Photo of cross taken by Jesse Elias, BE Kindred

Looking out on Ngatiawa from the hilltop



WRITTEN BY A CAMP LEADER ABOUT CREATE CAMP 12-16 JULY 2026

Entering this year's season of creation a small crew of rangatahi and leaders spent the week together at Create camp run by Scripture Union NZ. This camp focused on encouraging young people's creativity as a way of connecting and worshipping God through our unique individual expressions and in communal sharing and collaboration.

The camp started off with an activity of creating art from junk; the rangatahi were given materials such as old bottle caps, magazines, and cardboard rolls. This set the tone for the week that creativity is everywhere, there are so many things that as humans we use once and then dispose of.

This process of junk art helped us to creatively reframe conception of waste and to give it more than one singular life. This activity was framed alongside the proverb "prayer is a practice not a performance." These words flowed through the rest of the camp as we leaned into other creative pursuits serving as a constant reminder that the process and practice of creativity is equally, if not more important than the result. It is a joy and a privilege to engage in the process of creation, just as God delighted in creating us and this land we inhabit.



The Ngatiawa River Lodge was a unique and fruitful experience. We joined the Ngatiawa community for morning prayers each day, walking in the cold past the flowing rivers and misty mountains to sing songs and recite liturgy together. We also had lunch and dinner with them, lovingly prepared by Donna, who we are endlessly grateful to for filling our bellies with good kai day after day.

The young people bore witness to and engaged with Ngatiawa's way of intentional communal living, by doing dishes together, composting our food waste, weeding, and gardening around the native trees they had planted a year ago and having conversations intergenerationally around the dinner table.

A calm break from our busy world was such a gift. Ngatiawa's rural location in combination with the young people's phones being handed in at the beginning of camp ensured that they were able to be as present as possible to the people and the beautiful environs. We partook in awesome creative practices such as turmeric printing which involved pressing leaves into a turmeric-solution covered paper and letting it develop out in the sun, wood cut print making, song writing, dance, and photography. The young people's creativity was nurtured by the environment we were in and such a beautiful and expressive safe space for them to share their gifts and talents. All this creative exploration was presented at an end of camp showcase.

This camp was a beacon of hope for me as a youth leader, reminding me of the beautiful and unique gifts each young person has to offer, the natural inclination for us as humans to create and to share our creations with others and how our environment nurtures our innate creativity and is an overt reflection of God's abundant creative love.

Can you hear their voices rustle through the trees?
Or their hands in the soil, sowing us new seeds
Can you feel their passion coursing through the rivers?
Rings of hope upon the waters, it's a whisper, it's a quiver
Notice how their palms are nurturing the light
Beckoning it to pierce through this dark and dreary night
How they lay upon the grass with hopeful eyes up to the sky
Urging us with joy, there is so much time to try!