Te Whare Kura (TWK) is a Thematic Research Initiative directly funded by the Vice Chancellor at the University of Auckland, Aotearoa, New Zealand. It was established in November 2010 and is based at the Faculty of Arts championed by the Dean of Arts and Director of Faculty operations. TWK's direction is underpinned by a Governance Group comprised of senior Māori and Pacific faculty staff from across the University of Auckland and it is an indigenous multidisciplinary and collaborative research initiative supported by a network of 250+ Māori, Pacific and non-indigenous faculty members. Its primary focus is to assist faculty members to undertake research that benefits Māori and Pacific communities in Aotearoa, New Zealand. TWK comprises of four key themes: Mauri Atua (Indigenous Knowledges), Mauri Tīriti (Governance, Rights and Responsibilities), Mauri Tangata (Health and Identity) and Mauri Manaaki (Economic Development).

Ms Everdina Fuli (M.Ed, B.A., Dip Tchg and N.Z.T.T.C.) is the Business Manager for TWK. She is responsible for guiding the TWK Governance Group, and leading the TWK Management Team in driving TWK's indigenous research and business strategy, university wide which includes the national and international arenas. She has played a key role in bringing Health of Research Council of New Zealand funding into the University of Auckland and working relentlessly to establish a robust international indigenous research strategy. This has culminated in two formal tripartite agreements with the Universities of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, Washington (Seattle), Massey and Auckland.

Recently the National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) of the National Institute of Health (NIH) awarded to TWK, University of Auckland, the University of Washington (Seattle) and the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa a five year T37 training grant, titled the “Mahina Project: International Indigenous Health Research Training Program”.

Ms Fuli has worked in research funding, contract management, government policy and strategy, directorships, and was a senior faculty member. She has completed research, published academic articles and government reports in the areas of: education; evaluation; Treaty; employment; health; gender; indigenous women; Māori and Pacific advancement; and Māori language; economic development. She has worked internationally in: Sydney and Canberra, Australia and Nadi and Suva, Fiji; Kiribati; Tuvalu; Montreal, Vancouver, and Vancouver Island, Canada; Shenzden, China; Durban, Pretoria, and Johannesburg, South Africa; and Hawai‘i.

Ms Fuli is a member of the Pacific Advisory Group for the Ministry of Social Development and Chairs their Pasefika Proud Research Advisory Kōmiti. She was also appointed to the Expert Advisory Group in October this year by Cabinet to review the family violence sector in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Government appointed her to the Ministry of Education’s Pacific Island Polynesian Education Foundation Board in November. She has sat on a number of key advisory committees and boards in the field of health; education; economic development; and indigenous languages.

In January 2014 Ms Fuli will visit the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa with a group of TWK researchers from the University of Auckland. They will be hosted by Associate Professor Keawe‘aimoku Kaholokula, Chair of the Department of Hawaiian Health at the John A Burns School of Medicine and Associate Professor Kāwika Tengan, Chair of Ethnic Studies at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. While she is there she is very keen to also meet key Native Hawaiian and Pacific leaders, organisations and community groups active in promoting the “mana, wellbeing and aspirations” of indigenous peoples.

She is from the iwi (tribes) of Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Kahungunu, Te Whakatōhea, and Ngā Puhi which are eastern and northern tribes located in the North Island of Aotearoa. Paternally she is from Tokelau; Cook Islands; and Tuvalu. She is grateful to her parents, elders and especially her grandparents for grounding her culturally and linguistically. She says this laid a strong foundation in her life and work. She is passionate about assisting Māori and Pacific communities in becoming socially and economically sustainable with leadership that enables this.