Adrian Field (Dovetail), Georgia Parslow (Dovetail), Cat Ruka (Dovetail Collaborator) and Amanda Hunter (Dovetail).

Te Manu Ka Rewa: Background

About Te Manu Ka Rewa

Te Manu Ka Rewa is a semi-permanent public art sculpture located at Manurewa Library in Manurewa, South Auckland. The sculpture was created by emerging Ngaati Te Ata Waiohua mandated artist Jadyn Flavell and took two years to come to fruition. The work was unveiled in December 2024 with a dawn ceremony and blessing from Ngaati Te Ata Waiohua and is currently open to the public.

Te Manu Ka Rewa was commissioned and project managed by Auckland Council's Public Art team and spearheaded by a public art project manager. Investment has included commissioning, strategic planning, project management, iwi relationship-building, artist upskilling and capability building. Through partnering with Auckland Council, significant investment was also brought to the project by iwi Ngaati Te Ata Waiohua, who supported and guided their mandated artist Jadyn Flavell throughout the creation of *Te Manu Ka Rewa*.

Te Manu Ka Rewa is inspired by the puuraakau of Tamapahore and his kite, from which Manurewa received its name. Flavell hand-carved the central figures using Takaanini kauri gifted to him by his late grandfather George Flavell, who mentored Jadyn through the process of creating the work until passing away before it finished. Each carved figure represents a tuupuna; Waiohua chief Huarangi is at the base of the pou, his first son Tamapahure is in the middle, and his second son Tamapahore is at the top.

The ancestors are encased by a Corten steel frame in the shape of a matuku (bittern bird) which lived on Waiohua paa sites Matukutuureia and Matukutuururu. The paa sites are represented on either side. A manuaute depicting Te Atua Uenuku (rainbow god) is located at the top of the artwork as if taking flight into the sky.

The face of the manuaute shows Tāwhirimatea, the God of weather. The patterns depicted on the underside of its wings represent the communities of Manurewa which are guided and uplifted by ngaa Atua. There are also ten stars: Rehua (Father), and the Matariki stars according to Ngaati Te Ata - Matariki (Mother) and the eight children. Programmable lighting picks up different elements of the artwork, giving it a depth and unique presence at night.

Te Manu Ka Rewa (the bird that is elevated) was named by Huia Cowell (Ngaati Te Ata Waiohua). It was inspired by the whakatauki 'Maa te kahukura ka rere te manu' - 'it is through the feathers that the bird takes flight.' This is a metaphor for how people can work together. Like a bird in flight, every feather works in harmony to create the lift needed to soar. This cannot be achieved by a single feather, but together, feathers carry the bird to greater heights.



Artist Jadyn Flavell, Ngaati Te Ata Waiohua - Photo by David St George

Te Manu Ka Rewa: Working in partnership to deliver value through investment

Te Manu Ka Rewa demonstrates a partnered approach to public art investment, with Auckland Council providing financial, in-kind, and capacity-building support alongside the cultural leadership and creative contributions of Ngaati Te Ata Waiohua. Together, these investments highlight the depth of relationship-building and often unseen layers of support required to realise meaningful and enduring public artworks.

A collaborative approach with mana whenua

Te Manu Ka Rewa utilised a partnered approach to investment between Auckland Council and iwi Ngaati Te Ata Waiohua. Auckland Council played a key role in bringing the artwork to life through both financial and capacity building support. The council invested directly in the project and provided specialist guidance, resourcing, and coordination to ensure it could be delivered to a high standard. Auckland Council partnered with mana whenua throughout the process, recognising the cultural significance of the work and embedding local iwi perspectives in its design and delivery.

The investment from Ngaati Te Ata Waiohua in the project extended far beyond the creative contribution of its artists. Central to this was the legacy of iwi carvers, with artist Jadyn Flavell and his grandfather, master carver George Flavell, bringing intergenerational skill and artistry to the work. The iwi contributed cultural and site knowledge, maatauranga Maaori, and tikanga Maaori. Support for the artist was also a defining feature, with mentoring, pastoral care, and administrative assistance provided through the iwi and through an arts administrator. Tangible contributions included taonga materials and the sourcing of specialist expertise, such as lighting designer David Eversfield, and support carvers Matt Brown and Tony Pecotic.

Te Manu Ka Rewa is an exemplar of the diverse forms of investment required to bring a public artwork to life, including deep relationship building across multiple stakeholders, capacity-building support from Auckland Council, and significant contributions from Ngaati Te Ata Waiohua. It highlights the often unseen layers of investment in arts and culture that align to ensure the success of the creative work.

Leading with relational integrity

Auckland Council intentionally lead with relational integrity by working in partnership with iwi to ensure that the resource allocation process honoured and prioritised Maaori. This intention from Auckland Council was met with enthusiasm by Ngaati Te Ata Waiohua, and together the partners worked in alignment to equitably identify and usher an artist into the project.

“With Mana Whenua Ngaati Te Ata Waiohua, they really want to share their history, their stories, their connection to place. They really want to develop their artists and capability of their artists.”

- Project Manager, Auckland Council

Te Manu Ka Rewa: Building artistic, social and cultural capital

The commissioning process for *Te Manu Ka Rewa* shows how council investment can build artistic, social, and cultural capital by strengthening an emerging artist's practice, deepening iwi storytelling, and embedding whakapapa into the public realm. The artistic process itself developed capability for Jadyn and his collaborators and also created a lasting expression of *toi Maaori* that affirms mana whenua identity and presence in place.

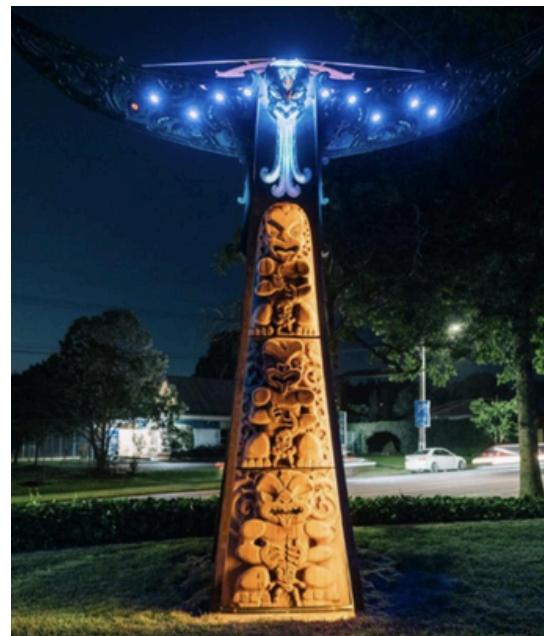
Artistic capability building

Auckland Council's intentional decision to commission an emerging mana whenua artist and harness the process as a capability building exercise meant that Jadyn was able to strengthen and expand his practice. Jadyn spoke about the opportunity to deepen his skills within a specific *toi Māori* form while also acquiring knowledge of public art production processes, including engineering and risk management. The experience provided a greater understanding of his own whakapapa and the stories and maatauranga held within his iwi, grounding his work in cultural identity. The process provided the emerging artist with the opportunity to work in the arts as a career:

“Now I've got a framework of how this kind of thing works and now I'm working on a few other projects at the moment, doing a kid's playground...and a few other pou that I'm working on.”

- Jadyn Flavell

The process also provided opportunities for those supporting Jan to learn and grow in their own artistic capabilities. Lydia Rasmussen, who provided administrative support through the project, spoke about gaining skills that enabled her to continue to facilitate public artwork of this nature. Both spoke with great appreciation for the investment made by Auckland Council's project manager to support and provide artistic capability building through the process.



Getting skills out of it for both of us is... it's a tangible art ... but what stops that from being the full stop and just a comma is the skills that we both acquired to be able to continue the mahi post this project.

- Lydia Rasmussen, Administrator

The patience, the tenacity, the advocacy for Jadyn, for us, was incredible. We couldn't have asked for better.

- Lydia Rasmussen, Administrator

Fostering artistic storytelling and expression of *toi Maaori*

The process of creating *Te Manu Ka Rewa* became a form of cultural reclamation for Jadyn; it deepened his understanding of ancestral narratives and solidified his role as a kaitiaki of iwi stories. Through his artistic storytelling and embedding whaanau history into the fabric of the artwork, *Te Manu Ka Rewa* contributes to a wider movement of Maaori visibility and pride in public spaces.

“It just put me on a kind of trajectory to really deepen my understanding of my history and my identity. It’s been life changing... If I’m going to do it, I have a responsibility to be able to tell these stories. That’s been really significant for me.”

- Jadyn Flavell

This partnership approach to investment and resource stewardship has resulted in a work that embodies the principles of *toi Maaori*. By weaving whakapapa, ancestral narratives, and tikanga into its form, *Te Manu Ka Rewa* stands as a striking artwork and a living expression of Maaori identity and presence in the public realm. Now proudly held within Auckland Council’s collection, the *toi Maaori* is available for all of Auckland to engage with.

We've now got an amazing work in our collection. In terms of the result of this, it's quite successful...we feel like we've got a really beautiful work that really answers the brief, so that's great.

- Project Manager, Auckland Council

Working in partnership with iwi

The sculpture, which is situated on land of ancestral significance, draws on iwi stories and embeds these narratives into its design, ensuring that these stories are literally and symbolically inscribed in place. A significant benefit for iwi so far is the sense of pride, belonging and identity that the pou activates.

When we launched the work, a lot of Jadyn’s family came, and you could see they really enjoyed the fact that their ancestors were represented.

- Project Manager, Auckland Council

The work by Auckland Council and Ngaati Te Ata Waiohua to upskill and support Jadyn means he now has the skills to be able to take on future iwi work. *Te Manu Ka Rewa* has been a process that has readied Jadyn to serve his iwi as a mandated artist. The Auckland Council project manager noted “They’ve now got another artist who’s really capable of doing more work to represent the iwi.”



*Blessing by Ngaati Te Ata Waiohua Dec 24’-
Photo by David St George*

Running centrally within the pou is a series of ancestor depictions that are carved from Takaanini kauri gifted to Jadyn specifically for this project by his late grandfather, master carver George Flavell. The investment of this taonga from Jadyn's koro not only elevates the mauri of the work but also solidifies and strengthens the mana and toi Maaori presence of iwi within that specific area.

“The wood that it's carved from is from the area, it was excavated from a housing development site. It's swamp kauri and carbon dated to around 500 to 5,000 years. It ties in with the history, it's a part of this whenua, so it's significant.”

- Jadyn Flavell

Community participation and engagement

Given that *Te Manu Ka Rewa* is in its first six months, there isn't yet a body of evidence to support an understanding of community engagement and participation. However, it is worth noting the launch and unveiling of the sculpture, which again involved a co-investment of resource and support from Auckland Council and Ngaati Te Ata Waiohua. The dawn event brought together approximately 100 people.

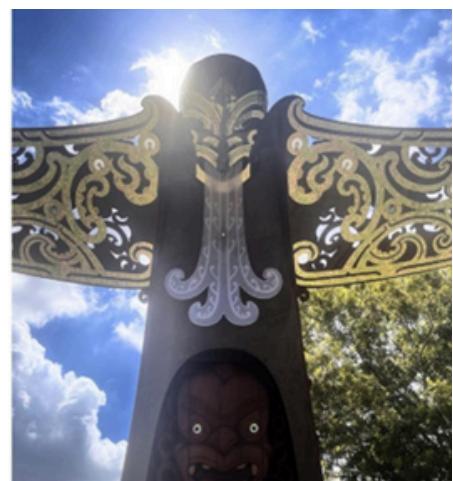
“The opening was a dawn ceremony. We had the Local Board, Mana Whenua, iwi did an official blessing and then after that there was an opportunity to network and have breakfast. The arts team, along with us, had arranged some activities with the kids. A beautiful poster and booklet were put together... talking about the story and its making, and this was mainly targeted towards our tamariki.”

- Community Library Manager

The launch event also catalysed further activations of creativity, including a poi-making workshop, a graphic booklet, and an art display. Short term goals for more community participation include a Matariki activation for 2025, and educational engagement with local schools. One of the goals for the year was to be able to bring schools in to see the sculpture and the group are now looking to bring Jadyn in for talks with schools. The Community Library Manager of Manurewa Library walked alongside the creation and launch of *Te Manu Ka Rewa*. In the case study, she spoke to the ways that she had observed how the process of artistic storytelling had been transformative for Jadyn:

“Being able to talk to Jadyn about that has been incredible... and the significance of the sculpture to him and that opportunity, and the links to his grandfather... it's of huge value for him and us.”

- Community Library Manager



Te Manu Ka Rewa: Delivering value for the people of Taamaki Makaurau

The new public artwork exemplifies a high-quality and highly visible arts and culture offering that genuinely reflects the needs and aspirations of the Manurewa community. By contributing to Auckland Council's placemaking approaches, the sculpture brings cultural specificity and depth to its surroundings, turning a public space into a site of storytelling, reflection, and intergenerational exchange.

Embedding local communities and stories

By being semi-permanently installed in a central public location, the work embeds arts and culture directly into the city's infrastructure, helping to shape the cultural fabric of Manurewa and signalling that creativity and storytelling belong in everyday spaces. The representation of local communities and stories, and the reflection of Auckland's diversity are embedded in the work:

“Te Manu Ka Rewa is a representation of the diversity... obviously Manurewa is made up of all types of different groups of people and communities, different cultures, and so that's kind of what I'm trying to depict in that...and it's about working together... they're working together to create unity and to come together to take flight into the future.”

- Jadyn Flavell

“While you can't see it from in the library, you can see it from Hill Road as you come down and it's got a real presence to it... So, it really adds value, huge value. It's a really great beacon.”

- Community Library Manager



Through its collaborative development process with local iwi and whaanau, the community has taken ownership of the artwork, not just as an object, but as a living symbol of ancestral pride and self-determination. Jadyn reported that “having this here helps share some of these stories that are not so commonly known and gives us a space or some identity in this area. Knowing our tupuna who’s name that we carry, that she was actually born here and she’s from here.”

By contributing to Auckland Council’s transformation of public spaces, the sculpture brings cultural specificity and depth to its surroundings, turning a public space into a site of storytelling, reflection, and intergenerational exchange. In doing so, it contributes to Auckland’s unique cultural identity, offering an artwork that is unmistakably rooted in local whakapapa, language, and histories.

I think any work anywhere that is designed to represent and uplift the people of the community in which it is positioned, is a worthy investment... Rather than this deficit thinking about places but more of this celebration, celebration of diversity, celebration of the past and look to the future.

- Lydia Rasmussen, project administrator



Blessing by Ngaati Te Ata Waiohua Dec 24' - Photo by David St George



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