

May (she/her): Tino rangatiratanga

May's kōrero

May was always proud of who she was and wasn't going to let others tell her differently. She was loud and proud about all the different parts of her identity. She had also been generous in sharing with and supporting others who were finding out about themselves. But, this was always a conscious effort; everyday she affirmed her strength and happiness, even though she might not be feeling it that day. She knew herself but she had worked extremely hard to get there.

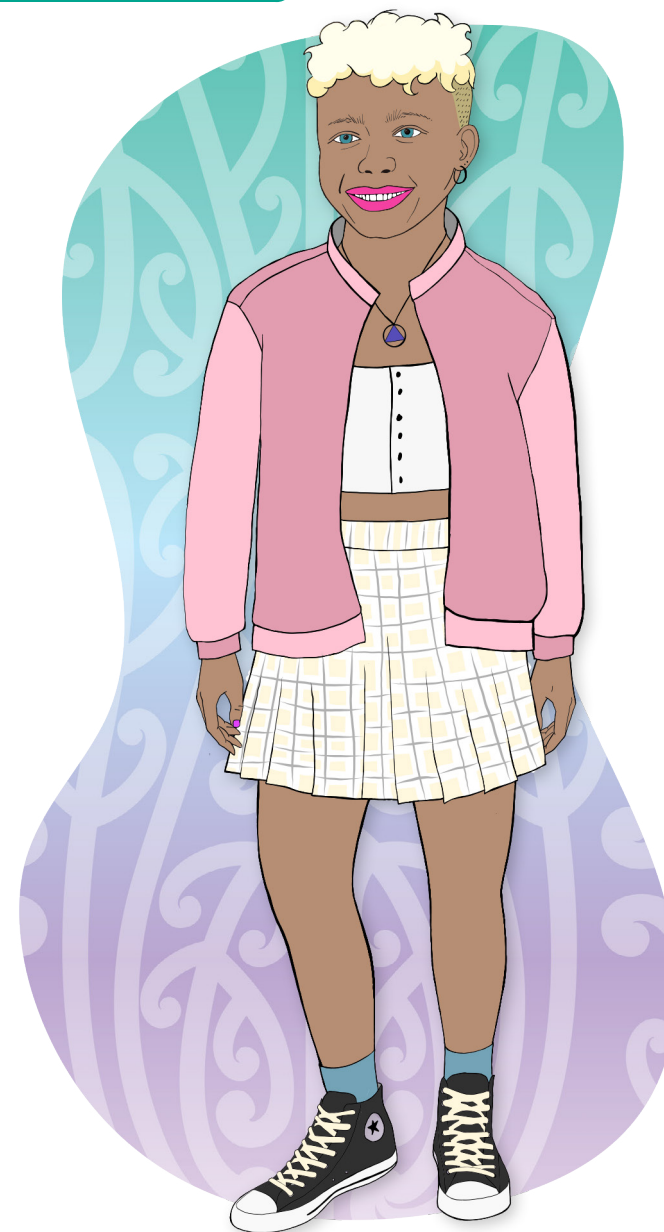
May turned this knowing into helping and supporting others around her through loving and challenging them; sometimes people needed hugs and other times a push. She was good at knowing when to do either. May was a leader. Not always in that up the front way, but she led others all the time whether she knew it or not. Part of knowing about who you are is that you can become frustrated and impatient with those who refuse to try and understand. This frustration is often what drives May to push on and she is keen to discover and apply this energy to change the world around her.

At the wānanga May learned more about culture and leadership. A natural leader, May fuels her dynamism with knowledge: sharing it, using it to lay down challenges and activating it to inspire action in others.

Leadership, decolonisation, self-actualisation

I intend on informing people more, anyone that I can, on the different identities that there are and that it's cool if you identify as anything other than cis het. Regardless of whether it's takatāpui or just general queer – you are all good, you are valid, and I appreciate you. I know that there are a lot of people that can't find that within themselves.

- May



Whakaaro

May's journey shows us a different side to leadership than is typically held up by western culture as the aspirational ideal. Rather than flexing her considerable knowledge and seeking to one-up other people, May leads from alongside. Sometimes she offers a balm, sometimes a nudge, and sometimes she uses her own past experiences to relate, but no matter the interaction, she always approaches it with aroha and respect. She is quick to let others know that she sees them, accepts them and values them.

Rangatahi takatāpui have in many cases had to grow up quickly. Many have been forced to reflect on who they are and how they fit with a society not designed for them. This 'othering' has been damaging in many ways and has contributed to isolation, disillusionment, anxiety, and depression.

Yet, rangatahi takatāpui are courageous. A diverse mix of voices leads to better outcomes and societal systems for everyone, and rangatahi takatāpui have been ready for a long time to not only share what they think, but to be leaders in working together towards a more equitable, inclusive, and just society.

Whaiwhakaaro

- Rangatahi takatāpui are kaitiaki of knowledge about themselves and about the takatāpui community. They know how to use it powerfully to engage with others, and so positioned, they are able to use it to make systemic change.
- Rangatahi takatāpui are aware that much of their culture has been suppressed, erased, and whitewashed. They are hungry to reconnect with their whakapapa and mātauranga.
- Rangatahi takatāpui display emotional intelligence and maturity beyond their years. Their lessons on leadership and altruism are powerful and transformational.

Pātai/Whakapātaritari

- Schools often force rangatahi takatāpui to abandon their identity in leadership. How might you support them to remain true to who they are as leaders?
- Does your school recognise and grow rangatahi takatāpui as leaders?



Supporting quotes

I share my experiences with my peers and other people who I know identify as takatāpui but aren't necessarily out. I've done this with a few students and we've cried together.

- May

I am learning more about gender in Māori indigenous culture in general because I want to know what's been whitewashed.

- May

When we all did the preferred name and pronouns at the beginning of the wānanga I was very proud to be able to identify as what I am. We could all do that and it made me happy. I wish our school did that, however because it's got "Girls' High School" in the name, it's never even questioned.

- May

Let's educate more young students about themselves and what they can achieve, ways that they can get out of their own heads, that they can think positively, and that they can do things.

- Remy

