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# Ako Wāhine: Journey of Learning

Theme:  
Leadership

 Ako Wāhine: Journey of Learning

[Heather Dawson](#)

 New Zealand Rugby

**Ako Wāhine is a World Rugby accredited programme bringing together women from all aspects of the game for education and development, and has a strong focus on connection and community.**

**What is the purpose of your project?**

How a female-centric environment can make a big difference to learning, connection and development outcomes. To build a network of confident women who emerge with a World Rugby recognised accreditation.

**What were the enablers that proved successful?**

Building a shared culture, authentic leadership, creating a safe learning environment.

**What impact did your project have?**

Many participants leave feeling more comfortable within their game and themselves as well as creating strong relationships between the people in attendance.

**What were the outcomes for women?**

Many participants have gone on to further their involvement in rugby in their home communities, bringing their knowledge and experience back to local clubs and unions. We've had women who have put their hands up for roles or positions within the game that they otherwise wouldn't have, resulting in more women in the administration and governance of the game - which in turn flows through for better outcomes for women and girls playing rugby.

Ako Wahine team Chch.jpeg

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We know that an environment tailored specifically to women makes a big difference to their learning, connection and development outcomes. NZR's Ako Wāhine programme is setting a benchmark of how things can be done.

Ako Wāhine is much more than a World Rugby educator programme. While it develops competency in the game, the goal is to build a network of confident women who have strengthened their capabilities both professionally and personally.

The authentic environment, focusing on connection and community, fosters a safe place for personal development, and many alumna of the programme demonstrate this by returning to feature as facilitators for future sessions.

Emerging with a World Rugby Coach Educator certificate, participants are then able to lead programmes and assess others as they develop within the sport, taking the culture and learning environment of Ako Wāhine with them.

The groups stay connected during and following the programme via social media group chats, so they can support each other through their development journey and reconnect on a regular basis once the course has been completed, which aids in further learning and networking opportunities.

The goal of the programme is to see more and more women stepping up to become future leaders of the sport. We have seen through our completed programmes that the Ako Wāhine approach results in improved learning and sustained development outcomes for women involved in rugby.

Rebecca Stanaway is an Ako Wāhine participant and educator, Referee, North Harbour Rugby Union Board Member, and North Harbour Rugby Referees Board Member.

*The Ako Wāhine programme was so much more than a World Rugby Educator course. It was my first opportunity to be amongst other women who live and breathe rugby. I had a great three days connecting with likeminded women who want to make a difference. I've now got a network across the country who I can talk to and share ideas around improving the game for women. I feel it empowered me not only as a person but also in rugby, showing me there was more to my journey and I had more to give to my community. I came away thinking of areas I could influence in terms of my role on the North Harbour Board - while it's focused on driving better outcomes for women in rugby, I interact with men, women, boys and girls, and my takeaways from Ako Wāhine will contribute to the game as a whole."*

The brainchild of former Black Fern Vania Wolfgramm, Ako Wāhine has been run around the country, with further COVID-delayed workshops taking place in 2022.

2022 is a year in celebration of women and girls in rugby, and we're capturing it all through our Wāhine Wrap newsletter. Sign up to keep up with the play!

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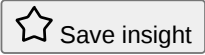
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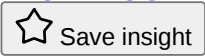
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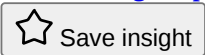
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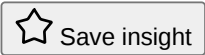
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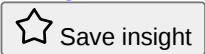
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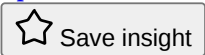
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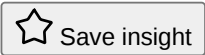
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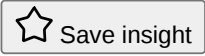


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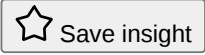


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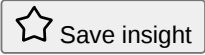
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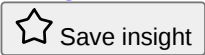
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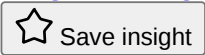
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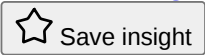
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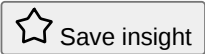
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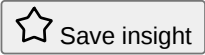
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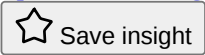
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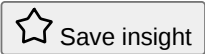


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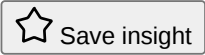
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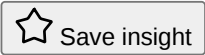


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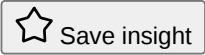


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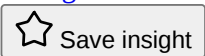
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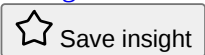
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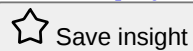
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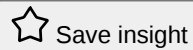
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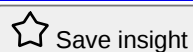
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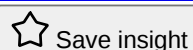
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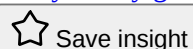
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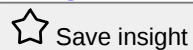
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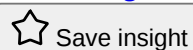
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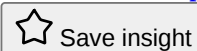
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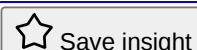
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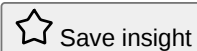
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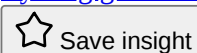
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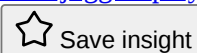
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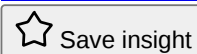
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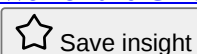
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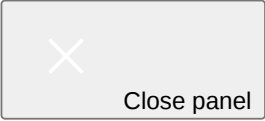
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