



Youngsters solving the world’s problems, one toothpaste tube at a time

Kiwi children are encouraged to solve real-world problems that matter to them with [iNVENTIONATOR](#). Designed and managed by [CORE Education](#), this programme caters for Year 6-9 learners who want to design innovative solutions that make a difference. Using the United Nations’ [17 Sustainable Development Goals](#) as a guide, ākonga (learners) are challenged to develop a locally relevant idea.

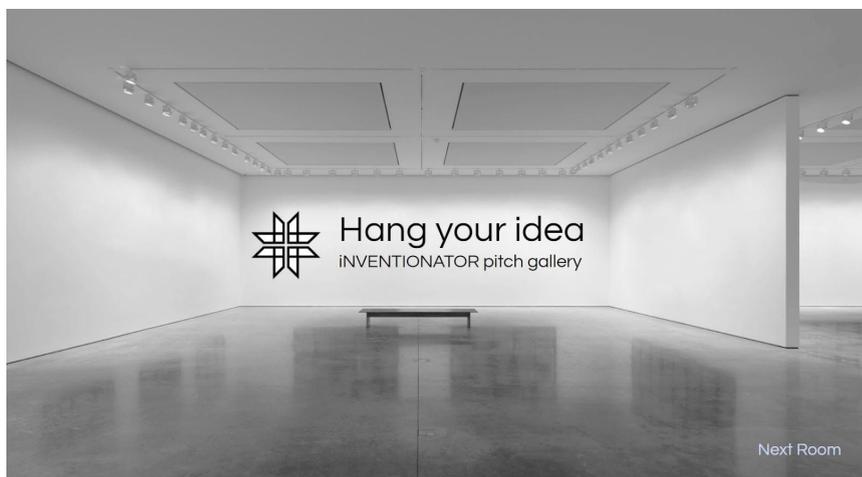
Open to any educational community, CORE has been refining the iNVENTIONATOR model over the past 2 years. Initially an in-person pitch competition, this year the whole programme was completed virtually. Learners pitch their innovative skills, idea or problem to form a peer group and under a community mentor’s guidance, the team works on solving a defined issue.

The competition judging panel consists of industry, business or community members. As well as an Overall Winner, awards are given in the categories of: Description, Delivery and Rationale.

“Young people learn to work together and think quickly thanks to iNVENTIONATOR’s incubation model. The focus is about building on learners’ existing strengths, digital fluency and virtual collaboration to develop innovator mindframes – which we need now more than ever,” says CORE Education’s iNVENTIONATOR Project Lead, Suzi Gould.

“It’s about enhancing social capital; partnering schools and communities across Aotearoa to build healthier communities.”

Listen to [Suzi’s interview](#) with Radio Waatea on 20th November 2020, World Children’s Day. She spoke about the winners of the latest iNVENTIONATOR, the kids’ experience of the week-long event, Māori innovators and entrepreneurship in Aotearoa. Or read Suzi’s [blog](#) on the rise of young innovators.



Case study: iNVENTIONATOR winner tackles toothpaste packaging

September's virtual event for gifted learners saw 80 students from 21 schools participate from around the country. Working virtually in Zoom rooms, students from different locations teamed up and worked together on a mutual project.

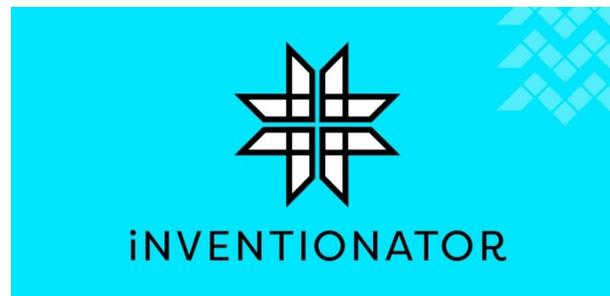
The winning team, **Ecotooth** was a mash-up of North Island students **Micah** (home school, Hamilton), **Emeth** (Manurewa Central School, Auckland) and **Chloe, Isabelle and Shannon** (from St Columba's Catholic School, Frankton). They were named Overall Winner on 17 September.

The students' problem was that toothpaste tubes are unsustainable and not worth the money; as people struggle to get all the toothpaste out of the tube. The group identified toothpaste 2 tubes/containers are made of plastic which adds to waste. Ecotooth's solution to the problem was two-fold: to make organic toothpaste and put it in refillable, recyclable glass jars with a pump. Their focus was on finding a sustainable and hygienic substitute to the norm.

The young innovators said by returning the empty jar, punters could get money off their next purchase. Market research found that 80 percent of people said they would find this product useful.

iNVENTIONATOR Judge Chelsea Grootveld (Director of AIKO Consultants and Board of Director for CORE Education) was impressed with Ecotooth's pitch.

"The team used design thinking to tackle environmental and recycling issues by looking at sustainable ways to make toothpaste. Their presentation was sharp, clear and research-informed. Wow!!"



iNVENTIONATOR is a CORE programme designed to nurture young innovators. The product is open to any school and works particularly well in clusters. CORE staff can upskill teachers in the process so they can help implement the iNVENTIONATOR framework locally.

In 2019, CORE secured Ministry of Education funding to run the programme for gifted learners, which has resulted in free iNVENTIONATOR events over the past two years.

Key aspects of the event:

- Encourages future-fit skills such as: problem solving, innovation, teamwork, digital technology and fluency, design thinking and entrepreneurship.
- Focuses on problems that matter to students in their context – local or global – building healthier communities as a result.
- Participants work through 6 key resources leading up to an event, building confidence and capabilities prior to the event.
- Community-based model enables ākonga to reference their local environment and experience as part of the inquiry process.
- Whānau and local business people are involved for mentoring and judging – playing both a learning and celebration role.

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