Haukapuanui Vercoe

Ko Tāwhirirangi te maunga

Ko Mōhaka te awa

Ko Tākitimu te waka

Ko Ngāti Pāhauwera te hapū

Ko Ngāti Kahungunu te iwi

Ko Waipapa-a-Iwi Mōhaka te marae

Ko Haukapuanui Vercoe ahau

- **Ko wai tēnei?**
  I am a proud raukura of Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori. I followed my passion for numbers, which led me to pursue engineering as a career. I am currently pursuing a PhD in Civil Engineering at The University of Auckland, focusing on enhancing marae infrastructure resilience against natural hazards (e.g., earthquakes, flooding) and climate change. My rangahau is now a platform for change, addressing social, environmental, and cultural impacts on whānau, hapū, and iwi. I am incredibly passionate about inspiring more rangatahi into tertiary education and encourage the pursuit of knowledge to further the aspirations of our tūpuna.

What is your favourite whakataukī?

'Whāia te iti kahurangi ki te tūohu koe me he maunga teitei'
– Reach for the stars.

Haukapuanui

- **Where did you grow up?**
  I grew up in Rotorua and suspect that our section of the whānau moved away around the 1900s, as my hononga to the Hawkins whānau goes back six generations.

- **What was your favourite subject at school?**
  Mathematics, Physics and Te Reo Māori

- **Have you ever failed at something?**
  Public speaking has always been a challenge but I've accepted that it comes with practice. So, in order to improve, I need to face my fear and just do it!

- **Who was your favourite teacher and why?**
  Uenuku Fairhall, the tumuaki (school principal) of our kura at the time, was a remarkable individual. Not only was he multilingual and a mathematician, but he also possessed a unique ability to push and challenge me to reach new heights. Under his guidance, I not only grew academically but also learned the importance of dressing well. My kura played a huge part in shaping me into who I am today, my way of thinking and how I conduct myself.

What's your favourite food in the whole world?

'There is nothing like the earthy taste of a ground hāngi!'

Haukapuanui