**He ara mauriora: Designing a kaupapa-Māori accessible walkway**

*Ki te kotahi te kākaho, ka whati; ki te kāpuia, e kore e whati.  
When a reed stands alone it is vulnerable, but a group of reeds together is unbreakable.*

Universal design centres on creating spaces that are welcoming to everyone, irrespective of ability or age. This aligns with the social model of disability, which advocates for societal changes over emphasizing the impairment of an individual. The challenge becomes multi-layered in Aotearoa New Zealand, where Māori not only experience disability at higher rates compared to other ethnicities, but also face issues of race, identity and colonisation, creating compounding layers of oppression.

This project takes a mana-enhancing, kaupapa Māori approach, weaving together research and design to conceptualize a wetlands walkway that is both physically accessible and culturally resonant. Located on Māori freehold land in the Bay of Plenty, the multi-purpose walkway meanders in and around a recently restored area of wetlands. As well as physical and sensory design considerations, we explore what a ‘Māori leisure walk’ looks like, including places to rest, places for knowledge sharing, and places for practices such as raranga (weaving). Drawing from hui with whānau hauā (Māori whānau with lived experience of disability), *he ara mauriora* showcases how design can bridge accessibility with cultural identity to offer an alternative perspective of ‘walkability’.