

WOMEN LEADING CHANGE



First Foundation is celebrating the launch of the Gattung Foundation. The new organisation's mission is "to lift children and people out of poverty; lift women out of situations of inequality, hardship or violence; lift young women, Māori and Pasifika into futures of leadership and empowerment; and lift animals into better lives."

We're delighted that the Gattung Foundation has recognised our work as a cycle breaker for Māori and Pasifika women. Of the 900 scholars First Foundation has supported over the last two decades, 454 have been for young women.

Businesswoman and entrepreneur Theresa Gattung won't put an exact figure on what the Gattung Foundation will give away other than to say it will be in the "tens of millions of dollars".

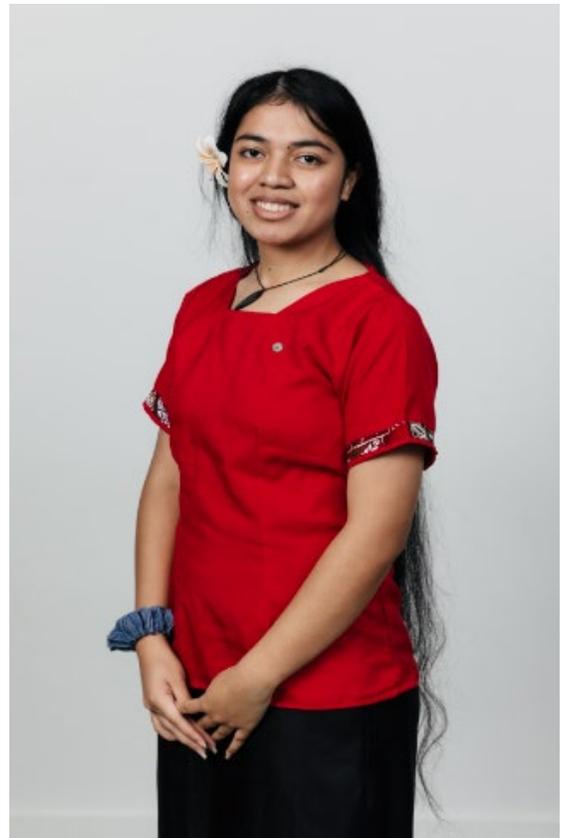
They are concentrating on key areas – supporting education and learning opportunities for young women, supporting families in need, relieving poverty through grassroots support, lifting women out of situations of inequality, hardship or violence, and improving the care and protection of animals.

In particular, they want to help address an imbalance of educational and professional opportunities for young Māori and Pasifika women, and are already supporting established charities working in that area.

They want to make sure that if young Māori and Pasifika women want to study for a university degree, lack of money is not standing in the way.

First Foundation scholar Vika Tupou has already benefited from the Gattung Foundation's generosity.

Vika Tupou was granted a First Foundation scholarship in Year 13 to study architecture at Victoria University of Wellington, but when she decided that degree wasn't for her, she lost the funding.



The Gattung Foundation is now funding Tupou for three years to complete an engineering degree at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, support which includes mentoring and work experience.

Tupou, who came from Tonga with her family to start Year 9 at Taita College in Wellington, is one of eight children and the first in her family to attend university. The 19-year-old says starting a new university in a strange city, not to mention the workload, was "stressful".

"The Gattung Foundation gave me the extra push I needed to go for engineering, and I'm really glad I did."

Looking ahead, Tupou says she would like to complete a Master's Degree, work for an engineering company in New Zealand, and one day return to Tonga to help with projects there.

You can find out more about the Gattung Foundation [here](#).

Photo credit / Babiche Martens, NZ Herald