Te awa o Whanganui once rang with the sounds of large pahu carved from hollow trees, Putatara that sounded from the cliff tops alerting hapu of manuhiri approaching, purerehua to summon the rain and many flutes and hue to catch birds and teach moteatea. From oral traditions we know that the waters of the majestic Whanganui once carried these sounds and that they were common place. Now sadly these beautiful Taonga are an oddity, referred to by many of the old people only as ‘flutes’, their true names long forgotten, and while instruments such as the Putatara, that are relatively easy to obtain and play, are beginning to re-appear the instruments that require a greater level of skill and investment to make and master are still largely absent.

Wananga based learning is central to the revitalisation of the art of Taonga Puoro in Aotearoa. Taonga Puoro cannot be learned or appreciated simply as musical instruments, while mastering the playing of them is an important part of the journey the tikanga, whakapapa and korero (language) of the instruments must be learned simultaneously. Wananga allow participants to explore all these facets in one learning environment.

The community of Whanganui has begun to make efforts to revive Taonga Puoro but there is still work to be done and there are young and old people in our area thirsty for knowledge and inspiration. I have worked for many years with the Haumanu collective of Taonga Puoro players, attending wananga with them while I worked at Te Papa Tongarewa. Now that I have returned to Whanganui I feel it is time to use these relationships to bring these Tohunga Taonga Puoro to our community and enrich our youth, our artisans, our musicians and our Kaumatua with this kaupapa.
The ongoing outcomes following this wananga will be:

- To generate new practitioners and learners of Taonga Puoro in our community.
- To increase the presence of Taonga Puoro on Marae and at community ceremonies.
- To create a group of enthusiastic new players who continue to meet, practice and learn long after the visiting kaiako have departed ensuring the sounds of taonga puoro are heard in our community for many years to come.

The Whanganui Taonga Puoro Wananga will be included as part of the Whanganui Puanga celebrations in 2015.

Nga Kaiako:

Richard Nunns
Richard Nunns is a living authority on nga taonga puoro. He has been described as one of New Zealand’s most remarkable musicians. His thorough and sensitive research has provided a wealth of information around the sounds, history and stories of these taonga, ensuring their preservation for future generations.

Brian Flintoff
Brian Flintoff’s carvings have been exhibited in several countries and are in Museums, and Public and Private Collections worldwide. His contributions to the arts were recognised with the awarding of a Queens Service Medal in 2010. Working with Te Haumanu has brought him status as a traditional flute maker. Brian has written a book, "Taonga Puoro, Singing Treasures" published by Craig Potton Publishing.

James Webster
James has a Bachelor of Arts, Te Maunga Kura Toi, (with excellence) in Whakairo Rakau from Te Wananga o Aotearoa, under the tutelage of Dr Paakaariki Harrison and Professor Kereti Rautangata. Webster is a member of the group Haumanu which is dedicated to the revival - teaching and sharing of these taonga. Webster has performed in concerts as well as conferences and tutored at Wananga in Aotearoa and abroad.

Warren Warbrick
Warren has also been a member of the Haumanu collective of players and makers of Taonga Puoro since 1993. A Tohunga Whakairo his background of academic research mixed with his art has made him an authority both within his home region of Manawatu and throughout New Zealand on nga taonga puoro and traditional carving tools. Warren also has a background in teaching and is the Advisor Taonga Maori at Te Manawa Manawatu Museum.

Horomona Horo
Composer, practitioner and cross genre collaborator, Horomona Horo has fused the traditional taonga puoro within a diverse range of cultural and musical forms. Mentored by tohunga of taonga puoro, the late Dr Hirini Melbourne and Richard Nunns, in 2001, Horo won the inaugural Dynasty Heritage Concerto Competition and in the intervening years has become the international Maori face of Taonga Puoro. Horo welcomes opportunities to give masterclasses and educate in traditional Maori music, dance and culture.

Jerome Kavanagh
Jerome is a Grammy winning indigenous instrument player who has recorded at Abbey Road Studios and performed at Carnegie Hall among other amazing musical achievements. Jerome hails from Taihape and was tutored by Whanganui River Kaumatua Morvin Simon. He also teaches Te Reo and Taonga Puoro.

Alistair Fraser
Alistair is a Dunedin born and raised musician, crafts-person, and has a B.Mus. Perf. 2000 (Massey University). In 2011 Alistair was the recipient of a CNZ/DoC Wild Creations Artist Residency, which took him to Rakiura/Stewart Island to research, make and record taoka pūoro. Alistair has been making and playing taonga puoro since 2000, when he attended workshops run by the ‘dynamic trio’ of Brian Flintoff, Richard Nunns and the late Hirini Melbourne. Alistair now plays, produces and composes taonga pūoro in a wide variety of settings.