

TOI NGĀPUHI

FEATURED TOI NGĀPUHI CREATIVE

FEATURED: ROUATI EWENS WAATA NGĀPUHI, NGĀTI KAHU

Ki te taha o tōna karani pā ko Te Hikutu te hapū, ko Ngāpuhi te iwi. Ki te taha o tōna karani mā ko Patu Koraha te hapū, ko Ngāti Kahu te iwi. Ki te taha o tōna māmā nō Ingarangi

Rouati is a well-established weaver and educator who was born and raised in her tribal homeland - Hokianga.

Photography by: Symphony Morunga

Rouati is based in the Hokianga where she is a kaiako at Rawene School. Rouati is the daughter of Charlie Waata and Mandy Sunlite who is also an established weaver. She is the mokopuna of Molly and Albert Waata and they both played a significant role in her upbringing. She is a māmā to three teenage sons.

Rouati has faced many challenges juggling whānau life along with her mahi raranga but she says she's had a good support network backing her to keep pursuing her creative life.

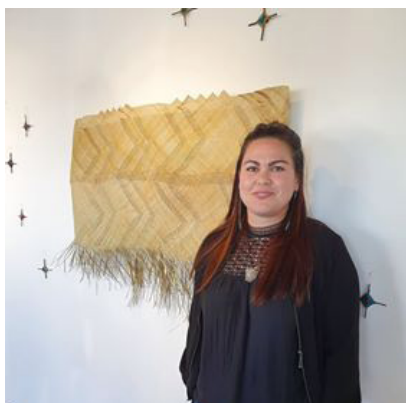
Rouati's love for raranga began in her home. She grew up with the smell of harakeke and fell asleep to her mother weaving at night.

toingapuhi.co.nz

info@toingapuhi.co.nz



Rouati's grandfather Albert was a forward-thinking Māori man and around the time of the Māori revival he assigned each of his children an area of Toi Māori to upskill on. His mission was to make sure his children had something. Rouati's father was given raranga to take up but that naturally got passed onto her mother, Mandy who took up the wero and follows it through to this day. Her pāpā asked Emily Schuster, a master weaver from Te Arawa, to come up north and teach Mandy to weave: Mandy's exposure to raranga began when Rouati was as young as three months old.



As a young girl, Rouati would hassle her mum to teach her how to weave and she finally gave in when Rouati was around eight years old. Albert had set up the first pā harakeke in Whirinaki when Rouati was still a young kōhine, and anybody who came to harvest from there had to seek her permission. Her pāpā indulged her so that the pā became her domain. He remained the kaitiaki of that pā harakeke right up until his passing. Rouati describes her pāpā as the main instigator of her weaving journey and a huge pou for her.

Rouati was homeschooled for most of her education, but she attended Northland College in her second-to-last year of school. She then went on to study a Bachelor of Education at the University of Auckland. She did this while living with her dad in Paparoa, Kaipara. Her dad was pursuing a Bachelor of Education and encouraged her to do the same.

In recent years, Rouati has done raranga projects with Rawene School redoing hukahuka on kapahaka uniforms with Years four to eight tamariki. She has also taught some young sisters from Rawene as part of an arts festival how to make harakeke bracelets. The sisters loved it so much that they ended up carrying this on in the holidays and then selling their bracelets at the Boatshed café in Rawene.

Rouati's teenage sons have all dabbled in weaving and will often prep for her. Her eldest son will harvest the harakeke and another will carry out the boiling.



One of the unique skills Rouati possesses in her mahi toi is that she is able to learn how to recreate patterns without being shown. She had spent so long watching her mum weave that she learnt through osmosis and didn't have to be shown when she began to weave.

This skill was helpful because Rouati was the one who initially figured out how to do the hono (join) of Te Rā, the only known woven Māori sail. Rouati, Mandy, and experienced artist and weaver, Ruth Port, travelled to England in 2018 to where Te Rā resides in the British Museum in London. There are no accounts of how the hono was woven on Te Rā so they had to study it themselves. They spent three days in the British Museum observing the sail and then brought that knowledge back to Aotearoa in order to recreate the sail. A number of notable weavers including Ruth Port, Makareta Jahnke, and Maureen Lander jumped on this kaupapa and created Hinemarama, the replica of Te Rā, which they successfully completed in July 2021 after two years of weaving. They then took the sail out onto Whirinaki River where it was successfully launched and sailed.

Rouati and her mum have woven together for years and have done many joint projects and exhibitions. It was particularly special that they got to work on such a kaupapa whakahirahira like Te Rā together. Rouati admires her mum for continuing on with the raranga journey while she herself has gone off on other paths at points throughout the years such as raising a young family and attaining a degree.

Written by: Dina McLeod- Ngāti Wai, Ngāti Hine, Ngāpuhi.
Tai o Hī Tai o Hā Writing Intern

The biggest highlight in Rouati's career so far has been working on Te Rā. Hokianga has influenced Rouati and her mahi, especially Whirinaki her pāpākāinga where she keeps her home fires burning. Te Rā weavers preach that their kaupapa always comes back to the grass roots of Whirinaki. It encompasses everything from it being where they harvest their harakeke, to doing all their wānanga at the wharetoi, to putting the sail on Whirinaki river and finally to having their kauhau for the completed replica sail, Hinemarama, at Pā Te Aroha Marae in Whirinaki.

Currently Rouati and her mum are working on a private commission piupiu, a cloak for her sister's PHD graduation at the end of the year, and of course they are continuing on Te Rā Kaupapa. Rouati would love to see more people get on board preserving the knowledge of the hono. She believes this in turn will lead to the making of more Māori woven sails to fulfill the vision of having the harbour filled with waka with sails on Waitangi Day 2040.

Rouati believes that toi is the essence of who Māori are as a people as toi stems from whakapapa and back to 'who we are and where we're from.'





TOI NGĀPUHI

Inspiring excellence in
Ngāpuhi cultural and
creative expression
across Te Taitokerau

Te whakaoho i te ihiihi,
mō te kounga o ngā
tikanga, me ngā
auahatanga o Ngāpuhi,
puta noa i Te Taitokerau.

Contact

info@toingapuhi.co.nz

Physical Address:

Level 1, 3 Cobham Road

Kerikeri 0230