

Amber Taylor



**Ko wai koe? A brief history on you!
How you got started on your mahi, what are you working on?**

Ko wai au...
Ki te taha o tōku pāpā.
Ko Taranaki te maunga
Ko Urenui te awa
Ko Tokomaru te waka
Ko Ngāti Mutunga me Te Ātiawa, Tainui ngā Iwi
Ko Raumati tōku whānau
Ki te taha o tōku māmā
Ko Tutamoe te maunga
Ko Wairoa me Kaipara ngā awa
Ko Mahuhukiterangi ngā waka
Ko Ngāti Whātua me Ngapuhi, Te Rarawa, Tainui ngā Iwi
Ko Ngāti Hinga me Ngāti Mahuta ngā Hapu
Ko Nepia tōku whānau
Ko Amber Taylor tōku ingoa.
He Kaiwhakahaere ahau i ARA Journeys.

I am a mother, a partner and the CEO of ARA Journeys, a digital technology company I co-founded in 2018. Inspired by and drawing on mātauranga Māori, our award-winning digital platforms utilise AR, MR, XR and AI to achieve the key objectives of connection, education, and exploration. I am curious about all emerging technologies and have a particular interest in data, robots, ai and immersive tech.

I'm an urban Māori, not entirely disconnected from my marae, but not connected either. This is what started me on my journey to starting ARA Journeys. I wanted a place to learn about my culture.

A place where I could feel safe to explore and learn in my own time. I felt that doing the initial ground-work to better understand my identity would help me to feel more confident to reconnect to my marae, my whakapapa, when I was ready. I later discovered I wasn't the only one who felt this way so I decided to do something about it. With the help of Dr. Isaac Warbrick, my business partner/co-founder we set about building a geo-location game that highlights our Māori stories in relation to place.

He aha te whāinga matua mō tō mahi? What is the main goal for you work?

ARA Journeys is on a mission to flood the world with digital platforms built by and for indigenous cultures. A place where all indigenous people can celebrate, preserve and share their culture, traditional knowledge, and language.

By focusing on the interface between traditional mātauranga (knowledge) and immersive technologies (AR & XR), we hope to provide the world with interactive experiences that bring together culture and technology.

Hei aha o whakaaro ai e pā ana ki te whakamahia e ngā wāhine i tō kaupapa mahi rānei? Why do you think it's important to have wāhine Māori in your particular industry/business?

Women make games that women want to play!

For a long time, new technologies and games have traditionally been developed with males in mind. Yet, nearly half of all players of digital games in New Zealand are women. Our culture and being wāhine Māori gives us a very significant point of difference and world-view. Having this reflected back in the games we create, and play will enable us to create games that reach new audiences and improve player inclusivity. With more wāhine Māori in tech, we have an opportunity to create content that better reflects and celebrates everything that makes us unique.

Ka huri koe, te whakakitenga ki mua he aha ngā wawata mō te āpōpōtanga o Aotearoa? Looking at the future, what are your hopes/aspirations for your industry and Aotearoa?

Maximum cognitive diversity in tech. What I mean by that, is I hope to see the tech sector broaden its talent potential. The evolution of thought comes from diverse teams – gender, race, religion, upbringing, differing viewpoints, ways of thinking etc. The ethnic and cultural diversity of our country is what make us unique and we need to do a better job in embracing it.

If we want to grow the tech sector we need to encourage more diversity in the workforce. My hopes are that our leaders of today are paving the way for our leaders of tomorrow by being good role-models and leading positive change. I hope that twenty years from now, “diversity and inclusivity in tech” is no longer a headline because it’s the norm. I want to see more indigenous peoples represented in the sector, pushing the boundaries of innovation, and playing an equal role in designing the technology of tomorrow.