WOTK Alumnae Kylie Heihei - My Leadership Journey

Theme:
Youth

Co-authored by Kylie Heihei

Kylie Heihei - My Leadership Journey

Embarking on my role as the Sports League Coordinator at Y North Shore Sports Leagues, I faced the early challenge of limited guidance. Responsibilities included overseeing the Y North Shore Sports Leagues, such as Women's Basketball, Indoor Football, and Junior Basketball. Conversations with girls' basketball teams revealed a hesitation to compete against boys, driven by concerns about the game's intensity. Examining our statistics—Basketball Programmes consisting of 85% males and 15% females—intensified my commitment to impactful changes for children, women, and young people in our community.

The journey through the early stages of my role brought both challenges and rewards. Delicate handling was key for intricacies like basketball draws and managing staff dynamics. Creating a draw, a significant challenge given my limited knowledge of basketball and football, became a learning curve. No prior experience with draws added complexity, but insights from current staff helped structure it. This was a steep curve, especially for a naturally reserved introvert stepping into a leadership position.

Despite incredible support from my team, lingering insecurities, and doubts about excelling in this role persisted. It was a journey marked by overcoming challenges, learning new skills, and pushing forward despite initial uncertainties.

Whanake o te Kōpara, led by Fran and Sarah, was more than a leadership programme – it transformed me. Recognising that everyone has a unique voice, waiting for amplification with support, was a crucial learning. The programme showed the power of having people around, including mentors and the 19 other inspiring women aged between 18-25, who encourage and stand by you.

In Whanake, I realised the significance of having a strong support network and being encouraged to highlight my strengths. The mentors and peers in the program were there every step of the way. This support, along with the encouragement to embrace my abilities, was more than just enlightening; it became the driving force that helped me overcome reservations and approach leadership with confidence. Establishing a safe space for people to express emotions and fostering a culture of empathy and resilience played a crucial role in this transformative journey.

Post-Whanake o te Kōpara, the impact went beyond personal growth. Fuelled by a passion for empowering women, youth, and children, I initiated the "Find Your Y" day event. Collaborating with AUT students for a strategic approach, the event aimed to break down stereotypes and encourage more girls, women, boys, and young people to participate actively.

National stats from 2022 showed a decline in participation for girls, women, boys, and young people in sports in Aotearoa. Our "Find Your Y" initiative at Y North Shore aimed to increase participation and create a more inclusive space for girls, women, boys, and young people in our community.

The event saw younger children, especially 5-8-year-olds, trying basketball and gymnastics. Initial marketing challenges taught valuable lessons for future events. Assessing the impact of "Find Your Y" revealed an encouraging increase in participation post-event. For me, witnessing all children come in and give it a go was the most rewarding.

Inspired by conversations with girls', women's, and children's basketball teams and our programme statistics, "Find Your Y" aimed to tackle the reluctance to compete against boys and address gender imbalance in our programmes. The event generated a positive response, particularly from younger children aged 5-8, who embraced basketball and gymnastics.

Despite initial marketing challenges stemming from underused internal systems, we gained valuable insights for future events. Following "Find Your Y," we observed a noteworthy increase in participation – a gratifying win.

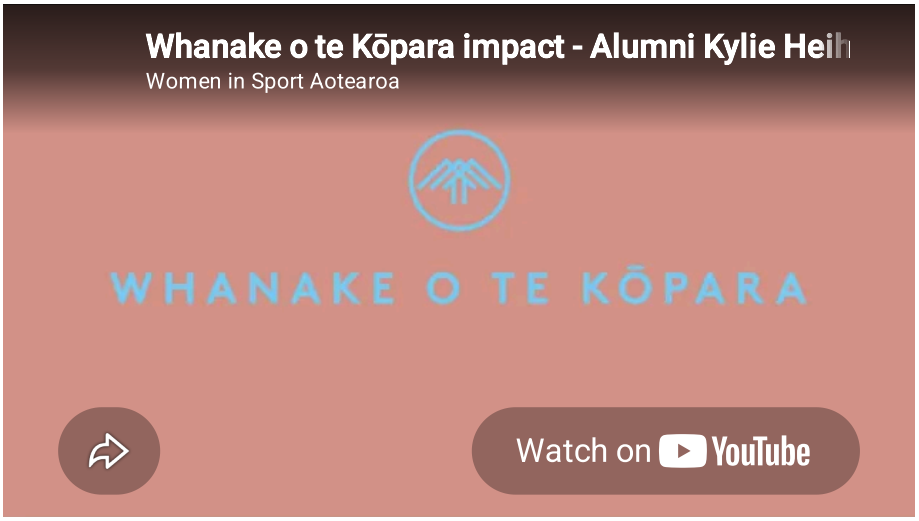
The decision to leave my role was a mix of emotions. Saying goodbye to camaraderie and impactful work was challenging but fuelled by a burning desire for personal growth. This departure marked a turning point, unlocking doors to new and exciting experiences.

In my new role as the OSCAR Operations Supervisor overseeing Central and East Auckland, I've deepened my passionate journey of fostering inclusivity and empowerment for young people, especially young girls, in sports and active recreation within our Auckland after-school care programmes. Drawing on leadership skills from Whanake o te Kōpara, I actively challenge stereotypes within after-school care programmes.

I'm committed to breaking down gender-related stereotypes by encouraging both boys and girls, women, and young people, to explore a variety of activities without limitations. By promoting inclusivity and embracing diverse interests, my goal is to create an environment where every child feels empowered to participate, regardless of traditional expectations. This approach aims not only to foster a sense of belonging but also to contribute to dismantling broader societal stereotypes related to gender and sports participation.

As I step into this journey, lessons learned continue to shape and deepen my dedication to Recreation Programmes at Y North Shore. With renewed commitment, I aim to transform our programmes into spaces that celebrate our community's richness.

Check out Kylie's video here:



Save this Insight

Print this Insight

Download Insight assets
For use in your own documents

Was this Insight helpful?

Share this Insight

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Email
- Copy this page's URL

Save this Insight | Print this Insight | Download Insight assets

Email this Insight

Close 'Download Insight Assets' modal

Download Insight assets

- WOTK Alumnae Kylie Heihei - My Leadership Journey.pdf
- Kylie Heihei 2.jpg 110KB JPG

Was this Insight useful?

Similar Insights (39)

A game of inequality: The reality of sporting dreams for young disabled people

Save insight

Youth

A game of inequality: The reality of sporting dreams for young disabled people

Netball Smart - Injury Prevention Resources

Save insight

Youth

Netball Smart - Injury Prevention Resources

Her Moves - Sport Ireland resources to inspire girls to be active

Save insight

Youth

Her Moves - Sport Ireland resources to inspire girls to be active

Tatiana Raumati leads Māngere’s charge in Z Manu World Champs qualifier

Save insight

Youth

Tatiana Raumati leads Māngere’s charge in Z Manu World Champs qualifier

Basketball: Getting girls court time comes with unique spin

Save insight

Youth

Basketball: Getting girls court time comes with unique spin

Research: Obstacles faced by primary and intermediate school girls' when playing sport

Save insight

Youth

Research: Obstacles faced by primary and intermediate school girls' when playing sport
Supporting Balanced Female Health
Save insight

Youth

Supporting Balanced Female Health

By Emma Evans - Sport New Zealand
Sport NZ It's My Move: Tools and Resources
Save insight

Youth

Sport NZ It's My Move: Tools and Resources

By Emma Evans - Sport New Zealand
Six Years On | Yeah! Girls NZC
Save insight

Youth

Six Years On | Yeah! Girls NZC

By Jess Davidson - New Zealand Cricket
Whanake o te Kōpara case study - Dantaye Simpson
Save insight

Youth

Whanake o te Kōpara case study - Dantaye Simpson

By Merran Brockie-David - Women in Sport Aotearoa
Thriving Through Sport
Save insight

Youth

Thriving Through Sport

It's My Move Progress Report
Save insight

Youth

It's My Move Progress Report

By Emma Evans - Sport New Zealand
PNGHS “Let’s Move it” programme video
Save insight

Youth

PNGHS “Let’s Move it” programme video

By Cheycoda Cocks - Sport Manawatu
Letters from Rangatahi: Olympic Muses and Musings
Save insight

Kura Netball Team

Youth

Letters from Rangatahi: Olympic Muses and Musings

By Ciccone Hakaraia-Turner - Netball New Zealand
Move YO - Move, Stretch, Relax programme for young women and girls
Save insight

Youth

Move YO - Move, Stretch, Relax programme for young women and girls

Flow on Effect: Anna Peterson talking menstruation and being active
Save insight

Youth

Flow on Effect: Anna Peterson talking menstruation and being active

Flow on effect: Sophie Watson (EONZ) on how to be a menstrual ally
Save insight

Youth

Flow on effect: Sophie Watson (EONZ) on how to be a menstrual ally

Flow on Effect: Fern Taiapa on breaking down the stigma around menstruation
Save insight

Youth

Flow on Effect: Fern Taiapa on breaking down the stigma around menstruation

Flow on Effect: Clare Morgan on Sustainability: understanding what is good for body and planet
Save insight

Youth

Flow on Effect: Clare Morgan on Sustainability: understanding what is good for body and planet

Governance: Ariana Reweti completes Basketball New Zealand Board Internship
Save insight

Youth

Governance: Ariana Reweti completes Basketball New Zealand Board Internship

Venus Williams is stunned 45 per cent of girls are dropping out of sports over body confidence issues

Save insight

Youth

Venus Williams is stunned 45 per cent of girls are dropping out of sports over body confidence issues

IWG: Jess Davidson - Yeah! Girls Activators – building a new workforce for youth female cricket

Save insight

Youth

IWG: Jess Davidson - Yeah! Girls Activators – building a new workforce for youth female cricket

ReSport partners with Sport Northland for the Positive Puberty Participation Initiative

Save insight

Youth

ReSport partners with Sport Northland for the Positive Puberty Participation Initiative

Harbour Sport Girls Motion Programme

Save insight

Youth

Harbour Sport Girls Motion Programme

Celebrating Champions of Change: Kylie Heihei

Save insight

Youth

Celebrating Champions of Change: Kylie Heihei

Team sports help vast majority of young girls feel more confident, says report

Save insight

Youth

Team sports help vast majority of young girls feel more confident, says report

Balanced female health handbook for adults supporting young people in community sport.

Save insight

Youth

Balanced female health handbook for adults supporting young people in community sport.

Webinar replay: Supporting Sporty Girls for coaches or administrators

Save insight

Youth

Webinar replay: Supporting Sporty Girls for coaches or administrators

What’s Your Little One Made Of? Creating a new generation of male allies for girls in sport

Save insight

Youth

What’s Your Little One Made Of? Creating a new generation of male allies for girls in sport

How Erika Fairweather went from kayaking with dolphins to swimming for gold

Save insight

Youth

How Erika Fairweather went from kayaking with dolphins to swimming for gold

Rangatahi just want to have fun!

Save insight

Young women from the Women’s Organisation of the Waikato Muslim Association with First Step Outdoors staff, after a river trip.

Youth

Rangatahi just want to have fun!

By Robyn Cockburn - LUMIN

Managing the Physical Load of Female Athletes

Save insight

Youth

Managing the Physical Load of Female Athletes

Creating an Environment for Youth to Flourish

Save insight

Youth

Creating an Environment for Youth to Flourish

By Charissa Barnham - Sport New Zealand

IWG: Lavenia Yalovi & Maria Rarawa - Football for Development Programme Insights on Gender Equality

Save insight

Youth

IWG: Lavenia Yalovi & Maria Rarawa - Football for Development Programme Insights on Gender Equality

Make Space for Us

Save insight

Youth

Make Space for Us

We're losing kids from sport; but you can change that

Save insight

Youth

We're losing kids from sport; but you can change that

IWG: Florence Gitau - Using the platform of football to promote Employment and Entrepreneurship opportunities for slum girls and young women in male dominated Sports industry- Critical lessons from ‘Breaking the Barriers’ (BTB) project in Kenya

Save insight

Youth

IWG: Florence Gitau - Using the platform of football to promote Employment and Entrepreneurship opportunities for slum girls and young women in male dominated Sports industry- Critical lessons from ‘Breaking the Barriers’ (BTB) project in Kenya

Developing A Brand For Young Women's Initiatives: HERA Goddess

Save insight

Youth

Youth

Developing A Brand For Young Women's Initiatives: HERA Goddess

By Briana irving - Aktive - Auckland Sport & Recreation

Empowering Young Female Leaders - Whanake o te Kōpara & the Emotional Culture Deck

Save insight

Youth

Empowering Young Female Leaders - Whanake o te Kōpara & the Emotional Culture Deck

By Sarah Leberman MNZM - Women in Sport Aotearoa

Our Partners

- Sport NZ
- NZ Foreign affairs and trade
- US Embassy NZ

Women in Sport Aotearoa Insight Hub | Ngā Wāhine Hākinakina o Aotearoa

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Linkedin
- TikTok
- YouTube

- Contact
- FAQs
- Privacy policy
- Terms of use

© 2026 Women in Sport Aotearoa

Subscribe to our newsletter

Receive the latest news, events and insights as we publish them.

Name:
Email:
Subscribe

Close panel Women in Sport Aotearoa Insight Hub | Ngā Wāhine Hākinakina o Aotearoa

Subscribe to our newsletter

Our weekly email delivering the latest insights as we publish them, tailored to your tastes.

First name:*
Email:*

Preferences

Select those that apply to you to help us customise your Insight Hub experience.

Insight Themes

- [x] All
- [x] Leadership
- [x] Social Change
- [x] Active Lives
- [x] High Performance
- [x] Visibility and Voice

Insight Content Types

- [x] All
- [x] Research
- [x] Case studies

- [x] News stories
- [x] Toolkits

Subscribe now