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Whai Wāhitanga: Rediscovering the Future of Youth Participation

AraTaiohi
Peak Body for Youth Development

EDITED BY KAHUKURA RITCHIE, ROD BAXTER AND JANE ZINTL

Kaiparahuarahi

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Foreword

Tēnā koutou,

I was so pleased to hear that the focus of this edition of Kaiparahuarahi is whai wāhitanga. By acknowledging young people are valued contributors to society, the principle of whai wāhitanga reinforces something we all already know – that young people are amazing and that their voices must be heard.

As the Minister for Youth supporting, responding to, and encouraging youth voice is one of my key priorities. Young people offer important perspectives that must be considered and acted upon at all decision-making levels. The Government's Youth Plan 2020-2022 aims to drive change and empower youth participation. We know the youth of Aotearoa are diverse, make meaningful contributions to their communities, and care deeply about many issues that affect them, their families and communities.

I would also like to use this space to acknowledge and thank everyone who works to support our young people. It has been a particularly challenging few years in which you would have undoubtedly been navigating your own challenges. Yet, you have supported our youth through these difficult times as well. Your mahi does not go unnoticed, and I want to personally acknowledge each of you for the time, care, and energy you put in to empowering our young people's voices to be heard. We want Aotearoa New Zealand to be the best place in the world to be a child or young person, and I know the youth sector is key in making this happen.

Nō reira, tēnā tātou katoa,

Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan
Minister for Youth

Editorial

How to rediscover the future?

One of the beautiful things we've noticed is that the current exploration of whai wāhitanga in youth work and youth development isn't interested in 'othering' young people. You'll note that as you read this issue because there's an inherent intersectionality in every article. There's a fusion here of age, culture and perspective, and credibility isn't defined by length of experience. This issue about youth voice features plenty of youthful voices, and we leave it up to you to work out who is who.

In this spirit, we're thrilled to welcome Kahukura Ritchie (Rangitane, Ngati Kahungungu) as an editor for this issue. Kahu's a Praxis and BYD graduate, 22 years old and a youth worker with several kaupapa. Regular editor Nikki Hurst offered to step aside for this issue, creating space for a younger leader, however mega thanks to Nikki for her undercover proofread pre-design. There are numerous relational connections between Kahu, Jane and Rod, as we've discussed over several breakfasts at Floridita's. Whilst we'll avoid the details and indulgence, it might be useful for you to know this unique issue of our beloved journal embodies whai wāhitanga in every dimension.

As our language around youth participation is shifting, this issue begins with a few contributions that give us a sound understanding of whai wāhitanga, the whakapapa behind this whakaaro and then beyond what the kupu mean. We're honoured to hear and raise the voices of tangata whenua and taiohi. You'll note we're consciously choosing not to translate Te Reo Māori in-text and encourage you to do the work continuing to increase your matauranga, as part of our collective commitment to Mana Taiohi, where whai wāhitanga has ostensibly expanded from.

Whaea Elizabeth Kerekere was pivotal in the manifestation of Mana Taiohi, and with Jane Zintl's recollection of the discernment process, surfaces the thinking underpinning whai wāhitanga as a refreshed identity for participatory practice. The Involve 2021 conference naturally emphasised whai wāhitanga and it made sense to record the keynote Rod Baxter shared last year. Kahukura's surfaced a new and incredibly powerful participation grounded in tipuna korero, and to say we're excited about Whitiwhitia is a serious understatement. Rounding out this foundation, we've been gifted some insights from Kahu Kutia with images that will leave an indelible impression.

Congruent with this kaupapa, young people have been involved in the writing of several organisationally focused pieces, including Ara Taiohi's Rangatahi Regen, VOYCE Whakarongo Mai, Sports NZ, and Sticks 'n Stones. Youth voices are highlighted in many other pieces and it's a joy to see this so seamlessly integrated. A special shout-out to our youngest ever contributor, Jack, who was interviewed following a recent volunteering experience in his city.

Three of our contributors have served substantially within local government settings and have tales to tell of their adventures since. Nicole Grey's reflections are playful and profound. Sarah Finlay-Robinson shares some epiphanies parenting a toddler and climbs Shier's Participatory Tree, a model from Nicaragua. Hannah Dunlop and Tayla Taylor expand the legacy emerging from post-quake Canterbury, sharing a new tool with national, if not global, potential.

Balancing stories from practice, this issue is also grounded in a robust evidence base that develops our thinking with theory. Joy Eaton further explores Wierenga's Star in youth mentoring, and gifts some resources alongside quotes from mentees. Jennifer Braithwaite and Kelsey Deane share recent research to illuminate and deepen participation practice. Eddy Davis-Rae recently graduated with a Masters in youth participation and offers some refreshing new thoughts validating the role of adults and youth workers.

Finally, welcome to Volume 2, Issue 1. Why a new volume? Well, you probably already know we're making up the rules as we go, but after reading these articles, we seriously felt like a new season is upon us. We have a new coordinator for this journal, Zara Maslin, having returning from parental leave with Piper, and the editors are immensely grateful for her organisational ninja skills. Maybe Piper can write something here one day too?

As usual, we welcome your feedback. We'd especially love to hear how something you read here transformed your work with young people? Make some suggestions about themes for future issues, because we're trying to respond to the current trends in youth work practice. Maybe you also have something you'd like to write about? Check out the inside cover and get in touch.

Nga mihi nui,

Rod Baxter, Kahukura Ritchie and Jane Zintl
August 2022

The Journey of Whai Wāhitanga

Elizabeth Kerekere and Jane Zintl

Acknowledging mana, whai wāhitanga recognises young people as valued contributors to society, giving them space to participate, assume agency and take responsibility.

Reframing and defining our understanding of youth participation through the lens of whai wāhitanga was a decision rooted in our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and was gifted to us during the review of the Youth Development Strategy of Aotearoa (YDSA) 2002.

The YDSA included six principles of youth development that were formative for the youth development sector in Aotearoa. At the 2018 Involve national conference, feedback from the over 800 delegates was that the previous principles were sound, but needed to be updated to reflect modern youth development and the rich cultural heritage of Aotearoa.

In order to encompass the range of contributions for the review of the YDSA, and to reflect calls for a kaupapa Māori and Treaty-based concept, a Māori framework was developed for the review. The Kete Kupenga framework[1] features a loose diamond weave which starts simply and develops into an intricate knot where double strands meet.

The four double strands feeding into the knot represent components of intersectional youth development:

- Te Ao Māori (Māori world)
- Taiohi (young people)
- Kaimahi (workers: people who work with young people) and
- Mātauranga (knowledge, research).

The knots themselves represent key points of whakapapa in those intersections such as events or publications. The space between the weave represents wairua, time and place.

Upon the completion of an extensive engagement process these inputs were synthesised, and checked with a focus group, as well as receiving linguistic advice from a translator accredited by Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori (Māori Language Commission). It was on this step of the process that our understanding of whai wāhitanga was born.

All strands of the review highlighted the importance of youth participation. Equally important however, was our commitment to not 'browning up' a series of monocultural principles, and truly being informed by Te Ao Māori.

We were also aware that traditional Western framing of youth participation has been individualistically framed. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (article 12) states

> *Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.*

He Arotake Tuhinga[2], our Aotearoa based literature review (one of the strands of the Kete Kupenga framework) emphasised this challenge. Initially, *He Arotake Tuhinga* intended to review research and literature from Aotearoa since 2002 through the lens of the previous principles of the YDSA. It was to also address critiques of the YDSA and its accompanying literature review, *Building Strengths*[3] (2002), particularly with respect to their Western orientation. It became clear these two could not co-exist. To ensure kaupapa Māori was integral to this work, the researchers created a framework based on concepts discussed in Māori models of youth development.

Six Māori concepts became the organising framework for the youth development literature review. Each of these was described in relation to the six previous principles of the YDSA although they do not directly correlate. The concepts were Whakapapa (interconnectedness through time and space); Mauri (one's inherent potential and life spark); Mana (one's inherent authority and integrity); Manaakitanga (generosity and care for collective wellbeing); Whanaungatanga (relationship building and connection); and Mātauranga (knowledges). Mana was the concept most directly relating to both participation and strengths-based practice (which was also linked to Mauri).

> *Mana is inherited at birth, based on whakapapa and connection to the land. Throughout their life, people accumulate mana through their actions and achievements that are reflected in their social standing and related integrity, authority or power. Mana implicates rights as well as responsibilities, as expressed by the taiohi Māori participants in Ware and Walsh-Tapiata's (2010) research. They explained that, for them, "mana included a level of self-reliance, self-determination and independent authority, but only in relation to the needs of, or benefits to, the collective" (p. 23).*
>
> *There are clear links between the YDSA principle 5 of "youth participation" and the concept of mana. First, mana connects to the idea of citizenship... Related to this, young people have agency and have a right to be involved in decisions that affect them, and to access mana-enhancing leadership and other opportunities. Mana-enhancing practice connects to the core of a "consistent strengths-based approach" (YDSA principle 3) (p. 33).*

The review went on to explore Māori perspectives on youth participation noting:

> *Regardless of the forum or format, youth participation initiatives need to be culturally responsive. This requires investigation of whether and how youth participation is promoted in other cultures, and a commitment to Te Tiriti implies the need to uphold approaches that protect Māori culture. Whilst some aspects of traditional Māori approaches to youth participation fit well with contemporary Western youth development practice, Keelan (2014) points out that other facets sit in tension with Māori views...For taiohi Māori, youth development is inherently tied to Māori development where the mana of young people is inextricably linked to the mana, and thereby the benefit and wellbeing, of the collective (p. 38-39).*

These findings in the literature review clearly understood participation through the lens of mana. As we honour the mana of Taiohi, as part of the whānau, participation naturally flows.

The synthesisation group[4] undertook the substantial process of bringing together all the strands from the Kete Kupenga. Under the guidance of Ngā Kaihoe (the network of Māori who work with Rangatahi) we determined that each principle would be framed around a kupu (word) in Te Reo Māori. It became clear that there were new principles emerging, that had not been seen in the previously such as Mauri o te Taiohi, Whakapapa Taiohi, and Manaakitanga. As they revealed themselves, we decided on eight principles framed under Mana Taiohi, the first four acknowledging the mana young people carry, and the second four looking at how we (as kaimahi, elders and whanau) enhance the mana of young people.

One area where the group struggled was in how to frame participation within the principles. Debate was rigorous, and all participants were passionate. How could we understand youth participation from an indigenous and collective world view?

The group explored traditional Māori approaches, including the term 'urungatanga':

> ***This approach has been termed education through exposure where participants were not given formal instruction but were exposed to a situation and expected to work out what was going on and solve problems that arose. This type of education included areas as diverse as cultivation, childcare and public occasions such as the structure and roles within hui and tangi (Hemara, 2000)[5].***

For some the definition above was entirely applicable to youth participation. For others the practice of urungatanga was iwi-specific, tapu, and therefore not for general use. Advice from the Kaihatū of Ara Taiohi, Matekino Marshall, was that using urungatanga in this way would be confusing due to its use in particular iwi practices. Subject to further consultation with community leaders, framing participation through the lens of urungatanga was ultimately not pursued.

Honouring the use of all kupu used throughout the Mana Taiohi principles resulted in the engagement of a translator accredited by Te Taura Whiri I te Reo Māori. The suggestion of 'whai wāhitanga' was submitted to the synthesisation group and immediately resonated with us. The Kaikautū commented that 'it made my heart sing'. As we connected with wider sector leaders, the consensus and synergy grew.

Whai wāhitanga captures the essence of youth participation in the fullest sense, from an indigenous world view. Together we support Rangatahi to take their place, or to chase their space. This is both inclusive of, and more than, concepts such as youth voice or co-design. Whai wāhitanga is led by the Rangatahi, and the pace is set by the Rangatahi. It encompasses the depth, breadth and variety needed to support Rangatahi to step into full participation, honouring the mana of the collective.

Dr Elizabeth Kerekere is a Member of Parliament and former Kaihautū and former Chair of Ara Taiohi.

Jane Zintl is the CEO of Ara Taiohi.

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References:

[1]Te Kete Kupenga Framework developed by Dr Elizabeth Kerekere, former Chair, Ara Taiohi

[2]Deane, K. and H. Dutton and E. Kerekere (2019) *Ngā Tikanga Whānaketanga – He Arotake Tuhinga. A Review of Aotearoa New Zealand Youth Development Research.* Wellington, NZ: Ara Taiohi. Available for download at: https://arataiohi.org.nz/publications/aotearoa-youth-research/

[3]*Building Strength: Youth Development Literature Review*. Ministry of Youth Affairs.

[4]The synthesisation group comprised of Rod Baxter, Elizabeth Kerekere, Jane Zintl, Terewai Rikihana, Simon Mareko and Kelsey Deane ***

[5]Ara Taiohi (2020). *Code of Ethics for Youth Work in Aotearoa New Zealand (3rd ed.)*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ara Taiohi. Page 11.

Whitiwhitia: Kia Whai Māori Ai Te Wāhitanga

Kahukura Ritchie

Kupu Whakataki – Foreword

My interest in developing this model arose during my youth development studies. I felt that within the participatory/whai wāhitanga area there was a gap around mātauranga Māori based theory - at least in the material we were exposed to - about how we, as youth workers, can create the ideal environments for rangatahi whai wāhitanga (young people chasing their space).

Whitiwhitia is a tikanga whai wāhitanga (model of participation) guided by tīpuna kōrero (ancestral stories) and my personal understandings. Understandings that I have developed through many hours of wānanga, and time spent listening to kaumātua and rangatira – koutou o te hunga poipoi i te manawaiti, e kore e taka te mihi. Let's be clear, my kōrero may differ from the understandings of others. These are my insights, not the be all and end all of kōrero. Please do your own research and kōrero with those around you to develop your own understandings.

I want to follow by introducing the idea of tōhungatanga, tīpuna wisdom – the intrinsic knowledge passed down through our kōrero, pūrākau, and history. Our whakapapa retains both the incredible hardships we have faced and the knowledge on how to navigate them. The knowledge that lays the pathway to a just world where our rangatahi have assured opportunity. By merging tīpuna wisdom with established youth development tools we unlock a new way of knowing and doing. I look to Reflective Practice as a method for remembering what came before and I look to Whitiwhitia as a way of nurturing the now.

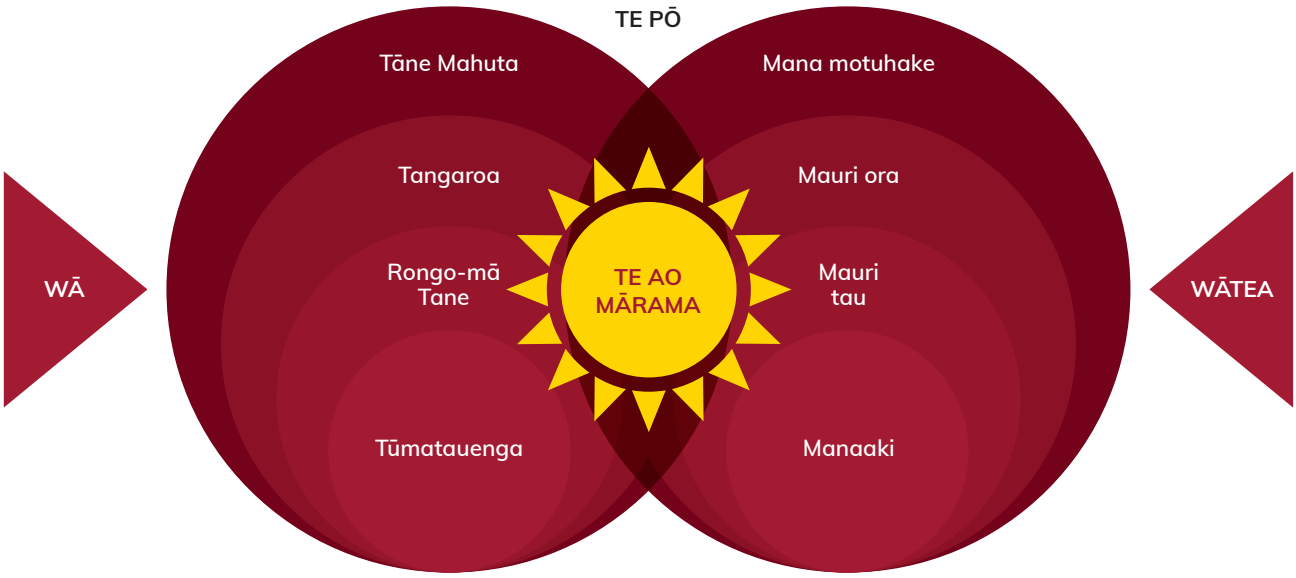
The name Whitiwhitia comes from an old karakia waerea. The purpose of waerea is to clear space for the intended kaupapa, often heard during the powhiri process when tāne orate the karakia alongside the kaikaranga. Whitiwhitia could also be interpreted as shining or crossing, in the case of these tikanga it is representative of our crossing into the time and space of the rangatahi and the clearing of barriers within that space.

Whitiwhitia aims to serve as a guide for aligning the participatory practice of youth workers with the mauri of the rangatahi we work with[1].

Nā,

Kahukura Ritchie
Rangitāne, Ngāti Kahungunu

WHITIWHITIA –
TIKANGA WHAI WĀHITANGA



Kauae Runga - Conceptual Theory of the Whitiwhitia Model

Mauri

Mauri, as a concept, is expansive – to try and explain it in writing, especially in English, would do it no justice. My encouragement to the reader is to kōrero with those around them who hold a wealth of knowledge in te ao Māori, combine this with observation and reflection within their practice, and then formulate their own understanding of mauri.

I will, however, share one metaphor which has helped me to understand mauri itself, our relationship with it, and how it is innate to each of us and our relationships with others.

Firstly, every living being has mauri, including those commonly believed to be inanimate, such as water or our whenua. Imagine then, that these living beings have within them a flame, and that this flame represents mauri. When we interact with other things, people, places, or kaupapa that have mauri we form an invisible connection between our two flames. I commonly discuss three examples of interactions between these flames (although there are certainly more):

1. We can take oxygen from the flame of another causing our own to temporarily burn brighter and theirs to diminish
2. We can recklessly give oxygen to another flame causing our own to diminish and theirs to burn brighter (often resulting in burnout)
3. Or, we can combine our flames so that both burn brighter.

The aim of this model is to provide a pathway to youth workers that allows them to create spaces in which the 'flames' of rangatahi are able to burn as bright as possible without diminishing those of others.

The Whitiwhitia model is comprised of four states of mauri, and four corresponding environments which we as youth workers can create to allow for the rangatahi to transition from Te Pō into Te Ao Mārama.

The Foundations of Whitiwhitia

Central to this model are four considerations. These four considerations are: Te Pō, Wātea, Wā, and Te Ao Mārama. Together, they provide some structure for how we might enhance our approach to whai wāhitanga.

Te Pō

Te Pō can be a space of uncertainty and fear, or it can be a space of potential, growth, and development. Often, we encounter rangatahi within this space. Whitiwhitia strives to recentre whai wāhitanga through mauri-responsive tīpuna wisdom, and shift rangatahi from uncertainty and fear to growth and development.

Some useful questions to ask yourself may be:

- What is the potential the rangatahi see for themselves? Are there any barriers?
- What potential can you see from outside of Te Pō for the rangatahi?
- What is needed to begin to bring rangatahi out of Te Pō and into Te Ao Mārama?

Wā

Wā is about time, this can be as tangible as the time of day/year and as intangible as the metaphysical and socio-political environments of the moment. Whitiwhitia requires us to be deliberate about understanding the time in which the young people are operating and how we respond to them accordingly.

Some useful questions to ask yourself may be:

- What are the different things happening for them in their lives at the moment?
- What is affecting their mauri at this time?
- How does this affect their ability to participate?
- Does the time I organise work for those who need it most?

Wātea

Wātea is about environment, it is about space for rangatahi. Conceptually, this means clearing away some of the "noise" and holding space for them away from their dominant contexts. Whitiwhitia reaffirms the intention that the spaces we create must always seek to remove the barriers that block rangatahi from transitioning from Te Pō into Te Ao Mārama – while holding on to how to cater to the state of their mauri and allowing them to participate fully.

Some useful questions to ask yourself may be:

- How does the space I am providing support the ability for the rangatahi to participate inclusive of the state of their mauri?
- Am I using the right physical spaces for the rangatahi?
- How do I maximise the effect of the space I am providing? E.G activities, food, resources, location...

Te Ao Mārama

Te Ao Mārama is a world of light, clarity and understanding. It often defines a shift to an alternate future, a future built on assured opportunity and the realisation of potential. Ultimately, Whitiwhitia leverages inherited understandings of mauri, place, and time to shift rangatahi into a new world, a world of possibility.

Some useful questions to ask yourself may be:

- What does Te Ao Mārama look like for the rangatahi?
- What can I do to support the rangatahi to get to Te Ao Mārama?
- Do I feel like the rangatahi are moving towards Te Ao Mārama?

The Four States of Mauri

There are four states of mauri identified within the Whitiwhitia model, which all of us – youth workers, young people, and groups alike – will constantly transition between. Each state of mauri is connected with an atua. The four atua that symbolise four different states of mauri are Tāne Mahuta, Tangaroa, Rongo-mā-tāne, and Tūmatauenga.

Tāne-mahuta

Tāne-mahuta is widely known as the atua of the forest and land, attributed with bringing forth the new dawn and transitioning the world into Te Ao Mārama. In this state, the rangatahi's mauri is in a state of creation, growth and expansion. Challenges are seen as opportunities to further this expansion and provide opportunities to others. Whitiwhitia directs us towards understanding that this is a state where creation and rangatiratanga go hand-in-hand, where growth can be driven by providing resource and spaciousness for the rangatahi.

Tangaroa

Tangaroa is widely known as the atua of the sea, often attributed as providing sustenance and feared for its destructive power. In this state, the rangatahi's mauri is fluid, reactive to their environment, and ready to take up challenges. They will likely follow the pathway that presents itself, regardless of whether that opportunity is destructive or supportive for themselves and others. In the context of Whitiwhitia, this is a state where efforts must be made to ensure that the opportunities presented to young people will have positive flow-on effects.

Rongo-mā-tāne

Rongo-mā-tāne is widely known as the atua of cultivated foods, recognised as being the bringer of healing, peace, and nourishment. In this state, the rangatahi's mauri is healing and peaceful, they are in a state of finding balance and understanding their next steps. Too much challenge and they will stay in the safety of their māra.
The wisdom of Whitiwhitia tells us that this is a state where consistency should be prioritised and turbulence avoided to achieve the most growth.

Tūmatauenga

Tūmatauenga is widely known as the atua of war and people, attributed as being the bringer of destruction and turmoil. In this state, the rangatahi's mauri is turbulent and unsure. They may be untrusting, unsettled and unready to take on challenges that could aggravate their mauri more. Within the Whitiwhitia model, this is a state where the focus becomes stability and connection.

The Four Responses to Mauri

Finally, we have four approaches to aligning our actions with the mauri of the rangatahi. Whitiwhitia reminds us to bring intention to our whai wāhitanga practice. There should always be a response that will align with the state of the rangatahi's mauri and maximise the rangatahi's participation and development. Each of these responses is entirely legitimate for each of the different states of mauri. Generally, the response that corresponds with the state of mauri will be most suited to encouraging participation. Contextually, there may be occasions where different states of mauri and responses better align – the youth worker should assess the needs of the young person and decide the best response.

Mana Motuhake

This is when space has been provided for rangatahi to assert their independence and mana over whatever they want, resourced with whatever they need to create the change they envision. All we have done is provided the space and supported the resourcing.

Mauri ora

This is when we have provided a space in which rangatahi have opportunity and challenges to push them to thrive. We provide guidance and may initiate or suggest steps however our leadership does not go beyond that.

Mauri tau

This is when the space we provide is tau (calm/peaceful), opportunities are there but there is a lot of support around the rangatahi to achieve. This is a space where slow, small steps are encouraged, and healing of mauri takes place.

Manaaki

This is a space where the sole focus is manaakitanga, making sure the rangatahi are cared for and able to do the things that allow their mauri to become tau. This space should be relatively stress free.

The overall idea is to utilise the model, as well as your personal ability to understand the state of a young person's mauri to best assess and practice participation to the right level for that person or group. Doing so will mean moving rangatahi from Te Pō to Te Ao Mārama, from the night to the world of light through safe, responsive, and empowering participation.

Kauae Raro – Applied Theory of the Whitiwhitia Model

Commitment to Whitiwhitia

First and foremost, youth workers must have a commitment to furthering their knowledge of te ao Māori and to the improvement of outcomes for Māori, especially rangatahi Māori.

With that commitment, it would be helpful for youth workers to grow their understanding of the concepts and stories within Whitiwhitia. Building on a basic understanding of those concepts one can then, through reflective practice and analytical observation, grow to realise the relevance within our own practice and rangatahi, thereby deepening one's understanding of the concepts and Whitiwhitia itself.

Planning, Responsiveness, and Adaptability

With the above being realised, it is then most important for the youth worker/s to be adaptable and responsive to the young people's mauri. It is easy to fall into the trap of being too rigid with a plan. Make no mistake, planning is often crucial for this model to work. Without a plan the youth worker is subject to allowing gaps in their facilitation and causing the young people to disengage. However, when planning you must also be prepared to completely adapt and change based on the state of mauri of the young person/s.

Whakarongo, Whakarongo, Whakarongo

When you have perfected the skill of being adaptive to mauri, this is much like our tīpuna being adaptive to their environment when navigating the Pacific. It is being completely attuned to the environment which in this case is your young person/s. Reading their energy levels, facial expressions, posture, the way they are speaking, how much they are on their phones etc. Noticing anything out of the ordinary for that person and then aligning yourself, your kaupapa, or program so that Te Ao Mārama comes to you and that young person. If you are lucky or have created an environment open and honest enough, you may be able to get to understand where their mauri is sitting. However, often we aren't afforded that luxury, so training yourself to be able to feel and see where a young person's mauri is at is incredibly important. Rongo, our senses, not just listening but feeling, smelling, seeing, you must whakarongo/sense with your entire being to best achieve this.

Start small, try to notice how often your young people are on their phones, then compare that with how they said their day was, and then add in more data such as: how engaged they were in the session, how they interacted with others in the group etc...

The more you start to listen, the more you will understand the mauri of your young people, the more you will be able to respond to it and, finally, the more effective you will be at creating space for young people to realise their potential and find their space in this world.

One helpful tool in order to achieve this is our check-in routine at the beginning of our session with any young people. Even if you aren't able to reach much depth with this space it is imperative that you implement it, whether one-on-one or in groups, to check in with the young people and understand what they are bringing into the space with them. This is a simple tool to utilise in order to gauge a person's mauri. The more a youth worker is able to create meaningful check-in spaces where young people are comfortable and safe to share, the easier and more effective it will be to gauge the mauri of the young people and then adapt your plan to fit.

As an example, you may have seen your young people operating within the Tāne Mahuta state of mauri the week prior to your session, so you plan to create a space for them to completely take the reins and run the session. However, when they arrive some of them inform you that there was an incident at school, they had been stood down, and the teacher said to them that they were not smart enough to go to university and would likely end up in prison. Through your understanding of the young people, you can deduce that they are feeling the impacts of the incident. We then apply the Whitiwhitia model to this situation and sense that they are now sitting in the Rongo-ma-tāne state due to the impact that their actions within kura and their interactions with their teacher had on their mauri. Furthermore, you can see that this is affecting

the whole group. You then alter your plan to have more of a hang-out session with boardgames and activities where you and your support youth workers can get alongside the young people and encourage them. You include some ABL and games that require them to problem-solve so you can have the young people prove to themselves that they are as intelligent and incredible as you know they are, creating their space to bring Te Ao Mārama to them.

Hei Whakakapi:

In the development and sharing of Whitiwhitia, the hope, and challenge to you is that this is merely an encouragement and starting point for you to develop your understanding of how to practice whai wāhitanga with rangatahi to the highest standard within your context. There is endless potential to develop this tikanga further with different atua and different responses which may be more relevant to the rangatahi you are working with. With that, however, comes a warning, it is easy to take what you agree with or what is easy for you to achieve or understand and leave the rest without proper consideration or wānanga. This creates a risk to bastardise the tikanga. One way to minimise this risk is to first have an in-depth understanding of the tikanga and concepts within, prior to any development or changes you make for your context. I am forever intrigued by the kōrero of others so should you ever wish to share any insights or whakaaro you may have, please do send them through to **kahukuramr@gmail.com**.

If you are interested in progressing your study further here are some of the names that have inspired and developed many of my understandings so please do read the taonga they have given to us: Tā Hirini Moko Mead, Tā Mason Durie, Moana Jackson, Rangimarie Rose Pere, Pei Te Hurinui, Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Leonie Pihama.

Kahukura Ritchie – Rangitāne, Ngāti Kahungunu tāne youth worker passionate about supporting rangatahi Māori to stand strong in their whakapapa and identity.

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References:

[1]Ki taku hoa, Awhioraki Goodall, kaore i mimiti aku mihi ki a koe mo te nui o to mahi ki te tautoko i ahau me tēnei kaupapa. Kei taku hoa, kei taku tuakana, kei taku rangatira, ko koe kei runga.

Noticing whai wāhitanga in action

Rod Baxter

This article is an expanded adaptation of the keynote Rod delivered at the Involve 2021 conference, including some 'deleted scenes' that didn't make the live cut!

Whakataukī

Kua tawhiti kē tē haerenga mai,
kia kore e haere tonu;
he tino nui rawa ō mahi, kia kore e mahi tonu.
You have come too far not to go further;
you have done too much, not to do more.

Ta Himi Henare, Ngati Hine, 1989

Ko Kaukau te maunga te rū nei taku ngākau.

Kaukau is the mountain that speaks to my heart.

Ko Korimako te awa e mahea nei aku māharahara.

Korimako is the river that alleviates my worries.

Nō Te Whare Mahana o Ngaio ahau.

I'm from Ngaio. I live in a place named Te Whare Mahana, and I mostly work from home with a remote team called The Prince's Trust Aotearoa New Zealand. Te Whare Mahana is also where I meet with people for supervision.

E mihi ana ki ngā tohu o nehe, o Te Whanganui-a-Tara e noho nei au.

I recognise the ancestral and spiritual landmarks of Wellington where I live and we are gathered today.

I need to begin by expressing gratitude to the young people who have, are and will teach me and all of us.
This keynote/article is inspired by young people I've worked with as well as young people I've never met but have transformed the ways in which I think about their agency and capacity to make the world a better place.

The focus of this kōrero, and actually a thread that wove through many of the sessions at Involve 2021, is Whai Wāhitanga – a fresh approach for youth participation, that embraces this new whakaaro as part of Mana Taiohi.

You might like to take a moment and reflect on this shockingly simple question:

How do you define 'youth'?

If you're reading this, you're most likely committed in some capacity to serving young people. Collectively the youth sector includes paid professionals, vocational volunteers, and young people.

We represent all the facets of work with young people: youth workers, researchers, youth mentoring champions, youth health clinicians, policy writers, decision makers, ethicists, kaiwhakamana, managers, educators, students, whānau, activists, faith communities, facilitators, humanitarians, innovators...

the list goes on. What's your professional identity and how does this define the young people you work with?

We may serve young people in different ways, we may focus on the diverse needs that young people have, the outcomes we achieve may be varied, however we are essentially serving the same population. This is what unites us. So how united are we in our common understanding of who young people actually are, and then what they may need?

At Involve, we used a sli.do poll to crowdsource responses to this question, and the 120+ ideas included definitions by age, biology or lifespan development, notions of transition, indigenous and cultural perspectives, a location in the future, benchmarks that determine whether or not young people can look after themselves, and a few optimistic strengths-based affirmations.

It strikes me that young people don't often describe themselves as young people, youth, teenager or adolescent. It's a pervasive historical and sociological idea, largely from Western societies, that has been designed to limit and control a significant group of humanity. Howard Sercombe (2010) defines youth as: "that emerging adult population which is excluded from participation [...] because of a perception of age-based risk".

Young people are defined by exclusion.

Society regularly reminds young people of all the things they can't yet do, because they're "too young" and it's "not safe". They would apparently be dangerous drinkers, manipulated voters, unsuitable spouses, irresponsible gamblers, bad tenants, te mea, te mea, te mea. Apparently 14 is too young for all of this, however I have some 40-something friends who aren't quite there yet either.

The idea that 'young people are the future' makes me uncomfortable, because it insinuates that their involvement in leadership has to wait. Young people are here right now, they are also the present, and they carry their own past or whakapapa. We do well when we remember that young people are people, not some exotic type of alien species.

If the population we serve face exclusion, our work therefore must prioritise inclusion. This means we're participatory and strengths-focused. We see young people as active contributors rather than passive recipients of a service. This is an orientation that seems to be more congruent with the traditional indigenous perspectives of tangata whenua.

I'm attempting to uphold my responsibilities as Pākehā and Tangata Tiriti. Working with taiohi Māori and young people in this whenua called Aotearoa requires us to look back, re-learn, decolonise and celebrate the natural role and location of taiohi in communities. This includes traditional indigenous, pre-colonial and contemporary responses lead by tangata whenua.

According to Teorongonui Josie Keelan's book Nga Reanga (2014), in 1838 an ethnographer observed that tamariki and taiohi "ask questions in the most numerously attended assemblies of chiefs, who answer them with an air of respect, as if they were a corresponding age to themselves. I do not remember a request of an infant being treated with neglect, or a demand from one of them being slighted" (Polack, 1838, as cited in Keelan, 2014).

It seems to me that exclusion is not a comfortable practice for whānau, hapū and iwi, whom prioritise inclusion and belonging. So to help us check that, I invited Ara Taiohi's Kaitiaki Kaupapa, Anaru Te Rangiwhakaewa (Rangitāne) to jump onstage and break down the whakaaro.

Hei aha to whakaaro o te kupu 'whai wāhitanga'?

Anaru: *In the Mana Taiohi principles, the term 'whai wāhitanga' is about young people chasing their place in the world. However, we need to look a bit deeper, because we know that Te Reo Māori has so many layers and depth of beautiful whakaaro. We can break this term down more specifically to inform the way we connect with rangatahi.*

- *The kupu* **whai** *can be to pursue or chase, and also means to acquire and possess*
- *Wāhi includes both* **wā**, *our time and space, and the world around us. The kupu* **hi** *means 'to draw up from'. This looks like a relationship with Papatuānuku; we are all an extension of the world around us.*

Anaru challenged us to find an equal role with young people in a metaphorical ngahere, an environment the enables transformative change and growth for all young people in Aotearoa.

Whai wāhitanga means to chase your place.

This sounds simple and catchy, but remember not to be reductive about whakaaro Māori. Our collective wero and challenge with Mana Taiohi is to continue meditating on what these ideas mean in our evolving practice as the needs of young people continue to evolve.

It means that participation is more than just turning up and being present in attendance. It's more than having a say.

It's also more than being involved in decision making. It's definitely more than consultation, and co-design doesn't cut it anymore! Participation has been the most consistent thread in my journey of youth work practice and yet still feels very different right here and right now.

To participate is now understood as whai wāhi – to chase your place. The pursuit is an ongoing journey and the place is more than physical or geographic, it's about potential, responsibility, leadership, opportunity and relationships. Whai wāhitanga is much less individualistic that previous iterations of youth participation.

Young people are currently chasing their place.

Here are five well-known and recent examples of young people finding their place. Each example is collective, hyper-connected, intergenerational, and most have a connection to the environment. Anaru's acknowledgement of Papatuānuku in the definition of whai wāhitanga shines through here.

- The **School Strike for Climate (SS4C)** in 2019 was part of a global youth movement started by Greta Thunberg – who is potentially the most famous teenager in the world right now. Greta acknowledges the eventual support of her family and the inherent superpowers she possesses. "Some people mock me for my diagnosis. But Asperger is not a disease, it's a gift. People also say that since I have Asperger I couldn't possibly have put myself in this position. But that's exactly why I did this. Because if I would have been 'normal' and social I would have organised myself in an organisation, or started an organisation by myself" (Thunberg, 2019, p30).
- Pania Newton (Ngāpuhi, Waikato, Ngāti Mahuta, Ngāti Maniapoto) became the face of kaitiakitanga and land protection at **Ihumātao**, and thousands of other people – young and old – flooded to support the peaceful occupation (Misa, 2019).
- A group of students in Ōtautahi Christchurch, founded **Culture CHCHange** last year with chalk graffiti about sexual assault and rape culture. They developed their kaupapa to advocate for better education about sex and consent in schools. The organisers are also anonymous (McCallum, 2021).
- 16-year-old Ben Norris was at Plimmerton beach with some mates when they noticed a stranded baby orca, whom they rescued. Ben stayed with **Toa** and developed a strong bond, particularly with other adults who knew how to care for Toa. This moment changed Ben's life as he now aspires to work in marine biology (Fallon, 2021).
- Three brothers in Horowhenua aged 5, 7 and 8 spend hours collecting litter because they're worried birds could die by consuming rubbish. They call themselves the **Waste Warriors** (Moore, 2021).

Sadly, these stories are criticised or patronised by adults in power, typically media and politicians, but also random members of the public. The Ihumātao occupiers were claimed to be disrespecting elders as 'rangatahi versus rangatira', however this was refuted by kaumatua (Cooper, 2019). The Culture CHCHange students were harassed during a public event by an older man who made violent and transphobic accusations, and after getting irate, actually tried to punch some of the young people involved. The Police took some time to arrive (McCallum, 2021b). Young people's engagement with issues such as #BlackLivesMatter and the crisis in Yemen are demeaned as meaningless 'clicktivism' and jumping-on-bandwagons. This erodes the power young people have, and their legitimate exploration of issues of interest.

The SS4C protestors were criticized as mere truants. Wellington High School student Micah Geiringer was refreshingly honest about his original intention to wag school, however after meeting some inspiring people outside the Beehive, he realised the potential power in his participation. You could say he started chasing his place. It was no longer about wagging, it was about making a difference. As Micah discovered his agency, he also needed to negotiate with his parental and school regulations – and he decided to betray both of these (Hunt, 2019).

There's a tension here that is actually core to the definition of youth work. It's called the **Sociology of Regulation versus the Sociology of Change** (Fusco, 2016). A Sociology of Regulation for young people facilitates personal development, character building, social skills and healthy lifestyles so they can be appropriate citizens in the existing society. A Sociology of Change engages young people in critical education, exploring experience, raising consciousness, bringing about radical social change and improving society.

Does your work with young people force them to conform to society, or does it enable personal and social change? Do you maintain the status quo, or do you support young people to make the world a better place? How do you help young people find their place?

Are the young people you work with given adult-imposed labels that limit their place? The problem with labels is that they reduce options and dampen potential.

- ADHD is allegedly a "disorder"
- NEET is if you're "not" doing something you should be
- YARLE is the latest acronym from policy analysts and stands for Youth At Risk of Limited Employment outcomes. (Since Involve, due to consistent feedback during consultation, particularly from tangata whenua, I've been informed this acronym has been dropped).

Who defines themselves by what they're not? You don't go to a party and introduce yourself like, "Hello I'm not Samantha, and this is my friend, not Brian." (I borrowed this joke from Peter Block's book *Community: The Structure of Belonging* (2009, p44). We're constantly reminding young people of everything they're not, rather than listening to who they are and who they aspire to be. And this current generation has faced more adversity than potentially any other.

Their childhoods were in the backdrop of devastating earthquakes and increasingly extreme weather events creating natural disasters. The internet has exposed them to violence, police brutality, racist attacks and, for many, the livestream of the 2019 Christchurch Mosque shooting was something they didn't have a choice about viewing. We're in the midst of the deadliest global pandemic in more than a century, whilst countries struggle to contain mutations of the Covid-19 virus. Meanwhile, economic inequality and upheaval impacts their financial

independence, making home ownership unlikely. Meanwhile, we're a little bit surprised young people have a mental health crisis, and we're sort of blaming them for using too much social media.

However, perhaps these are the conditions that young people will leverage to transform the way the world works. I recently learned of Eric Weiner's book: the Geography of Genius. Eric looked back over history and discovered that in particular places, at particular times, incredible explosions of genius occurred. Eric calls these "Genius Clusters". Ancient Athens produced Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Renaissance Italy featured Leonardo, Michelangelo and Donatello (not to be confused with the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles). And we also know about the tenacity and resilience of the navigators across the Pacific. Eric noted that in all of these 'Genius Clusters', there were three conditions: diversity, discernment and disorder. Geniuses are not usually born in peace time (Weiner, 2016).

We change when there's no other choice.

Let me tell you a short story about the day that a couple of us from the Prince's Trust went to a youth justice residence. We were there to run a two-hour consultation workshop that would help us design an education programme to support young people in the uncertain future of work. We were supposed to ask questions like: What kind of life do you want? What would support that? How do you want to make a living? And what are you living for? It was all about education, employability, and entrepreneurship. We were talking with young people about the skills they need to live, learn and earn.

The guys there didn't connect with these ideas and the consultation was going badly. Very badly. Usually, when I'm facilitating a consultative chat, I prefer that young people hold the pen and write the notes. Did you know they're not allowed felt pens in residence? Everything is considered a weapon and there's zero trust. Anyway I was setting up with this small group and they were sussing me out. I'll tell you a bit about them, and know that I've changed the details for confidentiality and privacy.

One guy, 16 years old, told me he's the father of four. Four kids to four different young women. He said, almost to himself, "I wonder if I'll ever get to meet my kids?" He sat down at the table and started swinging on his chair, in that kind of non-committal way of half engaging. He didn't care who was holding the pen.

Another guy, let's call him Scott, really struggled to listen. He interrupted every question or sentence. I had to quickly develop a way of saying three word sentences, and even those would get interrupted. Scott became increasingly agitated and eventually yelled at me. What I'm about to repeat is a direct quote, and unfortunately there's no way of sharing this without extreme profanity.

*Scott said, "What the f**k man, what the f**k? My brain is f**ked. I've smoked drugs every day for years. Every f**kin' day. I only stopped when I got locked up in here. I'm f**ked. I ain't getting a job. I'm f**ked!"*

The father of four was still swinging on his chair, smiling. Waiting for my response. I took a deep breath. And I said, "Look. I don't really know what all those drugs do to the brain. It's probably bad. It's probably going to be harder for you than anyone else to get a job, study something, start a business, however you want to make a living. But I have to believe, Scott, if you want it that much, you can."

Scott didn't interrupt me this time. He took a deep breath, looked me in the eyes, and asked, "Do you really have hope for me?"

And then the father of four stopped swinging on his chair and asked, "Do you have hope for me too?" I walked out of there that day and asked myself, how could hope be such a foreign concept for these guys in residence?

Hope:

Helping

Other

Possibilities

Emerge

(Glass, 1991, as cited in McCashen, 2017, p17).

Emily Ehlers (2021) recently released a book called *Hope is a Verb*. Emily reveals: "Studies indicate that when people have hope they are better able to manage stress, cope with setbacks, think creatively and achieve their goals. "Climate change, pandemics, racism, economic uncertainty... no wonder so many [young] people are experiencing anxiety and even panic about the future. When times are hard, it's a hell of a lot easier to lose hope than it is to hold onto it. [...] Expecting to simply 'have' hope is a type of magical thinking that puts you at the mercy of your circumstance. For hope to be meaningful, effective and empowering, it requires your participation. Hope isn't just something you have, it's something you do" (Ehlers, 2021, pp8-10). This is strengths-based practice. It's Mana Taiohi. Whai Wāhitanga is hopeful, mana-centric, radically strengths-based, youth participation in everything you do.

So ask yourself: How do you do hope?

Dedicate some time to talk to someone else about the hope you have for young people and how this manifests in your practice. How can you embed Whai Wāhitanga in what you do? Take a moment to digest and reflect on what you're thinking reading this article. This might be a useful topic to take to supervision.

One of the limitations from the story I shared from an Oranga Tamariki residence is that it's my voice and you don't know how the young people involved might recollect that experience. I also don't know what the staff working there would say about their attempts to hold onto hope. To keep us grounded, here is a poem written by a young lad from Te Puna Wai in Ōtautahi. This comes from a recent collection of poetry called *How did I get here: soliloquies of youth* edited by Ben Brown (2020).

Sistem by Zac

The sistem is cruped
Be cause they tack
kids that have a good
famley they tack kids
with out asking them
if there famley is a good
one for them we will
never no y they Do
Not ask the kid.

(Brown, 2020, p41)

At this point, we have defined 'youth' as exclusion, understood 'whai wāhitanga' as 'to chase your place', explored the current context that young people are in, named recent examples of youth-led activism, considered the dichotomous sociologies of regulation and radical change, embraced the importance of hope, and reflected on whai wāhitanga in unlikely settings, we can now re-examine existing youth participation theories and test the relevance of dated ideas.

There are potentially more models for youth participation than any other dimension of youth development and most of us have probably heard of Roger Hart's Ladder (1992). I now believe it's time to get off the ladder and put it away in the shed. It's a 1990s North American perspective that drew inspiration from 1970s social inclusion and equity (Arnstein, 1979). It presents participation in a linear and hierarchal fashion. Essentially it has a handful of useful ideas:

- Participation is about decision-making
- We need to know who initiated the project (adults or young people) and if we're sharing power
- Consultation and delegated responsibilities are valid participation, IF young people are fully informed, before and after
- Tokenism, decoration and manipulation are not good.

Other models of youth participation are similarly linear and/or hierarchal, including Westhorp's continuum (1987), Hodgson's five conditions (1995, cited in Finlay-Robinson, Baxter & Dunlop, 2019), Treseder's wheel (1997), and Shier's pathway (2001) to name a few. None of the dozens of models really help young people chase their place. Most youth participation models are organisationally focussed and adult-centric. The models acknowledge that adults have the power – which may be structurally and systemically true, yet whai wāhitanga forces us to rethink our focus.

We need participatory processes that start with young people.

Ani Wierenga, from Melbourne, is one of the few people who have co-created a youth participation framework with young people. It's available in a report called *Sharing a New Story: Young people in decision-making* (Wierenga, 2003). This research was published 20 years ago and I firmly believe it was ahead of its time.

That tension we noted earlier between the Sociologies of Regulation and Change reappears:

"Participation can also be used as a mechanism for social control (keeping young people gainfully occupied and out of trouble). Better practice is about meaningful engagement – recognising young people as co-creators of their communities"

(Wierenga, 2003, p40)

Wierenga suggests participation is not a type of *programme*, but rather the *purpose* of our work and a *pathway* for young people to either serve or shape society.

Wierenga and the young research team boldly name several of the issues with distorted youth participation, "it can favour those with privilege and it can 'professionalise' young people: "By being co-opted into the system, do young people stop representing other young people?' (Wierenga, 2003, p30). I've often noticed 'professional' youth representatives refer to young people – aka their peers – as "them" rather than "us". Anna, one of the youth researchers, described this as: "Training the $#!+ out of one young person and then them not being a young person anymore. They become an adult trapped in a young person's body – you lose the young person's perspective. Can a 'youth activist' really know what your average teen thinks and wants?" (Wierenga, 2003, p23).

Here's Wierenga's Star.

It includes:

- 3 essential elements
- 7 pointers for practice.

The central three essential elements are what works: what keeps young people involved?

- **Meaning** is doing something that has a greater purpose and that I believe in
- **Control** is making decisions, being heard and having what it takes to see the task through, and do it well
- **Connectedness** is working with others and being part of something bigger. Young people are drawn to things that have been going for a while and that will endure into the future.

The 3 essential elements in many ways act as the antithesis to the lower levels of Hart's Ladder:

Meaning might be the antidote to Decoration when young people connect with purpose

Control might be the opposite of Manipulation when young people are clear about their role, choices, options and responsibilities

Connectedness might be the solution to Tokenism when young people have authentic relationships with peers and supportive adults.

"Not surprisingly, there are clear parallels between the three central themes emerging from this study - meaning, control and connectedness – and things any young person needs in order to participate in social life at all. This makes sense. Surely our work is not simply about equipping high powered youth advocates, but equipping all young people to critically and creatively engage in the communities in which they live"

(Wierenga, 2003, p9)

The 7 pointers for practice provide a process for us to explore. I've summarised each pointer with an illustration from my own whai wāhitanga journey.

1. Storying

Stories increase young people's commitment. The degree of overlap in your story of what you're about, and young peoples own stories, will be the degree to which young people will actually engage. This is more about your organisational kaupapa and/or a project people are passionate about, rather than heavy self-disclosure from youth workers.

I was a teenager in the '90s, when the discourse about young people was grungy and obsessed about the potential impact of Kurt Cobain's death on suicidal teens. There were a few high profile, late-night, drug-related, homophobic and violent incidents with young people on the streets of Wellington. I felt compelled to help make my city a better place for and with my peers, so I volunteered at Youthline, joined the Youth Council and with some friends organised community projects.

Before all this, I was actually 12 years old and on a school trip when I saw a sticker in the bus advertising Youthline. Back then landlines only had six digits and I vividly remember thinking how cool it was a service like that existed. Two years later, frequenting the Cuba Street comic shop after school, the manager Andrew revealed he was a supervisor at Youthline Wellington, and I offered to help collect on their street appeal. It was a day off school, a chance to look cool/adult in front of my mates, and a cause I knew was making a difference. When I went to uni, I applied for the selection process to become a telephone counsellor, where I served for a decade. My youth work career started voluntarily and the stories weaving throughout this journey need no explanation.

2. Listening

Start where young people are at, and build mechanisms for youth voices to be heard. What are the hopes, dreams and aspirations of the young people you work with? At every opportunity, be sure to build in plenty of time to listen. This could be a ritual at the start of every workshop or meeting, and you may need to get creative with ways that suggest to young people you are willing to truly listen. Facilitate groups so that all voices are heard.

At the age of 19 I was employed as a part-time youth worker based in a local community centre. A handful of boys came to see me one day to ask for help building BMX trails in a local park. They were only a couple of years younger than me but I still felt distant from their reality. They taught me about BMXing and showed me sketches of mounds of dirt that were apparently ideal for fancy bike tricks.

Skaters in this particular suburb were frustrated because a skate park was designed and installed without listening to their ideas. As a result it had no flow and was essentially unusable. I knew I was no expert and the process of listening required me to find ways so relevant decision-makers could also listen to the expertise of young people.

3. Affirming strengths

Naming strengths and capacities helps us prepare for the next phase where we seek to add resources based on what young people need. We're familiar with strengths-based practice, and in whai wāhitanga this is especially relevant to celebrate what young people can do well, including leadership, public speaking, innovative thinking, and making things happen faster than adults!

Graffiti is often seen as an illegal activity, although many youth workers also recognise it is a valid art form and means of expression. The challenge is to build genuine relationships of trust with young people (labelled as taggers) and support them to channel their energy into legal community artworks. It might not seem it as first, but

spray painting a wall can be a form of participation, and it's certainly place-chasing whai wāhitanga

When I painted street art murals with young artists, I discovered that not only were they visually creative, their innate talents included creative forms of communication. Graffiti is a conversation happening across urban spaces where young people feel a sense of connection, belonging and pride. This is an example of a delicate strength to affirm.

4. Resourcing

Young people are able to participate effectively when they are properly equipped. Ask yourself: what do young people need to engage fully in this opportunity? Once strengths have been identified, there will inevitably be some skills young people will need to develop with adult support. This could include confidence, project management, risk planning, budgeting and having patience when things don't go to plan. Young people may also benefit from training and opportunities to expand their knowledge.

In 2008 I was seconded to the Ministry of Youth Development as a National Youth Participation Advisor. A dream job for someone who loves this kaupapa as much as I do! One of my duties was to support a youth advisory panel called Activate. I inherited a policy where members of the group were provided with meeting fees, travel allowances and rewarded with social activities for consistent attendance. More importantly, members were supported to learn more about the machinery of government, how to write submissions and present to sub-committees.

Many of the Activate members have since had incredible careers in law, government and international relations. Still, I wonder if their favourite moment was the Easter egg hunt I organised one night throughout the Ministry's offices after most staff had gone home. Organising resources requires innovation!

5. Creatively reworking structure and process

As a result of involving young people, organisations may realise that some things need to change. Adults in positions of power must consider if any systems (e.g. layers of bureaucracy) are slowing progress to a pace that disillusions young people. Sometimes practical resources are also required to remove barriers to participation, such as providing travel, and you may need new policies or budgets to support this. Ultimately whai wāhitanga challenges us to hold our existing systems lightly and rethink with young people what improvements could be made to enable their participation to flourish.

Over 16 years I helped coordinate a mentoring programme for 9-13 year olds. It was designed as early intervention; mentees were matched with volunteer mentors to support their positive behaviour at home, school and in the community. The initial period was a 20-week commitment, but many mentees still needed, and deserved, longer term support.

We kicked off the journey with a camp to accelerate bonding with peers and mentors. Early on I wondered if some of the graduates of past cohorts might benefit from returning to camp as a peer leader. This worked incredibly well for all involved as younger mentees admired their slightly older peers. The process developed over time and after 22 camps we were still refining and adapting to meet the needs to new generations of young people.

6. Honouring each other – the formal relationship

This pointer is highly intentional and ethical. It means we facilitate clear processes and negotiate group agreements that define expected behaviours for all involved, including roles and responsibilities. Ongoing participation groups may also design rituals to recruit, welcome and farewell members.

Rise E Tu was a national youth advisory group to the Ministry of Health coordinated by the New Zealand Association for Adolescent Health and Development (NZAAHD, one of the organisations that eventually founded Ara Taiohi). Rise E Tu had a formal nomination and application process, that selected a dozen founding members. They group met three times each year for four years, until there was a change of government that reversed some health policies. Members of Rise E Tu had formal relationships with each other, facilitators and public servants.

7. Nurturing informal relationships

Young people aren't young for very long! Therefore we need to design ways for teina to become tuakana and pass learning to emerging generations of future participants. The ultimate end goal of whai wāhitanga is to include young people, acknowledge their agency, hear their voice and empower their choices. Young people stay connected and become mentors, volunteers and leaders. This is the long term ripple effect .

For a decade I facilitated a youth leadership and participation group called 'Link'. We met on Tuesdays after school from 4:15pm-5:45pm, a time chosen by the young people involved to best suit their public transport schedule! We surveyed local youth with action research and responded with youth-led projects and events. Link was a dynamic and diverse initiative that probably taught me the most about participation and whai wāhitanga.

Several Linkers joined when they were 13 and left closer to 20 years old. Leaving Link wasn't easy for many, so they created a role called 'Link Veterans' that gave permission to step away but stay informed and connected, with the right to return for specific events. Veterans fulfilled a tuakana role with subsequent generations, and the input, in-jokes and legacy of long-serving Linkers were often celebrated. I physically posted a weekly summary of Link's progress to all current members and included Veterans, and these wacky mail-outs were cherished by many who even developed unique filing systems in their bedroom drawers.

Years later and everyone is an adult now, carving careers, spread across the globe and serving communities in different ways. Thanks to social media and the internet, we have the ability to stay in touch if needed. In my new job with the Prince's Trust, when I'm in our Auckland office I actually sit next to one long-standing Linker who now works for the Student Volunteer Army. Others are parents, teachers, business owners, artists, academics, and globe trotters.

Many have reached out after a painful breakup or mental health incident; they don't need me to fix anything, and meeting over coffee seems to provide the encouragement they need to keep going. It doesn't cost me much in terms of time or capacity, and my membership with Korowai Tupu holds me safely within our Code of Ethics. It's a privilege to see these relationships evolve, and I'm still learning about the longer term benefits of youth work and whai wāhitanga from these maturing adults entering their 30s.

I could write about Link forever, and as I do, I realise that I fundamentally believe these kinds of participatory groups should be a core component in every youth organisation. Every youth worker would benefit from supporting an ongoing group of diverse young people whose primary purpose is to lead through service, improving the lives of their peers.

Ani Wierenga suggests:

"As newer inhabitants of this planet, young people are often good at questioning the way that, and pointing out the impacts of, things are done. Perhaps this kind of contribution could be understood as the more 'prophetic' voice of youth"

(2003, p23)

To conclude this keynote, hold me accountable and practice what we preach, I invited some young people to share their thoughts. Hemi Rangiwhetu Shepherd, Bella Simpson and Fletcher Howell are three incredible young people who represent a continuum of involvement in youth participation and they had never met before Involve 2021. We structured our brief conversation around Wierenga's model.

1. Ko wai au? Tell us about your story: your name, where you live, your involvement in youth stuff?

- Hemi is 14, lives in Auckland and he's been involved in mentoring with Heart 4 Youth for six years.
- Fletcher is 18, born and raised in Wellington, and part of the Classification Office's Youth Advisory Panel.
- Bella is 25 and identified as a bit of a 'show pony', showing up places and smile in the youth/LGBT+ space for the last decade. At the time of Involve, Bella was the current chairperson of the Evolve youth health service.

2. How come you're involved and doing-what-you-do?

- Fletcher spoke about a connection between interests, study and career in relevant industries such as film. Fletcher's interests were not just individual, as he spoke about collaboration for the benefit of culture and communities in the future.
- Hemi mentioned his family were "struggling a bit" when he was 9 years old, hence a referral to Heart 4 Youth, and he shouted out to Ross McCook in the audience who founded the organisation.

3. What do young people need to support their participation?

- Bella described a culture of "pedestal-ing" young people, putting pressure to carry a huge amount of responsibility. Bella reminded us that young people are also trying to "live our lives, work out who we are and grow, and with that comes [some] challenges. There's no right or wrong way of how youth participation works, but currently we have very high levels of burnout within our youth activism space"

4. What's your advice for organisations who want to involve young people?

- Hemi acknowledged that in every organisation "there's always gonna be, like, a couple of stand-out kids that aren't really shy to talk to, like, the bosses and stuff. I reckon, them getting together with all the other kids and just having a chat about everything, and then them talking to the bosses, would be pretty mean"
- Fletcher described how the youth panel he's part of includes a group dedicated of "super-opinionated, wonderful people" who are given opportunities to develop, grow and teach each other. Fletcher indicated being involved in this panel was a good example of that.
- Bella said, "I think, instead of just giving young people a seat at the table, we should just be given the table" (The crowd at Involve cheered and chuckled). Bella then overviewed how Evolve's governance policy had formal requirements for youth participation at a structural level, when sitting around the board table.

This conversation continued in a breakout workshop immediately after the keynote that was not recorded because each young person facilitated a small group conversation with a dozen conference delegates each. You may like to review these quotes and notice how the natural responses from Hemi, Fletcher and Bella include the themes of meaning, control and connectedness.

"A simple pattern emerges: being involved and engaged leads to more opportunities to become involved and engaged. The flip side of this equation is also true: those who are not involved often stay excluded, both in terms of real world opportunities and the way that they are thinking"

(Wierenga, 2003, p26)

Whai wāhitanga is not optional nor additional, but central to youth development and distinguishing feature of youth work globally, historically and indigenously. We are the movement and young people are depending on you to find the ways in which what you offer can be more participatory.

How are you going to help young people chase their place?

Reflection questions:

- What is the place young people are chasing?
- Where is this place?
- How might whai wāhitanga relate to a sense of belonging and turangawaewae?
- If 'seen-and-not-heard' is a dated idea, what's the alternative narrative today?
- Who are the young people you serve and include?
- How socially inclusive are you?
- How welcoming can you be for diverse young people?
- What decisions are you making that affect young people and how can they be involved?
- What leadership roles are there for young people in your work?
- What responsibilities do and can young people have?
- What place do and can young people have in your organisation, the community you serve - now and in the future?
- What role can you play in supporting young people to find their place?
- What and where is your place?
- What are you chasing?

Rod Baxter is the CEO of the Prince's Trust Aotearoa, exploring how young people can reshape our personal, local and global economies. At Involve2021, Rod reflected on his 20+ years of youth work experience, which started as a young activist. Youth participation has been a consistent theme in Rod's youth development practice, and as such his keynote focused on whai wāhitanga. As a dynamic and creative presenter, Rod attempted to practice what we preach, and collaborated with some younger guest stars live on stage.

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Rangatahi Regeneration

Christina Leef, Simon Mareko and Rangatahi Regeneration

Rangatahi Regeneration (RR) is a kaupapa that has supported 9 rangatahi Māori/Pasifika from 5 rohe around Aotearoa over 2021 and 2022. RR is about celebrating #indigenousExcellence kaua e wareware e te whānau, our indigeneity is our super power!

RR explores in depth each of the following; 'ko wai au?', the art of facilitation, remembering and awakening their entrepreneurial whakapapa, and being trained to facilitate Mana Taiohi.

RR launched in 2021 with 6 rangatahi from around the motu, 3 of which returned in 2022 as tuakana to co-lead the delivery of the RR kaupapa with the new teina.

Rangatahi Regeneration is housed under Mana Taiohi Revolution alongside Ngā Kaihoe - a nationwide roopū made up of Māori who serve taiohi, who advocate for our hauora as those who serve taiohi. As this haerenga continues, we will see these 2 kaupapa become more intertwined.

Our moemoeā with RR is to promote and role model Whai Wāhitanga, how we can journey alongside rangatahi to lead these important kōrero around Mana Taiohi as the most qualified people to speak on te ao rangatahi, rangatahi perspectives and experiences.

Whai Wāhitanga is deeply embedded into this kaupapa, so we asked our RR whānau two questions and here's what they had to say.

1. Tell us about your Rangatahi Regeneration haerenga.
2. What does Whai Wāhitanga mean to you?

Maarie

RANGATAHI REGENERATION

You know those things that you can't explain or words can't define, and you know that the best way to show people the importance is for them to experience it? That's exactly what Rangatahi Regen is to me.

RR has given me the confidence to be unapologetically me, stand tall for all the things I believe in, that I can achieve everything that I want, and most of all that my opinions are valued. Professionally this has opened my eyes to multiple opportunities but also the continuous mahi that needs to be done for Māori and Pasifika Rangatahi of Aotearoa #themahicontinues!

Rangatahi regen is the best thing I have done for not only myself but, my whānau, my Tupuna and my future uri. I could not have asked for better mentors and a better team to have alongside me on this journey.

Forever Voyagers blesssgooooooo! Appreciate you all!

WHAI WĀHITANGA

Whai Wāhitanga is flipping the script and allowing space to hear the voices that matter the most - Rangatahi. It means Rangatahi having full autonomy over the decisions being made for them but also their peers and community.

To me it also means supporting the Taiohi to feel confident in spaces, valuing their opinions, paying Rangatahi appropriately, creating safe spaces for young people to express themselves and just always wanting to see them succeed.

Jordan

RANGATAHI REGENERATION

Definitely a life changing experience for me both externally and internally. Knowing who I am and being proud of that AKA being Māori 👊 And the countless opportunities that have come from being apart of RR has been unreal. The learnings, the life lessons, the confidence, the facilitation skills, the manaakitanga and most of all the endless support you both provide has been unmatched and so appreciated ❤️

WHAI WĀHITANGA

"Putting Rangatahi in a space to chase their place" 👀

Picture a waka which represents our life, the Mātauranga and learnings is the fuel (expenny 👀), each destination we pass through are the opportunities... and we are in the drivers seat in which we can go wherever the F&$@ we want ✌🏾 😜

Timena

RANGATAHI REGENERATION

My Rangatahi Regeneration haerenga was fun as! But also an internal wananga for me. When I started, I thought that to have doors open for me, I had to be, act and dress a certain way. A way that was unnatural and inauthentic to me because I'm young and no one would take me serious. Now I know that I don't have to act any way but be myself for opportunities. Organisation's will have to be a certain way for them to get my presence.

Through the awesome relationships I built in RR, it showed me that it's algood to just be the real me. Through entrepreneurship I learnt that what I have in me, or create around me is of GREAT worth. And through facilitation, it celebrates how I connect with people, and that in every context, me being authentically me is enough.

Just yesterday was a big milestone for me. I facilitated our local Youth Network meeting and I shocked myself with this HUGE improvement in my confidence and abilities. Was deff not there before RR. I was actually shocked lol. Everyone had so much fun! I'm so proud of THIS (new) me. I think that's my favourite part of this whole thing. Knowing that the confidence and learnings I got from this haerenga, are going to have a positive ripple effect on my local community, those around me, and especially the youth I come across. These RR people are my people for life and I'm so grateful for them all.

WHAI WĀHITANGA

Whai Wāhitanga is me sitting at decision making tables that have to do with me and being the chair of that meeting. While being in leadership roles I learn responsibility. I learn humility through failure, gratitude through hard work, and joy through success. With positive guidance and opportunities, I'll be set to live a successful life in whatever the hell I choose.

Vy

RANGATAHI REGENERATION

Life-changing quite frankly.

I constantly look back at my life then vs how it is now. Even agreeing to be a part of RR was so unlike me but something just said to do (it) like it'll set me free. And it has haha. At the beginning of the RR journey I definitely wasn't open. I had my walls up and Although I wanted to be there really badly it looked like I didn't. I think the learnings were mean as but the best thing of it all were the internal changes and shifts that I decided to make based off you (RR) all. Bringing together so many different perspectives, our values, our mahi, our banter (some of it was kinda mean thoooo y'all have thiccccc skin) 🤣🤣🤣 I guess what I've loved the most is continuing our relationships as a whānau going forward after RR ended and making a genuine impact for our kaimahi at a grassroots level. That's pretty much all I wanna do, work out and travel haha. I think it also opened up mahi doors I never knew existed and allowed ways to show strengths of mine I thought were weaknesses that I now use to steer job opportunities or projects. It's just made me a much better and stronger person in general. Could go on and on but yeah thought that's be heaps as.

WHAI WĀHITANGA

What does Whai Wāhitanga mean to me: me having full autonomy to feel fully confident in myself that I can chase whatever T.F I want to or don't want to:):):):) and this translated to all rangatahi being able to have this cause we get to decide our lives not anyone else, just guide us ————> like RR 😉

Talei

RANGATAHI REGENERATION

Rangatahi Regen changed my life in the best way possible. I first saw this as a personal development opportunity and really joined because I saw a Pacific man leading this Kaupapa and wanted to be in a space with Pacific people. I heard Christina was also involved and always saw her as a strong, powerful indigenous Wāhine and wanted to be in the same space as her. I really wanted to learn from these awesome humans as they were doing what I want to do in life. Do fun mahi with rangatahi and have the opportunity to travel and make connections across Aotearoa.

I met 5 amazing rangatahi who were all so different and so powerful in their own ways. I learned to be tough, make boundaries for myself and think about the overall intention of different Kaupapa I'm apart of. Why am I doing this? What is the intention? How will this be sustainable in communities? These are the questions I ask myself now and they have helped so much.

I have learnt to really show manaakitanga to everyone and anyone I come across and to consider the feelings and my impact when visiting people in other parts of Aotearoa and the wider world.

Rangatahi Regen really has me thinking how can I be a better human that my tupuna, whānau and future generations to come will be proud of.

Most importantly I have created life long friendships with people who help me continue to grow, pass on mahi opportunities and amazing experiences. These people show up when you need them and I now have an awesome mate who is helping run Find your Fish Movement and has provided so much depth and knowledge.

I have been able to explore my identity and I am now able to work in a space that I'm so passionate about - working with our Pasifika whānau which has always been a dream and it wouldn't be possible without Rangatahi Regen and Si and Christina.

I am eternally grateful for their love and support.

WHAI WĀHITANGA

Whai Wāhitanga to me means creating opportunities for rangatahi, showing them that their mahi and everything they do and contribute to whatever Kaupapa is valued and they deserve to be valued in every area of their lives. Whai Wāhitanga is co-design done right, really listening to what rangatahi want and helping them create and execute that dream.

Arohanui

RANGATAHI REGENERATION

My Rangatahi Regen haerenga was crazy, like looking back at last year (2021) I was such a baby lol. I feel like it was cool being able to fuck up and make mistakes but know I'll be supported anyway. To be a Rangatahi and to be genuinely spoiled with trips, kai, putea and just genuine manaaki to thank us for our time and input into this kaupapa made me realise IM WORTH IT and not to settle for anything less in my mahi 😜 I'm so glad that it taught me to hold space in big rooms, it gave me great connections and tbh, taught me heaps about myself in terms of what I want and don't want.

WHAI WĀHITANGA

Whai Wāhitanga. I think I'm still on that journey but it's finding space. Whai to me is to follow, not chase. I don't chase my place in this world, I find it, because it's already there, destined for me if that makes sense. I think it's also about creating spaces that are inviting for our young people.

Summer

RANGATAHI REGENERATION

My RR haerenga has been an exciting whirlwind? of both successes and learnings of course with everything in between. It would be nothing without the people, our crew, our tuakana, our rangatira. Diving deep into ko wai au, building relationships with incredible people who have similar whakaaro but each with their own plans and dreams, it creates a magical space to mahi alongside your people all paddling on the same waka.

Serving tangata whenua plus the rest of Aotearoa, with a focus on young people is where my heart is at. Presenting to groups is something I loved when I was little but then 'forgot' how to do it and got anxiety lol so having this space through Rangatahi Regen to lean in to the unknown, trust the process and get uncomfortable has allowed me to actually chase my own dreams WHILE serving our rangatahi and our indigenous people.

Then to add in an environment that is next to no other in terms of whanaungatanga, manaakitanga between all of us just makes for such a supportive place to explore, learn, get things wrong and get things right, it's a vibe that I will forever aspire to. Also the mātauranga is unmatched and I am super grateful and excited to be a part of disrupting the current practices that are just not working for our rangatahi.

WHAI WĀHITANGA

Whai Wāhitanga to me represents the infinite potential within each individual to do great things and be great people. To achieve in the way they desire and intend and make impacts on the communities and environments where they exist.

Through the living breathing mana taiohi kaimahi we are surrounded by, Rangatahi Regeneration created space for me to chase my place in this world and because I can see the real living results of Mana Taiohi, it is 100% something I am determined to champion across Aotearoa.

He wero

Our karere (message) and wero to organisations and practitioners who want to implement Whai Wāhitanga is to cast our minds back to when we were taiohi, think about those pain points, challenges, frustrations when we heard adults talk about the importance of taiohi voice but their approach to including and honouring taiohi voice was tokenistic and inauthentic. We are in positions of influence now where we can flip the script - pay young people what you'd pay a consultant, invite youth into spaces where there is no youth voice, hold people and organisations accountable when you can witness tokenism, ageism, discrimination and racism especially against taiohi.
This is also an unapologetic reminder to all who are youth adjacent and working/serving young people, that you have done your dash being a young person and to not set up projects of what our younger selves wanted to do/be. We are there to journey alongside them, not in place of them as they dream-up, scheme-up and realise their dream lives.

E rere ana tō mātou aroha ki te whānau o Rangatahi Regeneration - Talei Bryant (Fiji, Pākehā), Arohanui West (Te Arawa), Jordan Peipi (Ngāti Porou), Vyaan Kakau-Leef (Te Hikutū, Ngāi te Rangi), Timena Iuliano (Ngāti Wai, Tokelau, Sāmoa), Te Maungarongo Maarie Mareikura-Ellery (Te Ātihaunui-a-Pāpārangi, Ngāpuhi), Lourdes Lefaoseu (Mangaia, Sāmoa), Tokarārangi Poa (Te Ātihaunui-a-Pāpārangi), Summer Bell (Ngāti Ranginui, Whakatōhea), Kaz Hepi (Ngāti Hine, Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Porou), and Michelle Rangiahua (Tūhoe, Tūwharetoa)

E rere ana o mātou mihi ki ngā kaitautoko o tēnei kaupapa - Vodafone NZ Foundation, Te Pūni Kōkiri, Mānatu Hauora - Ministry of Health. We acknowledge and appreciate your tautoko and belief in Rangatahi Regeneration and Ngā Kaihoe from 2020 to now.

Whai te haerenga, follow the journey
- @Arataiohi
www.arataiohi.org.nz

RANGATAHI REGENERATION

Christina Leef *is the Kairaranga Kaupapa Mana Taiohi.*

What is important to both Si and Christina in this mahi is to celebrate and elevate Indigenous ways of doing and being. We exist to flip the script and remind everyone how gangsta it is to be Indigenous.

Si Mareko *aka Black Panther, hails from Sāmoa and is a proud pāpā and OG youth worker. Si is the Director of Mana Taiohi. Christina Leef is te kuīni o te Taitokerau (Te Rarawa, Te Hikutū, Ngāpuhi, Aitutaki) and staunch OG from Glen Innes, East Auckland #GItillidie*

and Rangatahi Regeneration

E kore au e ngaro / I shall not be lost.

Kahu Kutia

Where I come from, the kererū is revered. A food for royalty and women. Our kaumātua describe how the sky would get dark as clouds of kererū flew over head, sounding like a loud helicopter as they flapped their wings through our echoing valleys. This memory from long before I was born was a sign of abundance. I imagine our wāhine talking smack with lips covered in fat while they take their share. My father told me that ngahere always provides, take care of it.

I think about the centuries of understanding that has been harvested on my whenua in Te Urewera. The signs that heralded hard times or good times to come. What valleys to visit for healing, what to listen for on the wind. When my dad and his best friend ran away from school at 15 to live in the bush, they had everything that they needed. In my whakapapa I am the first link that doesn't know these things.

The world that we live in is complex, and so are the causes of my own disconnection. But I'll name a few factors. In 1867 the Native Schools Act was created. Premisced on the idea of assimilating a supposedly savage race and beating out of us all of the customs that make us who we are. My dad was a student of a native school and spoke to me about the beatings he got for speaking Te Reo Māori. He never spoke Te Reo to me until I finally begged him in to it as a university student. This was 6 months before he passed. In 1907 the Tohunga Suppression Act was created in response to the movements assembled by the likes of Rua Kenana. Indigenous medicine outlawed, along with the spiritualities that were woven in to it. Our people forced to abandon the health frameworks that had always been the most beneficial to us. In 1954 when my father was ten years old they made Te Urewera a national park. They said it was for our own good and told us we need to take care of the environment. As if we had not already been doing that for centuries. Our people could not eat nor live from these lands anymore, could not harvest rongoā to heal nor rākau to carve. Ways of being that are outlawed soon fall out of practice.

Originally published in *AKO Journal*. Republished in *No Other Place To Stand* – an anthology of climate change poetry.

Today, polluted water bubbles forward even from the middle of the middle of nowhere in my home. The contexts in which we have always understood our world are shifting. Our language. Our identity. The places we call home. Once upon a time the kererū made a spectacle of the sky, and now I feel blessed to see one bird on a power pole in the city.

Climate change cannot be understood separately from colonisation. And climate action cannot be enacted separately from indigenous sovereignty. When we understand the international picture of the colonial project we see how lands, waters, peoples and livelihoods became capital for exploitation. And every little action mattered.

Climate change is very much a sequence of emerging environmental disasters. Severe droughts and flooding in Te Matau-a-Māui is climate change. Water quality rapidly declining is climate change. Disappearing islands in the Pacific is climate change. I think we can all understand this. But when you understand how a history of colonial violence in rural Māori communities led to the urban drift of our people in the 60s and 70s, you understand that disconnection from culture and urbanisation is connected to climate change. The rates of Māori youth suicide are linked to disconnection from our healing practies and communities and therefore linked to climate change. Inequitable health outcomes for Māori are linked to climate change.

You will hear scientific research that says we have 8 years or 10 years, or 12 years before the run on effects of climate change become unstoppable. This in itself is

alarming. But in actual fact, marginalised communities have no years. We are already suffering the consequences and are making plans to adapt.I have taken part in land occupations, youth climate marches, and wānanga all to do with climate change. I've made art about it, written about it. I travelled to the United Nations climate change talks in Poland with a group of Māori and Pacific youth called Te Ara Whatu. I returned home to advocate to government and council. I do this because climate change is already affecting our lives deeply.

Young people already have a deep understanding of the world that they have been brought in to. They often feel frustrated at being placated by older generations who interpret our very real burden as irrational fear about the future. I encourage you to listen and think how you can help support their journey towards action that will benefit us all. If they want to start a club, or petition council, or spend time with their kaumātua, celebrate that It's so important that we have a clear picture of what we do want for the future and feel empowered to act upon that vision.

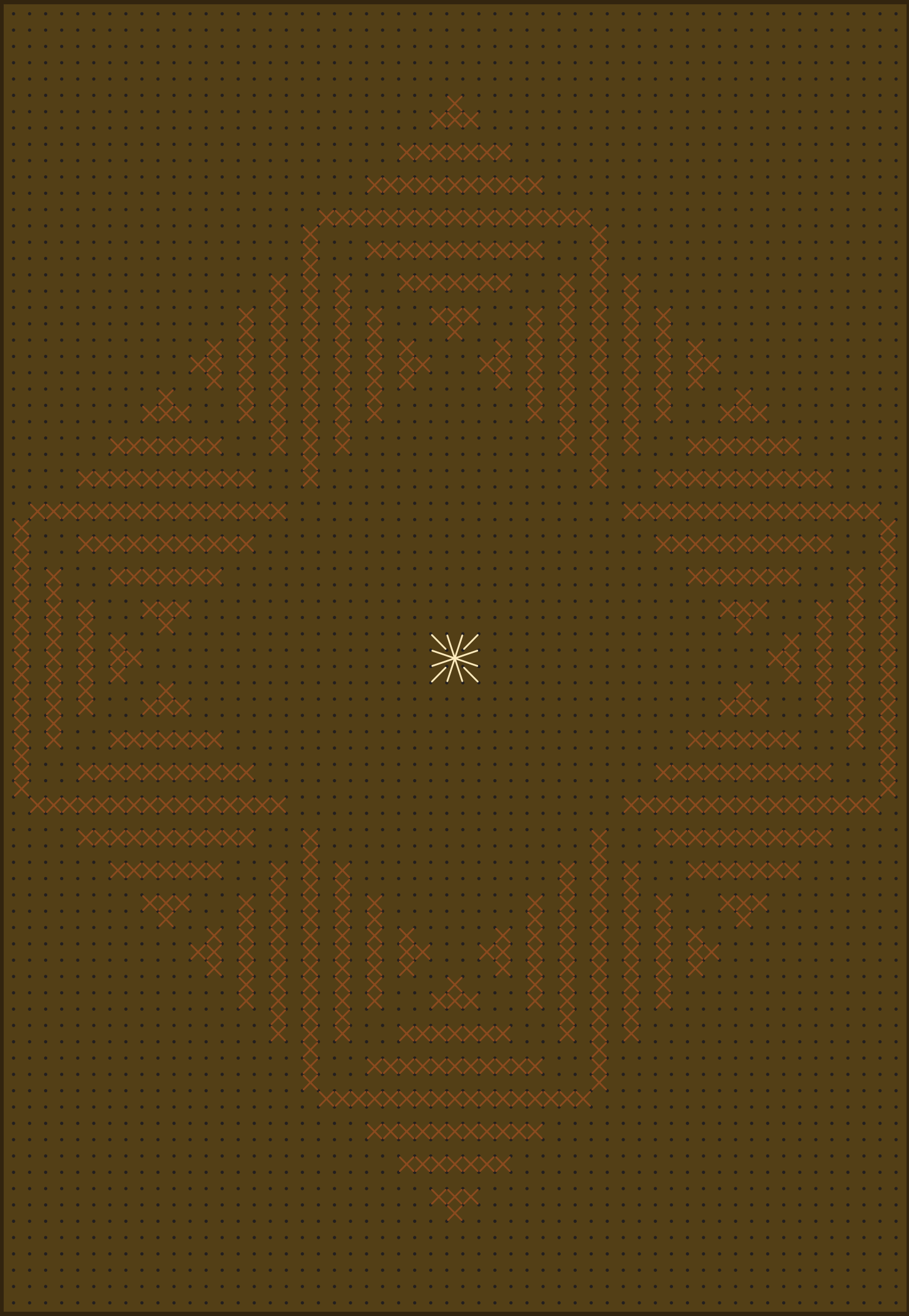
Some of the most inspiring moments I have witnessed in activism have been at the hands of rangatahi. I think of groups like 4 Tha Kulture and their work connecting climate change to social inequities in their communities in a way that many who have spent decades in the climate scene have failed to understand. I have witnessed a 5 year old lead a chant in a march of thousands. I have seen youth in their art convey realities of climate change and genuinely connect people over a cause that will eventually affect us all. Young people have a real power, and in your critically important roles as guides in their journey, you have power too.

My work as a climate activist very much comes from a place of despair at the colonising history of Aotearoa, and the ways that it has affected my understanding and place in the world as a Māori person. However no work is sustainable without hope. Let us return to the knowledge of indigenous peoples, because we have always considered ourselves a part of the land and the sea, rather than separate. If our whenua and our waters thrive, so too do we.

I imagine a world where resources are created to be accessible to everyone. Where we are able to practice sovereignty over our kai and know where it comes from. Where fast, safe, sustainable transport methods are available to us. Where thriving lands are priorisited over capitalist greed. Where rural communities are supported to navigate environmental shifts, disappearing shorelines, droughts, and floods. I envision a world where we can meet each other kanohi ki te kanohi to share knowledge and story. This world requires radical reinvention from us all, because we cannot fix climate change within the system that invented it in the first place.

I think of the birthright I am not able to inherit, the legacy of kererū and how much they mean to us. It's not that I hunger to eat the kererū, I hunger for a world in which I can be sure that she and I will not be lost.

Kahu Kutia (Ngāi Tūhoe) is a writer, artist and storyteller who was born and raised in her homelands in Te Urewera. All of her work explores themes of identity and whakapapa from a contemporary Māori worldview that ultimately aims to uplift all of the unheard stories of te ao Māori.



Jack Hurst – An Ambitious Young Volunteer

Interviewed by Zara Maslin

Hit us with your intro, Jack!

Kia orana, I'm Jack Hurst. I live in Northland, Wellington. I whakapapa to Pukekohe, Tamaki Makaurau bordering Waikato. I'm 12 years old and go to Northland School.

I really like history and mythology. I like Dungeons and Dragons (D&D) and my favourite movie is Dune - I'm listening to the book currently! My favourite food is tacos, specifically tempura prawn tacos without the sour cream (important detail), because you need to be nice to the spice.

Why is volunteering important to you?

Volunteering is fun and good for the community! It's also what good people do – you're a good person if you volunteer for things. So one of the reasons I do it is because I want to be a good person.

Tell us a little bit about a project you've volunteered to do.

Last year I volunteered to do a really important thing at my school: Start a Dungeons and Dragons (D&D) Club. It's important because it's good for people's mental health to interact and do fun, silly things together. D&D provides an opportunity to develop social and emotional skills in a safe space. The club provides that safe space for people while they try out something new.

It's sort of like play based learning when you're a kid: You might learn how to throw a ball (playing) while practicing counting at the same time (learning). But as you get older, play based learning gets harder because there are less opportunities. D&D is a good way to keep doing play based learning as you grow up.

There are heaps of benefits! Such as social interaction and learning at the same time. If you're usually shy and you play D&D, it helps to build confidence which can hopefully transfer to your everyday life. It also helps you to learn. One of the original D&D bosses is Tiamat who was a Persian mythological being. So you're learning about mythology at the same time.

The D&D club is a fun and safe environment for young people. It's entertaining and it keeps you coming back. It has a positive effect on the people who come for the rest of their day and week.

What other volunteering have you done?

I got to be part of the policy development project for the Tory Whanau Mayoralty Campaign in Wellington. I was one of a few people they got together to brainstorm ideas for social cohesion. We needed to come up ideas to make a space where people can socialise while getting out-and-about and moving around. I had an idea based off Mexico City: every so often the inner city is closed off to traffic for markets and a fair. It's only accessible for bikes and people walking. And we thought maybe that could happen in Cuba Street in Central Wellington one day! We just need to watch out for MAMIL's (middle-aged men in lycra)!

The whole project was a really positive experience. I am hopeful that the Cuba Street event could happen one day!

What's next for you?

Sticks and Stones is a youth-led anti-bullying programme that's run all over the South Island. We're trying to eliminate bullying in high schools and primary schools. Currently I'm trying to get that in my school. I spoke to the principal and made a sign-up sheet. However, lockdown and alert level changes made it tricky, so getting Sticks and Stones started up is next on my agenda.

When we eliminate bullying, we eliminate racism, anti-Semitism and white supremacy. We eliminate some of society's biggest problems because all of those things are versions of bullying. Sticks and Stones is great because you do it with a lot of cool people and do a lot of cool things together!

What do you want youth workers to know?

I want youth workers to know that you're doing a good job no matter what! Sometimes I hear people go on about it saying, "youth workers are so good... blah blah". But you really are! That's why you're awesome!

Jack Hurst. Hi I'm Jack, I like Dungeons and Dragons, hockey and mocktails! I'm 12 years old, 13 in February. I like how youth work is fun and you get to connect with people. And you get to help them feel safe and comfortable about themselves. I like to volunteer to help people. My goal as a youth worker is to join Korowai Tupu.

Welcome to Mai World!

Kelsey Brown, Peter Foaese and the Mai World Team

The current members of the Mai World team are Peter Foaese, Kelsey Brown, Noel Woods, Laura Gingell, Eddy Davis Rae, Waimarie Mete, and Ruby Sands. The team is led by Peter Foaese and Kelsey Brown, who joined the Office of the Children's Commissioner on the same day, and have been a team ever since. Together, they have built on and expanded the work of previous OCC staff members, including Donna Provoost, Awhina Buchanan, and Emma Hope. Since 2016, they have had an intentional focus of combining their unique skill sets to build a theory of practice that is grounded in Aotearoa. Every new team member that we have had join us has brought with them their unique worldview, whakapapa, experiences, and knowledge, which, combined with the contribution of every mokopuna that we have met along this journey, has added to the richness of Mai World, and makes it what it is.

At the Office of the Children's Commissioner [OCC] we believe that the best way to ensure a good life for mokopuna is to listen to and value their voice in the things that matter. But we often hear that mokopuna don't feel like government listens to them or gives them a genuine say. This needs to change.

This article will explore the evolution of how the OCC has enacted our obligations for enabling children's participation.

We will first explore the evolution of our approach from ad hoc engagements, to a formal Youth Advisory Group, to our current Mai World team, and growing participation hub.

We will then describe how our theory of practice has developed over the last 6 years, how it builds on a range of participation theory – both domestically and internationally and is demonstrated in the approaches that we took in some key projects along the way. The projects highlight the evolving nature of child participation over the course of the four-year period examined. For example, one general trend was the shift from a predominantly or exclusively child-focused approach in earlier projects to a more community and whānau-focused approach in the latter projects. The wider policy and decision-making environment shifted during this time as well, with listening to children's voices becoming more accepted as important and/or necessary in policy development processes.

We will then share some practical resources that we have developed and use in our own projects, that we hope will be helpful to youth workers and others who are working to ensure mokopuna have their views considered in decision making.

We will conclude by outlining our moemoea for mokopuna participation as Mai World, and as practitioners in Aotearoa.

Mokopuna have a right to be heard.

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) provides children and young people with the right to express a view, and to have their view given due weight in decisions that affect them. Enabling children's participation in decision making not only upholds their right to have a say and be heard, but also advances their welfare and best interests and leads to better decision-making overall.

However, a child's right to participate is rarely fully upheld in policy development and decisions made by the government, despite being recognised by international law through Article 12 of the UNCRC, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and in New Zealand's domestic legislation, including in the Children's Commissioner's Act 2003 (soon to be repealed and replaced by the Oversight of Oranga Tamariki System and Children and Young People's Commission Bill), the Care of Children Act 2004, the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 and the Education and Training Act 2020 (s5(6)(a)).

Evolution of Children's participation at the OCC

As best practice and theory around child and youth participation has evolved, so to has the OCC's approach to engaging with mokopuna. This section explores how questions around the authenticity, effectiveness and inclusivity of youth participation are reflected on and responded to in the evolution of our practice.

Early Years: While the OCC has always been a strong advocate for mokopuna, our approach to hearing their

voices was ad hoc. UNCRC had only recently been ratified here in Aotearoa and the obligation to allow mokopuna perspectives to inform the activities of the Commissioner was less pronounced. As such, the Commissioner engaged with mokopuna sporadically but there was no mechanism through which these perspectives were actively sought and valued. This approach reflected a commonly held sentiment held within the youth and public sector of "meaning well" but highlighted the need for more robust approach to hearing the voices of mokopuna.

In 2012 the OCC established a Young Person's Advisory Group [YPAG] – a mechanism that is still widely used by youth organisations and local and national government. The YPAG enabled the OCC to engage regularly with mokopuna so our decisions and advocacy incorporated their current lived experience. It supported in-depth work on a limited number of topics but was not flexible enough to hear the perspectives of mokopuna on issues as they arose. The formal structure of YPAG, and the criteria required to take part limited participation from younger or more vulnerable children.

In 2014 the OCC reviewed how we engaged mokopuna and decided to disestablish the YPAG because of its limitations around inclusivity and accessibility. The Children and Young People's Voices Project (Voices Project) was established in 2015 as an easier and effective way to hear their views on a range of topics. The Voices Project involved partnering with schools (particularly schools in low socio-economic areas) to hear from mokopuna through online surveys. This allowed the office to hear from a wider range of mokopuna on a more flexible basis.

In 2017, the OCC established the Mai World team who were tasked with conducting face to face and community engagements alongside the school surveys. Mai World draws heavily on Te Ao Māori and Ngā Mātauranga o Te-Moana-Nui-A-Kiwa, the creation of Mai World firmly drew upon the needs and cultural norms of Pacific and Māori mokopuna to shape engagements and continues to evolve today.

Our current Mai World approach

Our Mai World participation hub is the way that the Children's Commissioner upholds their statutory obligation to hear from children and young people.

We listen to, engage with, and amplify the voices of mokopuna to share them with decision makers.

Our team works with mokopuna from all around Aotearoa to understand what they think about a range of topics. We ensure mokopuna are supported to have their perspectives sought in the way that works for them. We then share their thoughts so they can guide government and community decision making. These voices also guide all of the work we do as an office.

The name Mai World emphasises the importance of children and young people's voices. It encapsulates what it means to be child centred by focusing on children and young people within their whānau, community, society, within their world.

The word 'my' in English identifies the subject in relation to what sits around it. The kupu 'mai' in Māori and in the Pacific world transcends language and is again, coloured by what sits around it - aroha mai (love towards me), whakarongo mai (listen to me), titiro mai (look at me), kōrero mai (speak to me) - just as worlds around mokopuna shape them. As can be seen by these phrases, the use of the word 'mai' makes a statement directional. This is true in the case of Mai World where the flow of knowledge is from the speaker to the listener, from the mokopuna who are speaking, to the adults in the room.

When we support mokopuna to embrace their own world and tell us about it– we pass the power, from our world to theirs.

Community Partners

Mai World recognises mokopuna are the primary experts of their lives and lived experiences. However, whānau and the community of mokopuna are critical both for their well-being and their authentic participation within engagements. Youth workers, community organisations, and those who hold trusted relationships with mokopuna allow us to have confidence in our engagement processes for a number of reasons.

First, it is an acknowledgement of Te Ao Taiohi – the fact that mokopuna do not exist in isolation but that their identity is tied up in their whakapapa, their support networks and their whānau. Community partners help provide context for this ecosystem around mokopuna and serve as a reminder of our status as manuhiri in this space.

Second, community partners understanding of their mokopuna help to enable their authentic participation within our engagements. It is the body language, personalities and silent looks within our engagements that add nuance to what mokopuna explicitly say and these can often only be interpreted by those who know the mokopuna best. Mai World works with the village around the child and recognises this village as experts in these young people's lives.

Third, it is the community partners who provide ongoing support for the mokopuna when we leave. The nature of our roles mean we are only ever visitors in the lives of mokopuna and yet some of the conversations we have around issues such as wellbeing, racism and day to day can have lasting effects on the outlook of mokopuna. It is essential, therefore, that mokopuna have safe spaces and people with whom they can carry on the conversation or receive support from when necessary.

This article serves as both a resource but also a mihi to you as a trusted person for mokopuna in your own communities. It is you who enable them to have their say and ultimately allow whai wāhitanga to be realised.

Practical resources

We have chosen to share some practical resources that we have developed and use in our own projects, that we hope will be helpful to youth workers and others who are working to ensure mokopuna have their views considered in decision making.

- **Resource 1:** Ethical considerations for hearing the voices of mokopuna within your own organisations.
- **Resource 2:** Consent form template to ensure mokopuna are providing informed consent to be involved in your engagements.
- **Resource 3:** Recording template to record the perspectives of mokopuna within your engagement programmes.

These resources are found on pages 102-105.

Where to next?

We will conclude by outlining our moemoea for mokopuna participation as Mai World, and as practitioners in Aotearoa.

Our vision is a participation hub for Aotearoa to ensure that:

- children and young people are supported to have their perspectives sought in the way that works for them, listened to, and given due weight in all decisions that affect them
- organisations engaging with children and young people are supported to develop good practice, including appropriate ethical and consent considerations, fit-for-purpose methods of engagement (which consider children's development and diversity, including language and culture), and appropriate reporting of views
- resources and views gathered are shared among government agencies, academics, and community organisations
- decision-makers have access to, and give due consideration to, the views of children and young people.

The Hub would expand beyond our existing Mai World engagement to offer support, guidance, information, and training to others, so children and young people's voices are heard in a consistent and systematic way across government and the youth sector. The Mai World team would build our emerging capacity to engage Māori and Pacific children and young people in the language and customs of their ancestors, especially those who attend immersion schools and centres. Mai World would be able to undertake engagement on topics of interest and share those widely. In doing so it can also model good practice in action.

We want to support government agencies to access the voices and views of children to inform policy, programmes, and practice – whether this is providing support to officials, sharing voices already gathered, or sharing voices from engagement that we have undertaken. All engagement with children and young people can be done well and be ethical and meaningful for all involved.

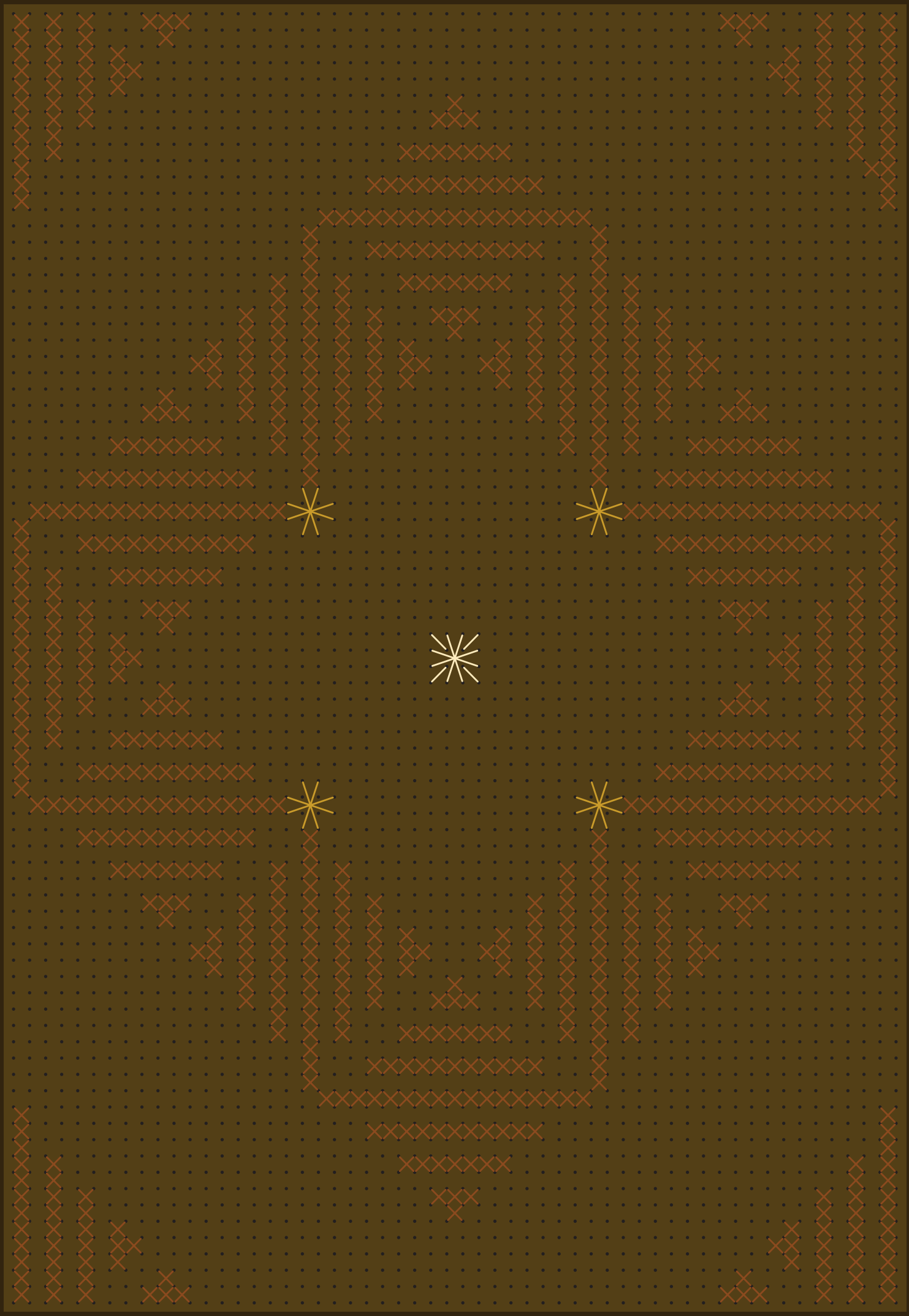
Conclusion

This article identifies the domestic legislation aimed at upholding the right of mokopuna to have their say, provides a timeline of the evolution of OCC approach to mokopuna engagement and outlines some considerations and resources for participation mahi within your own organisations. We ended with our vision for a participation hub within Aotearoa that promotes best practice across the sector. Youth development practitioners play a crucial role in ensuring that the views of the mokopuna they work with every day are heard in the decision making that affects them. We hope this article helps to both solidify a commitment to authentic whai wāhitanga and increase confidence within the sector to facilitate it ethically and effectively. If you want to hear more or get involved check out our website or send us an email at **voices@occ.org.nz.**

Kelsey Brown has whakapapa to Ngāti Mutunga, Scotland and Ireland, and grew up in sunny Ōtepoti. Kelsey has a LLB, BA and Post Grad Cert in Children's Issues, and is about to complete her Master of Laws on children's rights and participation in Aotearoa. Kelsey was an independent advocate at Puketai, a state run care and protection residence, and volunteered for the Community Law Centre. Kelsey moved to Whanganui-a-Tara and worked in policy on issues affecting children and their whānau before joining the Children's Commissioner's Office. Kelsey, alongside Peter-Clinton Foaese, has had a lead role in designing, carrying out and authoring all of the OCC's large scale engagement projects and reports, such as Education Matters to Me, What Makes a Good Life, and Te Kuku o Te Manawa. Kelsey carries the advice and opinions of all she's interacted with, and is a staunch advocate for having their views heard. Kelsey has recently returned from parental leave, where she spent the best year with her son.

Peter Foaese *From the villages of Faleula and Vailoa Faleata, Peter-Clinton Foaese is a first generation Samoan kiwi, born and raised in Pito-one, Te Awakairangi, Whanganui-a-tara. Despite a decade's experience before then, he embraced his call from Jesus to be a youth worker in his late twenties. With God's help, he developed his mind to match his heart for young people and completed a Diploma in Youth Work and Bachelor in Youth Development. He has 15+ years' experience walking alongside mokopuna in multiple spaces including te ao Maori and te ao Pasifika, refugee and migrant settlement, mental health support, family violence sexual violence, environmental sustainability, disability advocacy, education initiatives and civics education. He thanks his parents for role-modelling servant leadership, and has been blessed tenfold as he journeyed with mokopuna and whanau through grass-roots community action, participating in diverse national activities across Aotearoa NZ, and supporting child and youth participatory action research across the world. He has been at the Office of the Children's Commission since 2016 serving in the Child and Youth Voices, Participation and Engagement team called Mai World.*

www.occ.org.nz/voices



VOYCE Whakarongo Mai – Building Te Waka Rangatira

Tupua Urlich, Hunia Mackay and Ashley Shearar

Ko te ahurei I te tamaiti arahia o tatou mahi - Let the uniqueness of the child guide the work.

VOYCE Whakarongo Mai: Voices of Young and Care Experienced – Listen to Me! This is the name gifted to us by care-experienced children and young people across Aotearoa when asked their aspirations for an independent advocacy service that amplifies their voices. Right from our inception, VOYCE Whakarongo Mai has been designed by the community we are here to serve - co-design in its most honest form.

We didn't go into design workshops with any predetermined ideas, just open ears, minds, and pens to note down the important stuff, right from what our organisation looks like, feels like, how it works.

Care-experienced young people told us our service must:

- **Build** leadership among children and young people in care
- **Connect** children and young people in care through activities and local networks
- **Promote the collective voice** of children and young people in care so that it can influence the wider care system
- **Advocate** with individual children and young people in care in relation to their goals and concerns
- **Equip** children and young people for their future.

Voices of children and young people in care radically influenced the design of our service. To a large extent, this was because of the sway they had over the development of Oranga Tamariki. After the review and overhaul of Child Youth and Family in 2015, the government heard first hand from eight young people with lived-experience of the care system in Aotearoa. They brought their reality into the political realm, spoke about what it was like growing up in the system, including the challenges they faced in the community and how the trauma of uplift, instability, abuse, and isolation affected them long after aging out.

People in positions of power saw the gaps our young people were falling through. They felt young people's desperation of to be heard and understood by those with influence over their lives. According to Cabinet who enabled our creation, this Kaupapa "... is intended to maximise the participation of children and young people in decision-making."

Our mere existence proves that youth voice can influence decision-makers at the highest level, and we have continued to prove this over time.

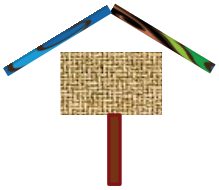
The Kaupapa and mahi of VOYCE Whakarongo Mai is key to combatting the oppression young people face in the system, by recognising, amplifying, and respecting their voices, and by supporting our young people to have a say in decisions that affect them the most. Right from the early days before the launch of our organisation, the journey has been about the coming together of people from various backgrounds, all with a passion to improve the lives of our whānau in care. As kaimahi, it is our privilege to help bring this aspiration to life alongside tamariki and rangatahi atawhai, and to continue to learn and grow from those with lived experience to ensure that what we do is relevant to the people we serve.

TE AO O VOYCE – WHAKARONGO MAI:
A VOYCE – WHAKARONGO MAI ECO-SYSTEM

Te pūtake kōkiri: The foundation

Te pūtake kōkiri is the kaupapa Māori foundation of VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai. The metaphor of a whare (shelter) represents the strategy that encompasses five Pou ārahi (guiding pillars). Each Pou ārahi defines a particular workstream of VOYCE – whakarongo mai. The Pou ārahi of VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai are Whakamana (Advocacy), Tūhono (Connections), Whakatairanga (Amplifying voices), Whaipūkenga (Upskilling) and Rangatiratanga (Leadership). Underpinning each of the Pou ārahi are a set of uara (values) that include aroha, manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, atawhai, tika, pono, wānanga, māramatanga.

Four pathways define how the organisation engages with the sector which are Kanohi kitea (The seen face), Te reo Rangatira (The esteemed language), Tangata whenua (People of the land) and Tūrangawaewae (A place to stand).



He pātaka kōrero (Information storehouse)

He pātaka kōrero: Information storehouse

He pātaka kōrero is where VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai gathers and stores our stories and information to contribute and influence the care sector for the benefit of tamariki and rangatahi! The most important factor in the creation of ***He pātaka kōrero*** was to ensure the contents that sit inside the storehouse are treated as Tāonga (treasured possessions). How information is recieved, stored and shared must be done with honour and respect.

Therefore, all information relating to care experienced tamariki and rangatahi is considered tapu (sacred). What VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai does with the information is seen as Kōrero tuku iho (Stories handed down). ***He pātaka kōrero*** is a place where we nourish and feed ourselves and others with kōrero tuku iho through the process of wānanga (reciprocal learning opportunities)

Since the launch of VOYCE Whakarongo Mai in April 2017, we have developed a reputation as credible, independent, and fearless advocates, holding people in power to account and creating avenues for care-experienced children and young people to offer solutions based on their insights. We have created a service which has enabled us to achieve this over time which now includes:

- A Board with diverse membership, including members and a co-chair with lived experience of the care system
- A National Care Experienced Lead with 12 years of lived experience in the system
- A National Youth Council with care-experienced young people from a range of backgrounds and parts of the country and regional youth councils being established across regions
- Offices in Tāmaki Makaurau; Tauranga; Whanganui-a-Tara; Otautahi as well as satellite presence in Hawkes Bay; Te Taitokerau and Otipoti
- Kaiwhakamana operating out of all sites to enable individual advocacy with children and young people in state care and create connection opportunities
- An 0800 number as well as a presence on Facebook and Instagram to enable access and connection
- An Insights and Impact team who collate themes identified through surveys, individual advocacy work and youth council members to create collective advocacy opportunities, as well as increase connections through social media
- Advocacy campaigns like the petition in partnership with OurActionStation “6 Promises for 6,000 children and young people in care”, seeking commitments from politicians during election time

- Public and oral submissions on Bills that have a significant impact on care experienced children and young people like the Youth Justice Demerits Bill and the Oranga Tamariki Oversight Bill
- A media presence across matters that affect children and young people in care.

Child and youth participation is fundamental to our purpose. We simply could not achieve our Kaupapa without keeping the voices of lived experience central to everything Kaupapa we step into.

As we grow, we continue to build on our experiences, increase our reach and strengthen our approach to participation to ensure we create a space steeped in our values for all children and young people in care. We want a VOYCE movement that encourages and excites all the young and care care-experienced community to feel included, engaged, connected, and heard. To progress this, we need a vessel for our journey, and so the crafting of Te Waka Rangatira – our Child and Youth Participation Strategy – has begun. We use experiences, relationships, knowledge, and insights gained over time as our tools, materials, and compass. Kaupapa Māori sits at the heart of VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai of which Te Waka Rangatira is an integral part.

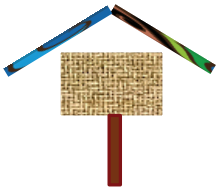
He kōrero whakataki – An Introduction

"Te Waka Rangatira" refers to a VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai approach to youth participation that acknowledges the mana of all care experienced tamariki and rangatahi. The introduction of the strategy weaves together all aspects of child and youth participation that exist at VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai and provides a platform for further development.

Te waka rangatira: Part of the eco-system

Te Pūtake Kōkiri utilises the metaphor of a whare and identifies ways for care experienced young people to engage with VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai. He Pātaka Kōrero provides a place to store the stories created at VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai from the voices of care experienced tamariki and rangatahi. The five pou ārahi (workstreams) hold us accountable to uphold the values of VOYCE – whakarongo mai and the vision that:

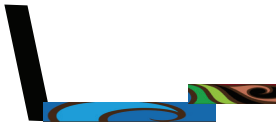
All care experienced Tamariki and rangatahi with love and mana.



He pātaka kōrero
(Information storehouse)

Te Waka rangatira
(Youth participation)

The additon of "Te waka rangatira" places care experienced young people and their stories at the forefront of the work of VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai using the metaphor of a waka (canoe) that supports their journey within the system.



Te Waka rangatira
(Youth participation)

"Te Waka Rangatira " and consists of the following kupu Māori (Māori words):

- **Waka:** Canoe, vehicle , vessel
- **Rangatira:** Noble, esteemed, leaders.

Traditionally Waka could be an ancestral link to tribal identity; modes of transport to carry goods and people from one place to another; or gifted to acknowledge the importance of a specific occasions or people. In our context "Te Waka Rangatira" is a vehicle for change that supports care experienced tamariki and rangatahi to embark on a journey of discovery to becoming the rangatira they are destined to be.

Ngā Aronga: The focus areas of "Te waka rangatira"

Building the movement:

"Me whakapoi ake te kakau o te hoe" – "Grasp hold of the paddle"

The power needed to drive "Te Waka Rangatira" forward comes from all parties taking part. Building the movement to ensure effective youth participation is a call for all to

take hold of the paddle. Whānau, hapū and iwi have a significant role to play in the movement as well as NGO's, community groups and Government.

Building the movement needs to be a wide-reaching collective of care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi who may want to board the waka and have their voices amplified. It is through the relationships with a wide collective in the community who engage with tamariki and rangatahi that we can extend our reach to those who may not be directly connected to VOYCE yet as well. Whanaungatanga (effective relationships) is key to extending the reach to all care experienced tamariki and rangatahi who want to be connected and heard. Representation on "Te Waka Rangatira" of tamariki and rangatahi will come from engaging with ngā kokonga katoa (all corners) of Aotearoa. Kanohi kitea (the seen face) is at the core of representation. A call to join the movement goes out: **Rite kia rite! - Be prepared, be ready!**

Tōkihi, tōkihi, tōkihi hī! – "By moving together, success will be achieved"

The strategy identifies opportunities for care experienced tamariki and rangatahi to get involved. Supporting tamariki and rangatahi to participate will be accomplished in ways that are tika (what is right and good for any situation) and pono (to be true, unfeigned, genuine).

He waka kaupapa, He waka tāngata – "A waka of many objectives, a waka for all"

Care experienced tamariki and rangatahi have the mana to identify kaupapa that resonate with them. VOYCE-Whakarongo Mai engages with key stakeholders in numerous ways. At the heart of all engagements are the foundation values of aroha (love, compassion, empathy), manaakitanga (showing and receiving care, respect, kindness, and hospitality) and haumarutanga (safety)

Developing the structure:

"Tāraia te waka kia mānu ai" — "Fashion the hull of the waka to stay afloat"

Having the right structures in place to form the waka and a plan to utilise all skills on board is key to safely navigate the sometimes-choppy waters of the care system. Being flexible is important and having the voices of care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi to guide "Te waka rangatira" is essential.

Learning and development:

"Tūruki, tūruki, paneke, paneke" - "Move, move. Forward onwards"

The use of the term tūruki tūruki, paneke, paneke! Is based on a chant used by leaders when moving waka either on land or sea. Kaihoe (paddlers) learn the skills needed to propel the waka forward and the chant helps to keep in time. "Te waka rangatira" creates opportunities and spaces to learn and gain experience. Through direct experiences and learning the appropriate skills will the journey become easier, and the learner then becomes the teacher for those to come! Wānanga (To meet, discuss, deliberate, consider) and kōrero (discussion) feed "Te waka Rangatira" and provide sustenance to care experienced tamariki and rangatahi to grow.

He aha te kai o te Rangatira, he kōrero? - What is food of leaders? it is dialogue.

Why is it important to listen to the young and care experienced? The answer really isn't as complicated as some people seem to think. Firstly, it's important to never lose focus of the fact that they are tamariki and rangatahi. They want all the same thing that any other tamariki and rangatahi do: connection to their whānau, friends and community; understanding of who they are and where they come from; love, care, attention, stabililty - all the basic needs of any young person.

Care-experienced young people should have a voice and be listened to because despite review after review, the government has failed to address the issues with the system in Aotearoa. It is all too clear that those who do not live with the impacts of poor decision-making, or who lack of knowledge, or are bound by too much red tape, don't fully understand. If people in positions of power and influence do not come from a place of lived experience themselves, then it is incumbent on them to be informed by those who do, so their decisions and actions can meet the needs, goals, and aspirations of care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi in in the way we want for every young person in Aotearoa.

Tupua Urlich

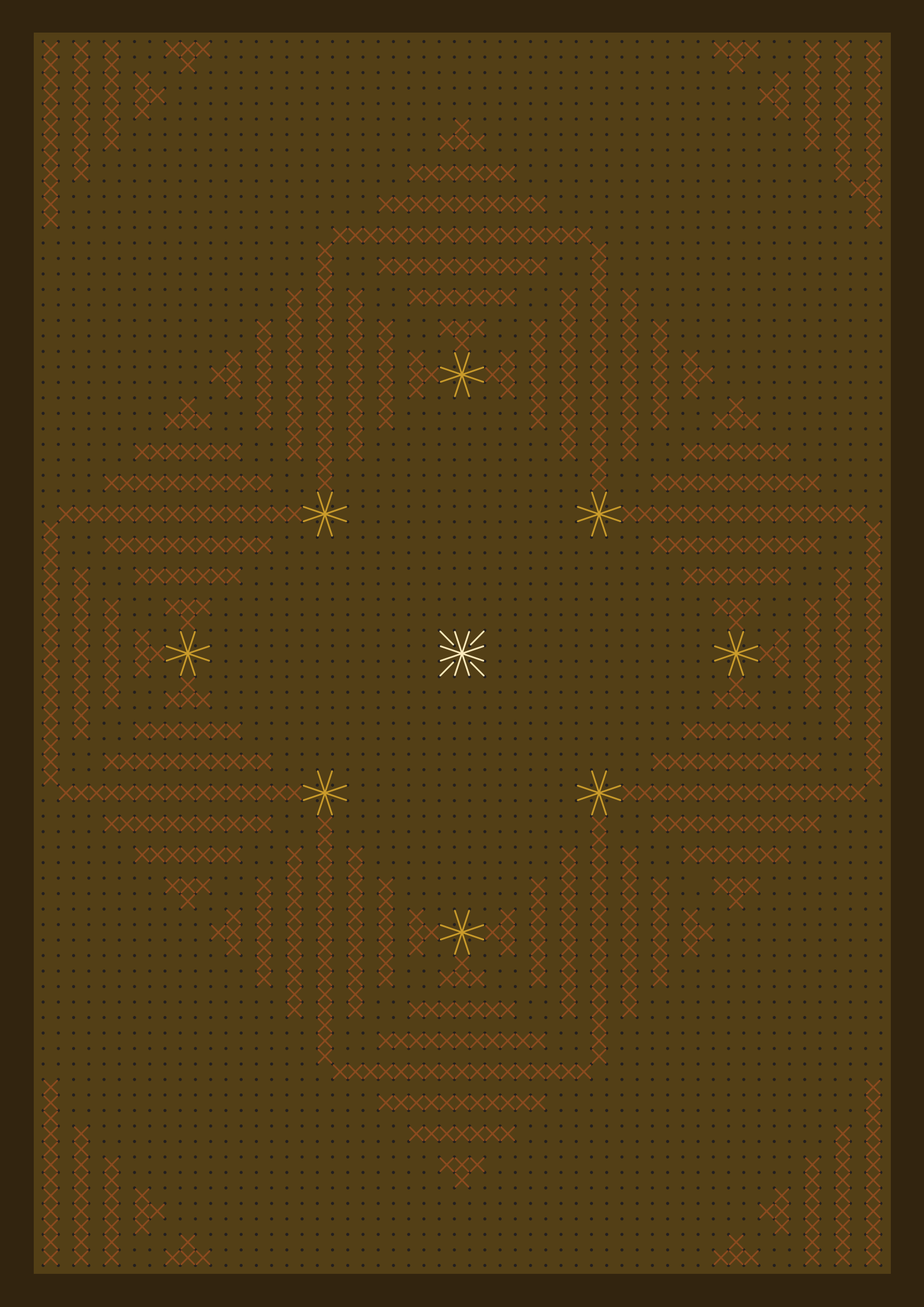
Ko Takitimu te waka
Ko Kahuranaki te maunga
Ko Ngarururoro te awa
Ko Ngati Kahungunu ki Heretaunga te iwi
Ko Kahuranaki te marae
Ko Tupua Urlich tōku ingoa

I am the National Care Experienced Lead at VOYCE - Whakarongo Mai (New Zealand's first and only National Indepedent Advocacy organisation for Tamariki/Rangatahi Children and Young People in care or with Care Experience). I spent most of my early life and adolescent years under the care of state in NZ from age 5 through to 17. My experiences in care coupled with solid support from VOYCE has enabled me to represent my whanau (family) in care on both the domestic and international stage, bringing awareness to the reality of our young people doing it tough trapped in systems that often do not perform or give young people the kind of childhoods we would all wish to have. Throughout my advocacy career I have been humbled to meet and connect with so many resilient, like minded young leaders who have emerged from the care system with a desire to improve that very system, not for themselves but for others who may need that support or intervention in their lives.

Hunia Mackay:
Ko Tainui te Waka
Ko Whitireia me Rangituhi ngā maunga
Ko kenepuru te awa
Ko Raukawa te moana
Ko Ngati Toa Rangatira te Iwi
Ko Takapuwahia te Marae
Ko Hunia Mackay tōku ingoa

Hunia was raised in Porirua but has lived in Tamaki Makaurau for nearly 30 years. He has worked in the field of education for over 25 years with a focus on supporting tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau. He is passionate about Te reo Māori and tikanga. He is the proud father of 2 girls and partner to a strong wāhine toa Kay Ellmers. Hunia currently works for a non-profit organisation called VOYCE - Whakarongo Mai (an advocacy service for tamariki and rangatahi of the state). He joined the board of TKI in 2020. Utilising the teaching of his ancestors as tools to finding a state of balance has always been a part of Hunia's life and sharing this with others is an honour and a privilege.

Ashley Shearar *recently joined VOYCE Whakarongo Mai as the National Youth Participation Lead. Growing up, she was strongly influenced and inspired by the advocacy and activism of young peers against the apartheid system in her home country, South Africa. Since then, her mission is to amplify the voices of disadvantaged children and young people to improve systems that are meant to serve them and celebrate their resilience, leadership and talents. She has previously worked alongside children and young people exposed to armed conflict as well as in conflict with the law, most recently as the Principal Advisor for Youth at Ara Poutama Aotearoa – Department of Corrections. Ashley moved to Aotearoa almost 17 years ago and now lives in Rotorua with her husband and eight-year-old son.*



Supporting young people to chase their place

Abby Golden, Stephen Jones & Meg Thomas

"If it's about us, without us, it's not for us."

This quote from the Polish Constitution of 1505 embodies the very essence of how we are at Sticks 'n Stones, New Zealand's multi-award winning, youth-led bullying prevention organisation.

At Sticks 'n Stones, we believe that the most effective way to change the culture around bullying, both online and face-to-face, is to put young people at the heart of decision-making, planning, co-design and delivery. Our youth-led model is key to engaging young people in a relevant, relatable and authentic approach. From developing programs to making core governance level decisions, everything we do is ed by young people.

Our work is centred around empowering youth to create change in their communities and helping them to develop their own strengths, skills and leadership abilities. This is what differentiates our approach from traditional bullying prevention programs or even many other youth leadership opportunities.

The young people of Sticks 'n Stones are not only our future but also shape our now. We want to step away from the view that it is the role of adults to 'make space' for us but instead have the chance to forge that path ourselves, and for the young people that follow us. We know that we are the key to creating change in our communities and our place as partners in making this happen.

The place of young people on boards and in leadership

We have seen a shift in the past five years with many organisations beginning to see the value of 'youth voice'. This includes reaching out to or creating youth advisory panels, running focus or consultation groups or bringing youth representatives in to present to committees. Now don't get us wrong, that is absolutely fantastic, but it's not enough to create tangible change or to ensure that we are truly a part of the process. Young people need to be involved in a non-tokenistic way right from the beginning, not invited into one-off meetings, panels or presentations once work is nearing completion. To create real change, youth must be treated as genuine members of boards and planning groups.

Moving from 'youth voice' to 'youth agency' means not only recognising that rangatahi have stories to tell (and that our stories are important) but also participating in the planning, decision making and reflection; influencing directions, choices and decisions (including funding); sharing the problems, challenges and opportunities we face alongside our ideas for potential solutions; and importantly having the opportunity to collaborate with other young people from diverse backgrounds and with different points of view.

For us, creating space for young people on our board and as leaders was a no brainer. We created Sticks 'n Stones in 2013 as an opportunity to challenge programmes made 'for us' but without our input. As we've grown from a regional project to a national movement, maintaining our youth-centred approach was without question a core part of this development. The leadership and ownership of our young people is the crucial ingredient to tackling Aotearoa's horrifying rates of bullying.

"Our Sticks 'n Stones board is unique in that we require at least 50% of members to be young people. I feel very privileged to have had the opportunity to apply for a position when I was 16 and I have taken on the role of secretary as well as co-chair since - this is beyond what I could ever have expected I would be able to do as a 20-year-old. While I didn't have any prior experience in governance, I've had the support and mentorship from those who have, and that has been invaluable to both my professional and personal growth. As a board, we work together cohesively to run an authentically youth-led organisation. Every board member has something important to offer, and we are always learning from one another"

reflects Abby.

"Having the opportunity to sit on the board of SnS since I was 15 has been an incredible learning experience. Throughout the whole journey, I have never felt like I am a "youth member" or a "youth representative". My voice is valued just as much as the adults to my left and right and what I have to say is not only heard but also acted on. The opportunities the board has given me have shaped me into the young adult I am today, gaining a wide range of skills from governance, learning about financial reports, serving a term as secretary and so much more. This role has allowed me to flourish, and also feel as an 18-year old that I am making a difference, rather than having to sit back and watch others make decisions about me", shares Meg.

"I joined the Sticks 'n Stones board in 2017, my first year out of high school and now hold the position as one of our co-chairs. Having come from a background where I had had the opportunity to be involved with a few different organisations, the Sticks 'n Stones authentic youth-led design appealed to me as a place where I could share my opinion and had no doubts that this would not only be accepted but also valued. I have felt supported, respected, and listened to every step of the way. Now entering my fifth year on the board, with the benefit of hindsight, I can look back and reflect on where it all started. I am eternally grateful to everyone who has been involved along the journey and can stand proud in saying that my mind has been opened to the full potential of true youth-led design. I am excited to see where this design can take us in the future," adds Stephen.

Nikki, one of our youth adjacent board members recognises the power of learning from rangatahi, commenting "Stephen, Abby and Meg have taught those of us who joined the board after you what governance is. I had no idea before I joined, and you've all supported me to learn".

How can adults play their part?

Don't underestimate the leadership potential of young people. Support us, offer mentorship, provide training and targeted opportunities and campaigns to get us involved. There are so many young people out there yearning for a seat at the table, wanting to take greater ownership and responsibility for making things happen and positively impacting their own social environments. Do things with us, not for us. Think outside what has always been done. Think about leadership beyond the loudest voices. Look beyond the exceptional young people standing out above all others that are already drowning in opportunities. There are so many of us, untried and untested but ready; ready to show you what we can do with the support and guidance of other rangatahi and competent adults. When this is offered, there are no limits to what we can achieve. Below is just one example.

ICON

Our web-tool **icon.org.nz**, is a perfect example of what can be achieved when leadership is held by young people, with a commitment made to ensure young people are authentically and meaningfully involved at all levels of decision-making.

Sticks 'n Stones conducted research across Central Otago in 2015 that showed that 48% of young people who had been bullied didn't tell anyone what had happened, they ignored it and hoped it would go away. One of our high school advocates came up with the idea to develop an online support tool as a starting point for teenagers experiencing online negativity who are not sure where to go for help.

ICON (In Case of Online Negativity) has been planned, developed, designed and tested by teenagers from all across New Zealand to be a tool that gives young people honest, practical and relatable strategies when they are experiencing online negativity. It's not an alternative or replacement for the incredible services already available throughout the country but simply points you in the right direction.

Research shows that when youth are actively involved in decision making, the outcomes are better not only for us but also for getting our messages across to other students (Finlay-Robinson, Baxter & Dunlop, 2019). That is why ICON has been completely co-designed, start to finish, with young people. It is also why we know that there is more to be done. In 2022 we are creating ICON 2.0 with a new group of young people, a fresh set of eyes and a goal of making it even better.

What next?

The Education Review Office (2019) found that the most effective secondary schools provided many opportunities for students to exercise agency and leadership around bullying prevention. Many of these schools had some form of peer mentoring structure in place, where senior students were paired with junior students to help with transitions and provide guidance and support.

Students told ERO this helped provide a more welcoming school environment and having role models reinforced school values of inclusion and respect. Student-led groups were the other main way in which many of the secondary schools supported students to contribute to bullying prevention. Less effective schools did not provide the same level of support for student agency. There were often still leadership opportunities in student councils or prefect roles, although these tended to be driven by adults, not students.

Young people are constantly bombarded with fear-based messages about what not to do. Instead, our programmes aim to help young people develop the social and emotional skills and confidence to stand up for themselves and others. Being listened to, being acknowledged and having an authentic role in making change is powerful.

We can't speak for all young people but we can say that the work we've done with Sticks 'n Stones to change the bullying culture in Aotearoa wouldn't have been possible if it weren't for the youth-empowerment culture the organisation fosters.

It took time to realise the potential we had as young people to make a positive change and to discover the best way we were able to contribute; to see the value that we add and that this does not require a loud voice. It simply requires ears ready to listen and an openness to reconsidering the way 'things have always been done.

We want to see an expectation that young people are meaningfully involved in decision making that affects us. That having young people as full board members is no longer unusual. That organisations that support young people come through on that promise. Supporting us means more than doing this for us. It means more projects from youth-focused organisations created with us using a co-design process. If decision-making power is not shared equally from the beginning, it is a consultation and not a true co-design process.

Young people have lived experience that offers something so crucial to any organisation wanting to positively impact youth. This perspective ensures that content is relevant to the constantly evolving social environment we face today. Support needs to empower us to realise our potential to lead positive social change.

To really chase 'our place', we need to be able to decide where that is and how we can get there, with your support but with us in the driver's seat. So please, encourage us, hear us out and make space on your platform for us to share our vision. Then take a step back and celebrate the steps we can take to keep forging that path.

Young people are not only the leaders of tomorrow, we are the leaders of today.

Abby Golden Originally from Central Otago, Abby has been a part of Sticks 'n Stones as a High School Advocate since the beginning of 2016 and on the board since 2018. Her work with Sticks 'n Stones has given her the opportunity to work collaboratively with young people from across the country who are committed to preventing bullying both online and off. She is a strong advocate for young people, fiercely believing in their collective power to create social change.

Stephen Jones is co-chair on the Sticks 'n Stones board and has been involved with the organisation for approximately five years. Growing up, he had the opportunity to be involved in a variety of youth and non-youth led projects. These experiences have taught and reinforced the importance of project design being 'for purpose' - for him, this starts with the people. Stephen is proud to be a part of Sticks 'n Stones, a group that shares this same perspective.

Meg Thomas has been a member of Sticks 'n Stones since she was 12. Six years on, Meg is a key member of the board and has worked on several nationwide bullying prevention projects and campaigns. Meg has had an integral role in developing student resources for Bully Free New Zealand week as well as advocating for youth to become more involved in social issues particularly those that affect young people.

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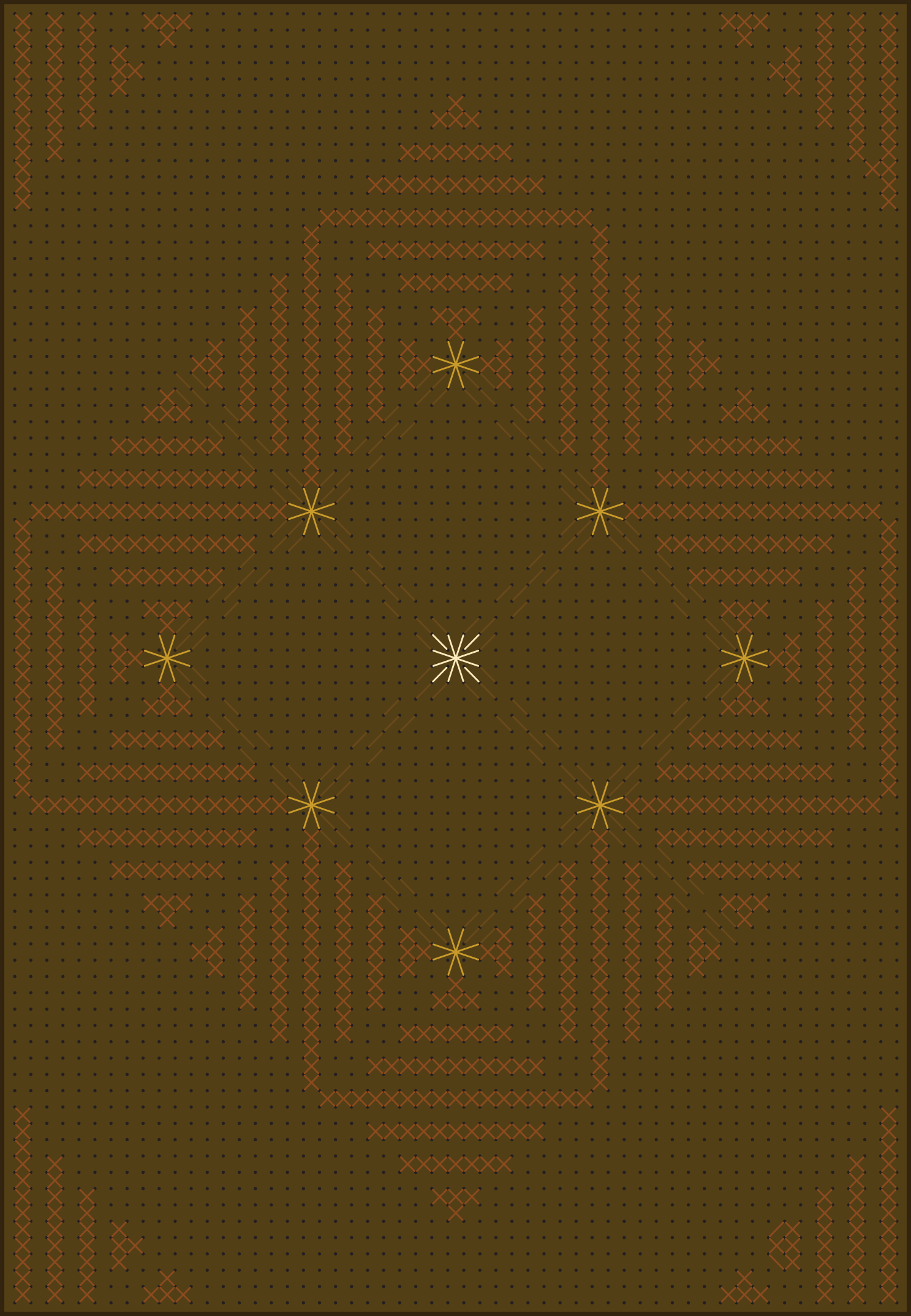

SportNZ Mana Taiohi and Youth Voice

Libby Davenport

Sport New Zealand is a kaitiaki of the play, active recreation and sport system in Aotearoa. As a crown agency, Sport NZ promotes and supports quality participation opportunities to improve levels of physical activity and, through this, ensure the greatest impact on wellbeing for all those living in Aotearoa New Zealand. Sport NZ's 2020 - 2032 strategic vision is to see 'Every Body Active'.

This means leading an enriching and inspiring play, active recreation and sport system that meets the needs of all, including those missing out. To achieve this, Sport NZ's current strategic focus (2020 - 2024) is on tamariki and rangatahi, with the aim to reduce the drop off in physical activity levels from age 12 - 18, and engage those who are less active.

In supporting better physical activity and wellbeing outcomes for rangatahi, Sport NZ is committed to empowering young people to 'chase their place'. Sport NZ has turned this commitment into action through the development of the Active Recreation for Rangatahi Plan 2021-2024. Active recreation is not strictly defined, but can be thought of as non-competitive physical activity for the purpose of wellbeing and enjoyment. It includes activities such as walking, swimming, biking, yoga, dancing, hunting, diving, and any other form of movement that you engage with for fun.

The Active Recreation for Rangatahi Plan journey started in 2019 when Sport NZ released its 'Secondary Age Review' looking at young peoples' participation in physical activity. The Review showed that needs were not being met by the current sport and active recreation offerings. The findings highlighted several key opportunities for active recreation for rangatahi, including developing and supporting participant-led active recreation opportunities, establishing alternative activity offerings in schools that had a social and non-competitive focus, and formalising partnerships with organisations that can meet the active recreation needs of rangatahi. Consequently, active recreation was identified as a key focus area for Sport NZ from 2020-24, in particular for rangatahi aged 12-18.

In order to activate this new focus area, in an organisation traditionally focused on servicing sport, the development of a plan was essential to align internal decision making. The newly formed Active Recreation team co-designed a collaborative, cross-business plan to guide Sport NZ's commitments, collective actions, and investments, known as The Active Recreation for Rangatahi Plan 2021-2024. The plan was intended to act as a metaphorical camp fire for other organisations passionate about this kaupapa to draw near and work collaboratively to improve participation levels and wellbeing outcomes for all rangatahi.

As a key part of this process, Sport NZ partnered with Ara Taiohi, Aotearoa's peak body for youth development, to explore the role of the 'Mana Taiohi' youth development principles to inform the plan. These principles acknowledge the mana that young people have, and how we can work to enhance that mana. This approach recognises the role that active recreation can play as a vehicle for positive youth development, and highlights the opportunity to achieve a broader range of positive outcomes that contribute to youth wellbeing.

The actions within the Active Recreation for Rangatahi Plan, along with the Mana Taiohi principles, were synthesised to produce the following four commitments that provide the foundation of the Plan:

- **Commitment 1 (Whakapapa and Matauranga):** Honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi and continue our journey to apply it in our work
- **Commitment 2 (Te Ao and Manaakitanga):** Increase internal and external awareness and understanding of great practice in Active Recreation for rangatahi
- **Commitment 3 (Mauri and Whai Wāhitanga):** Incorporate youth voice, and support youth leadership across our work
- **Commitment 4 (Hononga and Whanaungatanga):** Establish new partnerships and invest resources externally and internally.

In realising these commitments, Sport NZ aims to embed youth development practices within the recreation sector. We are achieving this through Mana Taiohi and Code of Ethics Training across the motu, as well as encouraging greater connections between the youth development and play, active recreation and sport sectors when it comes to sector funding (such as Tū Manawa) and networking opportunities.

In a first for Sport NZ, they provided space for young people when designing and articulating the plan.The willing co-leader was Libby Davenport, who was in her first year of the Sport NZ Ihi Aotearoa Graduate Programme at this time.

The Sport NZ Graduate programme and Libby's experience as it relates to Whai Wāhitanga

My name is Libby and I'm currently in my second and final year of the Sport NZ Ihi Aotearoa Graduate Programme. I was fortunate to be involved in the development of the Active Recreation for Rangatahi Plan and I now have the privilege of sharing my experiences in the graduate programme, as they relate to Whai Wāhitanga.

The Sport NZ Ihi Aotearoa Graduate Programme is a two year paid employment opportunity that exists to develop talented future leaders within the play, active recreation and sport sector. The first year on the Graduate Programme is spent in Wellington working at Sport NZ and the second year consists of two six month placements at organisations typically within the play, active recreation and sport sector. I was initially attracted to the Graduate Programme by the various leadership and professional development opportunities that it presents, but the overwhelming positive feedback I received from talking to previous graduates was what affirmed my desire to apply.

After successfully applying to be part of the Graduate Programme, I was fortunate enough to be linked with Fran McEwen as my mentor. Fran cares deeply for the wellbeing of young people and the Active Recreation team that she leads. She is empathetic, courageous, kind, and bold. Through intentional whanaungatanga, Fran took the time to get to know me as a human, finding out what fuels my mauri and how she could support me to be my best self. I can't understate the impact that Fran has had on me throughout my journey of chasing my place within Sport NZ and my wider world. Having Fran as my mentor also meant that I became part of the Active Recreation team, which is a small but mighty team of people who care deeply about wellbeing outcomes for rangatahi.

My experience of whai wāhitanga within the Graduate Programme started from the very beginning. Our first task was to develop our individualised work plan, where we determine our goals, personal and professional development, and map our work areas for the coming year. This represents a key aspect of whai wāhitanga, as although we are supported by our mentors, we as graduates have complete agency on the decisions that affect us, and are able to shape our work plans to reflect our individual priorities, interests and ambitions.

I developed my work plan in my second week at Sport NZ, and some of the goals that I included were big. One of these was to lead a project and present it to the Sport NZ Board. Another was to meet with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Sport and Recreation, Grant Robertson, as I have always admired the support and leadership that he provides the sector. Fran never once told me that these goals were too big or unattainable. Instead, she listened to my ideas, asked me questions so she could understand how to support me, and assisted me to set a series of smaller goals that would help me to achieve these goals. Six months later, I was sitting in Deputy Prime Minister Grant Robertson's office to discuss mahi that I was helping to lead (pictured outside his office below). Two weeks after that, Fran and I were presenting the Active Recreation for Rangatahi Plan to the Sport NZ Board, which was a plan that I had helped develop as a valued member of the active recreation team.

One of the coolest aspects of the graduate programme is that there is an understanding of the capability and skills we bring to Sport NZ, and we are empowered to lead. Staff submit projects for the graduates to consider as part of their work plan, and those projects provide the space and autonomy for us to choose our level of engagement,

which might be leading the mahi. Projects that we can lead from start to finish are typically prioritised, allowing us to have full participation and lead the project at every stage. Even though I did not always feel confident in my ability to lead the entire process, I was always made to feel that my contribution in each of the spaces that I held was valued.

This type of experience is not isolated to me. As Sport NZ graduates, we are consistently viewed as valued contributors across the organisation. We are given space to share our ideas, not for the sake of ticking a 'youth voice' box, but because there is a genuine acknowledgement of the meaningful contribution that we can and do make as young people. Whether it is a question, a wondering, a challenge, or even a half-formed thought, every perspective is considered and we are recognised for our efforts.

"The number of changes I have seen implemented and have implemented myself based on discussions I have had with various Sport NZ staff members is awesome. They genuinely value my thoughts, opinions and ideas and will give me the power to implement them"

Olivia Clare, 2022 Graduate

For me, this sense of value within Sport NZ was most amplified in the Active Recreation team. From the beginning, I was always introduced as a 'normal' member of the team, rather than a temporary intern. This may seem minor, but it was integral in helping me to participate fully in opportunities associated with the team as I felt a strong sense of belonging. The teamies (Chloe, Junior, Fran, Simon, and Rog) have all contributed to my sense of whai wāhitanga, ranging from small interactions such as asking me to review their work, to bigger actions such as creating space for me to share my thoughts in meetings with managers, and offering me opportunities originally presented to them as they felt I had something to contribute. While these ways of working have become the 'norm' within the team culture, it is also a result of the commitment each individual has made to supporting and advocating for young people in all of the work that they do.

In the second year of the programme, graduates choose two six-month placements at external organisations. These placements allow graduates to gain further exposure and experience in areas that resonate with our passions and career aspirations. In the early days of the Graduate Programme, some graduates were encouraged to accept placements in organisations preferred by Sport NZ. However, a previous graduate challenged this, and rightfully argued that we should have agency over this decision given the impact it has on us both professionally and personally. This paved the way for the youth-led decision-making process that we have in place now.

Lily Joiner leading a co-design session with a group of former-refugee rangatahi at Sport Tasman in Nelson, 2022.

Lily Joiner, also in her second year of the Programme, shared her experiences of this process below.

"I chose Sport Tasman and Napier City Council as my placements as I'm passionate about meaningful social change and helping those in need- at both grass roots and system level.

My mana was acknowledged in that I was the one who truly knew what role, location, and work environment would provide the right balance of challenge and satisfaction for me. Although there were many supportive colleagues to provide suggestions, I was comfortably able to choose organisations outside of their advice, and be respected in my decision. My placements were chosen through my own judgments and research; I prioritised potential managers who shared similar values and showed excitement about the skills and perspectives I could bring to their organisation. My intention was to grow outside my comfort zone with new and different mahi, and a 'safe' supportive team are crucial in enabling this growth".

I feel extremely privileged when I reflect on my first year with Sport NZ. The various opportunities I had to assume agency in my work, take ownership over my decisions and feel valued for the contributions I made, combined to make my experience overwhelmingly positive. I am now confident in the value of what I have to share and am passionate about supporting other young people. I believe the work that the Sport NZ Active Recreation team is doing in partnership with Ara Taiohi, is a leap forward in creating space for young people to thrive and chase their space in the play, active recreation and sport sector.

Reflections on where we need to keep pushing and working better in the youth voice/leadership space in Sport NZ and our sector

While it is awesome that organisations in the play, active recreation and sport sector, such as Sport NZ, are thinking more about how they can listen to the voices of young people in the mahi they are doing, there are some areas in which we can improve.

Participation

"No decisions about us without us" is becoming an increasingly popular phrase as organisations become more aware of the importance of involving young people in decisions that affect them. Whilst this is a step in the right direction, we also need to ensure we are enabling full participation, and that this involvement is consistent. Restricted participation is often a consequence of environments lacking awareness of youth development approaches, or hierarchical structures that determine who should be involved in certain stages of the process. It is not uncommon for young people to lead a piece of work, and a manager to then present it to key stakeholders. Although often unintentional, this is communicating to young people that their voice is only valued within certain spaces. This can make it harder for young people to participate in those spaces later on, as they have been taught they don't belong there or aren't 'ready'. It's therefore important to be aware of your commitment to young people, and ensure you can ho nour it before beginning this process.

Communication

Consistently and thoughtfully communicating with young people while working with them is important but often overlooked. It is unfortunately not uncommon for young people to be approached to be involved in a portion of a project, only to have no idea of how they contributed to the project outcomes, or what these outcomes even are. Therefore, it is important that we are prepared and hold ourselves accountable to communicating with young people throughout the entire process, including letting them know how their voice made a difference. It's even better if they can be involved in shaping how their ideas effect change or are implemented.

Recognition

I recently attended a webinar led by Tori McNoe, an awesome young person who grew up in a small town ten minutes away from my hometown. Tori spoke about the concept of longitudinal experience, which was explained as the experience you accumulate over time. Naming longitudinal experience helps us to recognise that it is not the only type of experience you can have, and that lived experience is equally valid. When working with young people we can recognise the lived experience they bring through acknowledging their mana, connections, communities, whakapapa, views and perspectives.

Structure

The kōrero above highlights the need to challenge structures that do not recognise the value of young people, and are therefore not conducive to positive youth development. The concept of hierarchy is still strong in many work environments, and with this comes the consequence that people are often only afforded access to certain spaces based on their job title. Environments where hierarchical structures exist and remain unchallenged usually value age, years of experience, and status, which are earnt over time. This approach puts young people at a disadvantage, as these structures do not recognise the value, perspectives and lived experiences that young people bring.

Recognising that power and authority is a privilege that should be shared with others, is a great start to breaking down the barriers that hierarchy creates. There cannot be true collaboration without sharing the decision making power. Challenging systems and mental models that restrict the ability for young people to be heard in these spaces is an important step we must take to support the whai wāhitanga of young people. The essence of this kōrero is encapsulated in the quote below, published on the Ara Taiohi website:

"We enable young people to be empowered to participate when we allow all young people to navigate and participate in the world, rather than privileging the voices of a few"

Ara Taiohi

Conclusion

When we create environments through intentional mana enhancing approaches, where young people feel valued, supported to participate and take responsibility over decisions affecting them, they will thrive. Young people already have a voice, they don't need to be 'given' one. They just need to be given time and space to use their voice how they choose to.

Poipoia te kākano
Kia puāwai
Nurture the seed and it will blossom.

Acknowledgements

A huge thank you to Fran McEwen (Active Recreation Lead, Sport NZ) and Chloe Bishop (Active Recreation Implementation Consultant, Sport NZ) for their guidance in shaping and editing this article! I would also like to acknowledge my fellow graduates Lily Joiner (2021 Graduate, Sport NZ) and Olivia Clare (2022 Graduate, Sport NZ) for their contributions.

Libby Davenport *is a Graduate at Sport New Zealand, currently on placement at Christchurch City Council and Leadership Lab. She is passionate about advocating for the strengths and value that young people bring to any space that they find themselves in.*

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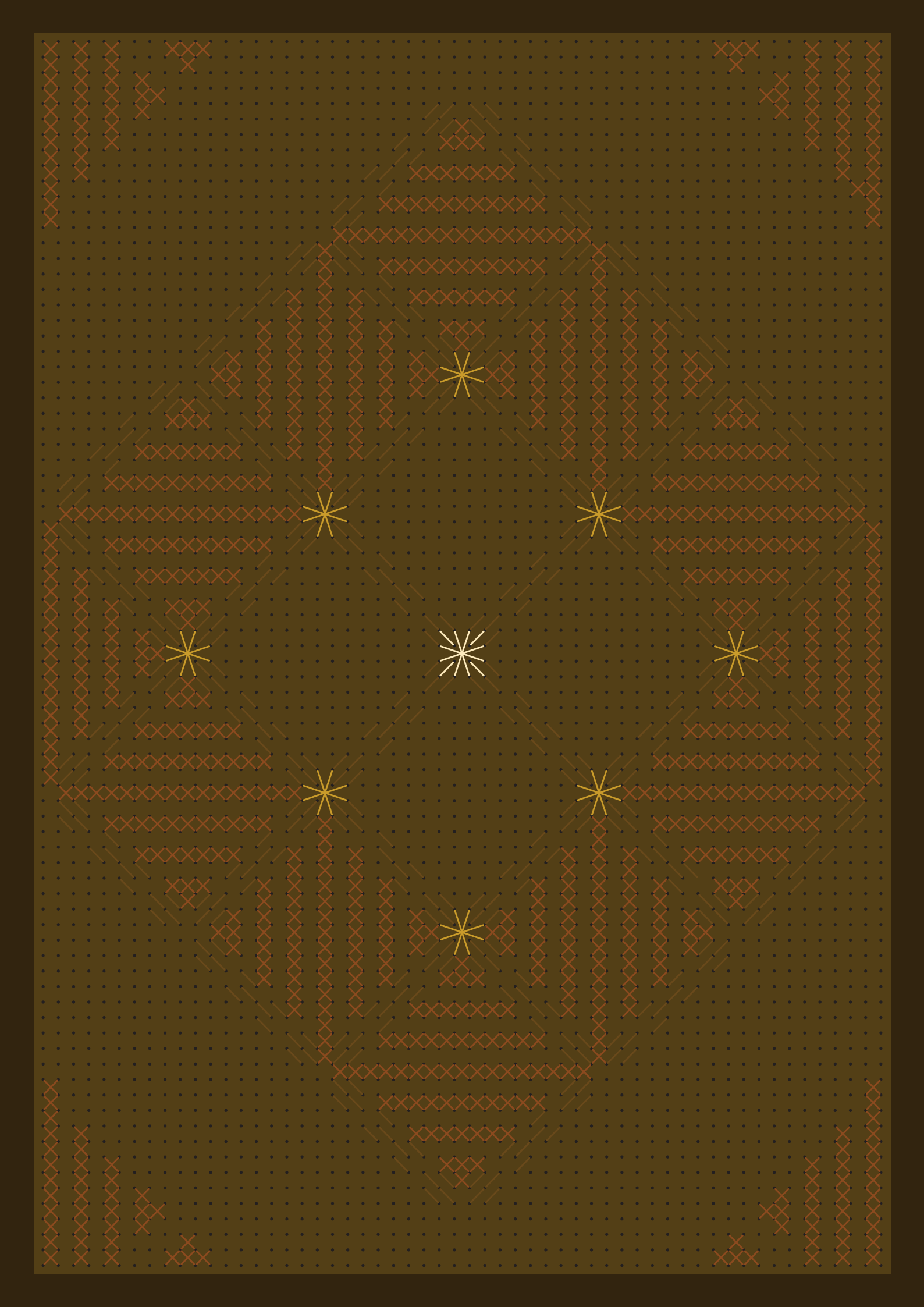

ReVision Initiative and youth relevant design - youth voices transforming spaces and places

Hannah Dunlop and Tayla Taylor

The ReVision Initiative has been around since 2014 in Ōtautahi and is one of those innovative projects that was born out of the Canterbury earthquakes. In its current form it is administered by Rerenga Awa | Canterbury Youth Workers Collective with the young people of Youth Voice Canterbury as Kaitiaki of the project.

This article will take you on a journey from the formation of the tool through to the current day. It includes the perspectives of a young person involved in the development, and of a community organisation that has utilised the tool. We will look at the tensions of youth participation through this process, how we've addressed these but also what is still there to resolve. The exciting challenge of Whai Wāhitanga is the tensions that we as practitioners, young people and organisations must face in order to get the best outcomes for young people. This project has plenty of that and our hope for this article is that you gain insight and inspiration into Whai Wāhitanga at work.

The ReVision Initiative is about creating tangible ways for local young people to have their say on places and spaces in their communities. ReVision have tools to support young people to audit places and spaces that are or will be used by young people to ensure that it is youth friendly, and tools to help planners, managers, architects and designers use Youth Relevant Design principles to create youth-friendly places and spaces.

We've trained up local young people to be Youth Audit Team Leaders, who are young people that use these tools to lead Youth Friendly Spaces Audits in their communities. Team Leaders aren't the only ones to complete the audits; they lead teams of local young people who actually use the space to audit their communities spaces and places. The team leader then reports back to the owners and managers of the audited space with a youth-friendly score and a range of recommendations.

How it formed

In 2012 the first Strengthening the Youth Sector Hui happened, bringing together youth development focused NGOs, funders, Central and Local Government departments connected to Greater Christchurch. The aim was to grasp what the issues were for young people and those working in the youth sector post 2010/11 earthquakes with the intent to inform decision making and strengthen collaboration in recovery. Out of this four workstreams were formed with a commitment to not let the Hui just become a talkfest and to report back in a year on progress made. Funding was made available and we got to work. One of the workstreams was focused on youth voice and building more effective pathways for youth participation to influence decision making. This workstream acknowledged the need for the work to not only equip and support young people but more importantly in the systems and processes that needed to build their capacity and understanding of how to create space for young people's voices to effect change and have weight. This workstream became Youth Voice Canterbury, a network of youth participation groups led by young people supported by youth participation coordinators and youth workers.

In 2013 a follow up Hui was held and another workstream was formed to address the issue of how to improve spaces and places for young people. This workstream was made up largely of youth workers and organisations that ran youth dedicated spaces. During this time some work was also being done to develop a youth wellbeing survey by the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA). This provided some concrete data that supported the anecdotal evidence around young people's needs for spaces and places. The youth participation workstream had some involvement in this process. The findings of the 2013 Youth Wellbeing Survey[1] relating to spaces and places:

- 25% of young people loss places they used to go
- Loss of sports and recreation facilities e.g. swimming pools, sports fields, etc. negatively affected 18% of young people
- 18% of young people were negatively impacted by being in a damaged environment
- 73% of young people were negatively impacted by the loss of a place or space that they used to go e.g. cafes, restaurants, libraries, places of worship, marae, arts and cultural centers.

YOUTH RELEVANT DESIGN

SAFE

Youth research supports CPTED Principles

» Well-lit
» Open Space
» Safe toilets and amenities
» Covered walkways
» High visibility

- **Appropriately Located -** Consider surrounding businesses and facilites.
- **Deliberate and safe "hanging" spaces** that are visible
- **Waiting and transition areas**

» Young people need to be able to safely get in/out
» Information on public transport avaliable
» Safe, sheltered bus stops & car pick up areas

APPEALING

Socially credible - young people want to go there to connect with the space.

At arms length but within arms reach - Young people want to connect with the wider community as well as purpose built youth space, however they prefer spaces which are slightly separated.

Engaging - young people want to be engaged in the space

Involving - young people are far more likely to use space which has had their input, involvement and investment throughout the design and concept stages

ACCESSIBLE

Physically accessible - good disability access is essential.Strong connectivity with good public transport can not be underestimated.

Reasonably priced - activities, services and goods on offer should be affordable for young people. Low cost food options close at hand.

Connectivity to key youth spaces such as public libraries, malls, sport facilities, community centres.

RESOURCED

Easy access to relevant social services and support functions such as youth workers and medical professionals.

» **Free Wifi -** or internet access.
» **Low cost** or free pricing structures.
» **Multi-use** functional spaces with more than one purpose that are well-used
» **Appropriate amenities** for what the space will be used for

YOUTH FRIENDLY

Vibrant and Alive - a tidy, contemporary and colourful space that refelcts young people and their subcultures.

Welcoming staff specifcally trained to deal with young people (strong preference for Youth Workers over security guards).

Embraces Young People - a place where young people feel they are wanted and valued.

Prioritises Youth Participation - a space that includes young people as much as possible in the development.

This all provided the opportunity to find ways for the recovery and rebuild of Ōtautahi to be responsive to the needs and aspirations of youth. As a start the workstream developed the Youth Relevant Design Check Card.
The Youth Relevant Design Check Card is for planners, architects and designers of places and spaces young people will go, highlighting the key 5 factors of youth relevant design:

- Safety
- Appealing
- Accessibility
- Well-Resourced
- Youth-Friendly.

These 5 Factors of Youth Relevant Design form the basis of the Youth Friendly Spaces Audit, providing focus areas, points of discussions, and a framework for making recommendations. The Check Card was developed through robust consultation with young people and a literature review that included international research and support from CPTED experts(Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design). The literature review was pulled together by Kevin Grimwood (MYD at the time).

Following this the youth audit process was developed in order to apply the youth relevant design principles to a space and provide structured feedback and recommendations from young people. Along the way it's gone through some refinement particularly with support from Research First.

The project

The Youth Friendly Spaces Audit provides a framework for young people to audit how youth-friendly a place or space is. As well as focusing on the five Factors of Youth Relevant Design, the Audit also looks at things like transport options, location, atmosphere, cost, bathrooms, and support.

The process of auditing a space is robust and genuine, and the team leaders put a lot of work into pulling together a team, arranging one to two audits, carrying out the audit, collating data, and writing the report.

Since early 2021 the project has gone from strength to strength, aided by funding from the Department of Internal Affairs. The funding was to complete 20 youth audits in Christchurch/Canterbury, train more team leaders and other development work around employment and strengthening the tool. The team leaders are paid a flat fee per audit. This funding has also enabled the employment of a coordinator. Like with most youth voice projects, dedicated funding and coordination is crucial to the momentum of the initiative.

The audit process is made up of a couple of parts. There is a score card that has a range of more specific items that link to the Youth Relevant Design principles and acts as a tick box exercise and provides the quantitative information that is generated into a score for the space. There is also some space for youth auditors to write some of their qualitative feedback. Alongside the score card the Team Leaders lead a focus group conversation. Following the audit the Team Leaders write up the quantitative and qualitative data into a report that outlines the findings and recommendations that can be applied to the space.

Goals:

1. Increase youth and community engagement in public and private places and spaces by auditing how youth-friendly they are and making recommendations for changes
2. Increase employment skills amongst young people by training and contracting them to conduct Youth Space Audits
3. Develop a social enterprise that can self-fund the above goals.

What kind of places have been audited:

- Plans for refurbishment of indoor and outdoor civic spaces e.g. pools, libraries and parks
- Existing parks and recreations spaces
- Transports hubs
- Plans for new buildings that have a youth focus
- Urban landscape
- Community organisation facilities
- Businesses.

In addition to the 20 audits completed, we were able to have the audit process evaluated by Sarah Wylie, Social Research and Evaluation. This report has provided us with valuable feedback on aspects we were doing well and identified some key areas we could improve on. We have already been able to implement some of these and are continuing to work on the others. One aspect noted in the report for improvement was our bicultural practice. Prior to this feedback we had engaged with Ko Au Consulting to help us develop and strengthen our practice in this area and we are currently awaiting their feedback.

This project took longer than anticipated due to the challenges that Covid19 posed. From lockdowns to different restriction settings, to sickness at different points Covid19 slowed the process down, however these delays have not impacted the final results of the project, or the audits and reports completed for each of the spaces.

We feel the Revision Youth Audit tool is now in a strong place moving forward as it has proven to be a sound, useful tool for young people sharing their voice and organisations receiving audits on their spaces.

We've worked with a range of 'clients' and stakeholders that have included architects, managers, community engagement, planners, landscape architects, business leaders, Councilors, community leaders, recreation staff, librarians, parks staff, medical professionals and so many more.

Each of these organisations now have a report containing young people's thoughts and perspectives on their spaces (or those relevant to them), as well as recommendations from these young people on what they could do to enhance the experience and safety of people who use their space.

In addition to the young people involved in the audits having the opportunity to share their views on spaces and places, they have also gained new skills such as teamwork - through working with other young people, and advocacy - through sharing their perspectives for the benefit of the wider community.

Through these 20 funded audits the following has been achieved:

- 3 Team leader training sessions
- 17 Team leaders trained
- 13 of these Team leaders have led audits
- 142 young people participated in audits - an average of 8 per audit
- 86 recommendations in total across the reports on how to make spaces more youth friendly.

Trained Team Leaders have gained a range of new and transferable skills in their role at each stage of the process. From initial engagement with other young people to take part and share their voices, to planning for, leading, and facilitating discussion throughout the audits, to compiling all the information gathered and using it to produce well written reports. They have also gained experience in working with stakeholders and organisations.

Young people have been able to share their thoughts on spaces across Ōtautahi Christchurch, making 86 recommendations to space owners. It has been great to see some of the recommendations be actioned and we look forward to more being actioned in due course.

We've also been able to bring on board a peer reviewer who is a former team leader and is under 24 years old. Will Wray is a key part of our team now and once a report is drafted, he edits and makes suggestions to team leaders for improving the report. The team leaders then make those edits and Will formats it into the final report. We pay Will for his work. It's great to have him on board having worked with him on a couple of projects and acknowledge his strengths in writing quality reports for a clear audience.

CASE STUDY — Shirley Village Project

In 2020, Steve Jones-Poole, on behalf of the Shirley Village Project, reached out about having Youth Audits done in the area as an avenue to engage and gather feedback from local young people about the Shirley community. In early 2021, the Youth Audit Project ran a Youth Audit Team Leader Training in Shirley, and over the remainder of the year completed three audits in the Shirley area. The Shirley Village Project asked young people to identify spaces they would like audited. The audits were held at the Shirley Library, 10 Shirley Road, and the MacFarlane Park Basketball Court. In total, two Youth Audit Team Leaders alongside 25 young people completed the audits. Three separate reports were delivered to the appropriate commissioning groups.

Feedback

In early 2022 we sought feedback from Steve on how the process went and whether he had any suggestions for improvement.

"Overall the Youth Audit Process has been really, really good. It has done what I wanted it to, and it has given us a clear framework around what to do, starting a clear process of youth engagement. Without this project it would have been a lot more haphazard, and I don't think we would have had the same outcomes. I don't think we would have such a structured process and documentation that sits so well with the likes of Council. It just takes it to another level."

"The reports are brilliant. They are well written, easy to read, clearly set out the methodology. There is nothing that I would change in that. We value the having the quotes from the young people included, and have used them for other pieces of work. The list of recommendations in the back is useful for going over."

Steve Jones-Poole

Steve noted that the different audits done in Shirley have different lead-stakeholders, and that some of these stakeholders are more willing than others to adopt the recommendations of the youth auditors. He noted that different spaces would have different required follow up processes, and that it would be useful if the coordinator was available to work with the spaces that need it to help them figure out how they could implement different recommendations.

Steve suggested in order to uphold the integrity of the Youth Audit Project, we should ensure that any commissioning group/asset owner has the intention and capability of enacting some of the recommendations from the young people to ensure it's not just a tick box exercise that then sits on a shelf.

What we've learnt so far

Challenges

- Finding the right balance of "youth-led" and "organisation-led".
- Voluntary vs paid young people and staff.
- Creating space for the strategic capacity building
- Managing quality youth participation with 'good business' - professionalism etc.

One of the biggest tensions in this project is both its biggest asset but also its biggest risk. And that is young people. The success of an audit hinges on a few things; Firstly the availability of a team leader to step up and lead the audit who has the time, skill and capacity to see the audit through. The team leaders all need to complete a training and a practice audit in order to be a paid team leader. They also receive support and mentoring from the coordinator. We know from discussion with team leaders that we could tweak this support. However, despite the support available sometimes the expectations of the team leader role are not met leading to delays and reports not being completed to a standard ready to submit to our 'client'. This is why positive youth development in practice is critical to this project, but also a real challenge in an employment setting. It's an opportunity for entering into a healthy and supportive conversation about commitment, performance, capacity and responsibility.

While these conversations with team leaders can be difficult, for the most part the outcome is that the young person comes away with a better understanding of themselves and can take that into future work scenarios and understand what is a good fit for them and what is not, or areas where they can seek to improve. We in turn learn more about how we can reshape our systems and processes to better accommodate the needs of the young people we work with. It's all about understanding how we can learn from each other to get better outcomes not just for the project but for young people.

The flip side of this is the relationship with the 'client'. The success of the project somewhat hinges on us being able to deliver a quality experience and report. When working with business, government and organizations there is a level of professionalism that is expected. The coordination role is to manage expectations and educate the 'client' about the process. Sometimes this means helping them to understand why timeframes aren't always met, why things are worded in certain ways and why things may need to happen in different time frames to what they are used to. More often than not the 'client' is understanding, but it does impact on the reputation and validity of the report and the wider project. So it's a balance much like in any project but at the heart of it is upholding good positive youth development and youth participation practice.

Secondly it depends on young people showing up to be youth auditors. One of the biggest challenges that the team leaders have mentioned is recruiting youth auditors. Current approaches often depend on the youth audit. But overall the recruitment process is led by the team leaders and asks of them to tap into their networks and social media. Youth auditors are compensated for their time and provided with kai. There has been some work done in creating a guide for team leaders on recruitment as well as discussion about increasing the koha for participation. It's hit and miss sometimes getting young people to turn up for a youth audit. Ideally we like to have between 5-10 youth auditors. For some audits we've had 14 turn up and others we've only had 1 RSVP and so have needed to postpone. The quality of an audit however, isn't always reflected in the numbers and it's all about making the most of who is in the room and sometimes the smaller groups have the deeper insights.

Youth participation is a two way street. It requires a sort of compassion and willingness from both young people and 'adults' to understand the needs of the other and find a way to bring out the insights of young people so that space owners can reshape their mahi and kaupapa to better embrace the needs and desires of young people. But it also requires professionalism and willingness to enter into a structured process. In most cases everyone plays their part and the results really are transformative.

We're committed to a process of constant improvement and the evaluation from Sarah Wylie provided some helpful insights:

Feedback from stakeholders/clients when asked about the value of the youth audit:

"A youth lens raises new issues for consideration. Sometimes these are contrary to our thinking so a challenge to relook at our ideas or take more time to ensure we can justify them."

"A lot - we have actioned nearly every point from the 2 youth audits we have done so far. we are also making really great progress overall in regards to including the youth voice in our planning and projects and i think the youth audits kickstarted this."

"It will have a significant impact and more importantly given weight to the reason for change."

The following outcomes were identified by respondents as arising from their Youth Audit Team Leader experience:

- Experience writing reports
- Exposure to different youth perspectives
- Connections with others
- Have a voice and be tangibly rewarded for mahi
- Overall learning
- Great team environment and peer support
- Work experience – increased understanding of design process and community consultation

The future

Currently there are another 9 audits in the works, six of these are through funding and the other three are user pays. It's exciting to be in a space where we can invoice organisations who want an audit done. What this means is that they see the value of having an audit done on their space or plans, they want to hear the voices of young people and they are willing to pay for this. We've been able to gather some great intel on how our processes work and don't work and have identified with our team leaders the areas in which we need to make improvements. We are also in the position where we need to find a business

model that ensures the sustainability of this tool. This is where our social good and youth development expertise need complimentary business development expertise to build a sustainable social enterprise. A big mihi needs to go to Rerenga Awa | Canterbury Youth Workers Collective who carry this project and hold it lightly to ensure that it goes in the best direction possible. They have provided space over many years for different initiatives to be incubated and grow in a supportive environment.

Christchurch City Council are looking at the feasibility of building in Revision Youth Audits into the work schedule of any new builds or major projects. As part of this, they have committed to paying for another three audits, this is exciting for the long-term impact of this project and for bringing the voice of young people into the development of all future of public spaces in Christchurch.

We are now in the process of securing funding to develop the business model and strategic development of the ReVision initiative to grow and be able to serve other communities around Aotearoa.

In this process of growth there are some questions we are needing to address:

- Who makes the decisions about the future of the project? How can we develop a decision making structure that finds the right balance of youth voice and "experienced professionals"
- How do we develop a business model that upholds good youth participation practice not just for young people involved but for the 'clients' and stakeholders involved?

Tayla's version

In light of the fact this piece is about Whai Wāhitanga and this is a youth participation project it made sense to ask someone who has experienced this project as a young person through to their mahi now. I've asked Tayla Taylor to share their perspective on being connected to this project throughout the development. I first met Tayla when she was 16 years old when she got involved with helping me set up youth participation projects at Waimakariri District Council. Tayla has gone on to study Social Work and is now working as a Kaiwhakamana at VOYCE Whakarongomai.

Q: Can you tell us about how you got involved with this project from your perspective as a young person through to your work now?

When I was a rangatahi in WAIYouth (Youth action group - part of Waimakariri District Council) we had Penny Prescott from Canterbury Youth Workers Collective come and speak to us about the SYS Workstream 'Youth Friendly Places and Spaces'. She spoke to us about the different projects they were working on (creating the Youth Relevant Design Check Card and Audit Tool) and wanted our feedback on what makes a place or space youth-friendly. As a young person who was maybe 18 or 19 at the time who had just been through the earthquakes and aftershocks in Canterbury, it actually felt really cool to be asked to have some input into something that had the potential to make our city more youth friendly through the rebuild. Not only that, but it gave us a chance to actually think about youth-friendly spaces, and think tangibly about what it is that made a space one that we liked to go to and wanted to spend time in. I don't even remember the specific feedback that we gave, but I certainly remember feeling like the feedback we gave could make a difference. It felt like, if we could have a voice in how our spaces were designed, we would feel like they were a place for us.

A while later, when the Youth Voice Canterbury network began to kick off we were invited to further kōrero around the tools and feedback on where they were at. I think this had a lot of impact on my view of the initiative, because it seemed like it had longevity. It was cool to see them keep coming back to young people to make sure they were getting it right. This is what made me want to get involved more, and eventually help to lead the project.

Eventually through becoming Coordinator for Youth Voice Canterbury I took on a key role leading the growth of what then became the ReVision Initiative. During this time I helped to:

- *Work with a graphic designer to redesign the tools to look more modern and youth-friendly*
- *Worked on a partnership with Research First who reviewed the tools and developed the Scorecard to create a more robust rating process*
- *Started investigating key stakeholders and doing market research*
- *Developed a training for Youth Audit Team Leaders.*

Q: What do you think are the challenges and tensions in this project?

The opportunity to continue working on this kaupapa in a paid capacity was a dream, and it felt good to have dedicated paid time to work on something that I not only believed in but had years of history with. Although there's certainly tensions and challenges going from a rangatahi feeding into a project to a kaimahi supporting what is still a youth-led kaupapa. But further to those challenges were the many directions something like this could go in. Who should own it? Should it be free and accessible? Should we charge for an audit? How much would that cost? How do we protect the integrity of the tool? What would a tangata whenua lens over this look like? What would a rainbow lens over this look like? And with interest and investment

from key stakeholders, places and spaces, funders, but most importantly young people themselves involved in the kaupapa - one major tension or challenge was how to navigate the growth and expectations of something so new, so innovative, and so needed. How do we keep moving so as not to lose momentum, but also take things slow enough to do them well and keep things manageable.

Q: Any models/theories that were evident/ made sense in this context?

It's been really interesting looking back at the journey of ReVision and the different points I was involved along the way. From a young person giving feedback, to a young person more involved, to an administrator and then coordinator and now a supporter from the outside - I can see several models and theories that I sat in to be able to participate in this kaupapa.

I look first to Shier's Pathway, and my first opportunity to feed into the project via structured consultation. There was a deliberate strategy to seek young people's views with the opportunity to be kept informed with what happened with our input. Further along as there were more opportunities to be involved through the establishment of team leader roles, young people began to sit further along the continuum in the influence and delegation space - young people have formal input into the organisation/project and are provided with real responsibility for undertaking particular tasks in the organisation/project. I also see strong links to Treseder's Wheel with the project being Adult Initiated, but decisions are shared with children.

Q: What have been some of the joys of the project for you?

I'm not entirely sure where to start! The biggest joy of the project is the journey that young people have been able to go on with the project, myself included. From co-design, to piloting and implementation, evaluating and reviewing - to where it is today. Young people have been involved at every step of the way. Young people can stay and be involved for as little or as long as they like, and what I love so much is the many levels young people can be involved from participating in an audit to training as a team leader.

ReVision for me has been a 10-year experience. I was recently in a hui and mentioned to another youth worker I remember auditing their space a few years ago - they then let me know they were in the process of reporting back how the changes had been used. It made me smile. Because there are so many times people give feedback and don't know what happened to it. Ten years ago as an 18 year old I gave feedback on what makes a place or space youth-friendly, and at that hui with that youth worker I felt like the feedback loop closed. I got to hear about a space that had piloted the tool, received the audit report, and was now reporting on any changes they made. And that's a pretty cool feeling, and one of the joys of the project I hope many more young people get to feel.

For more information on ReVision
http://www.youthvoicecanterbury.org.nz/revision.html
or email hannah@cywc.org.nz or
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Hannah Dunlop is the project manager of the ReVision initiative for Rerenga Awa | Canterbury Youth Workers Collective based in Ōtautahi. She has spent the past 18 years in the youth sector with experience working in youth work, youth participation, local government, program and strategy design, health promotion, environmental sustainability, education, consultation, governance and evaluation. She also works as a contractor providing support around consultation, research, evaluation and supervision with a focus on youth development and participation. She is passionate about creating systems change that enables cultures of possibility for rangitahi and the world around them.

Tayla Taylor is a Kaiwhakamana with VOYCE Whakarongo Mai, advocating for and connecting with care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi. She is also Project Lead for Puāwai, an intersectional Ōtautahi-based youth leadership programme. The heart for her mahi comes from a place of wanting to see all rangatahi reach their potential and have agency over themselves and their futures.

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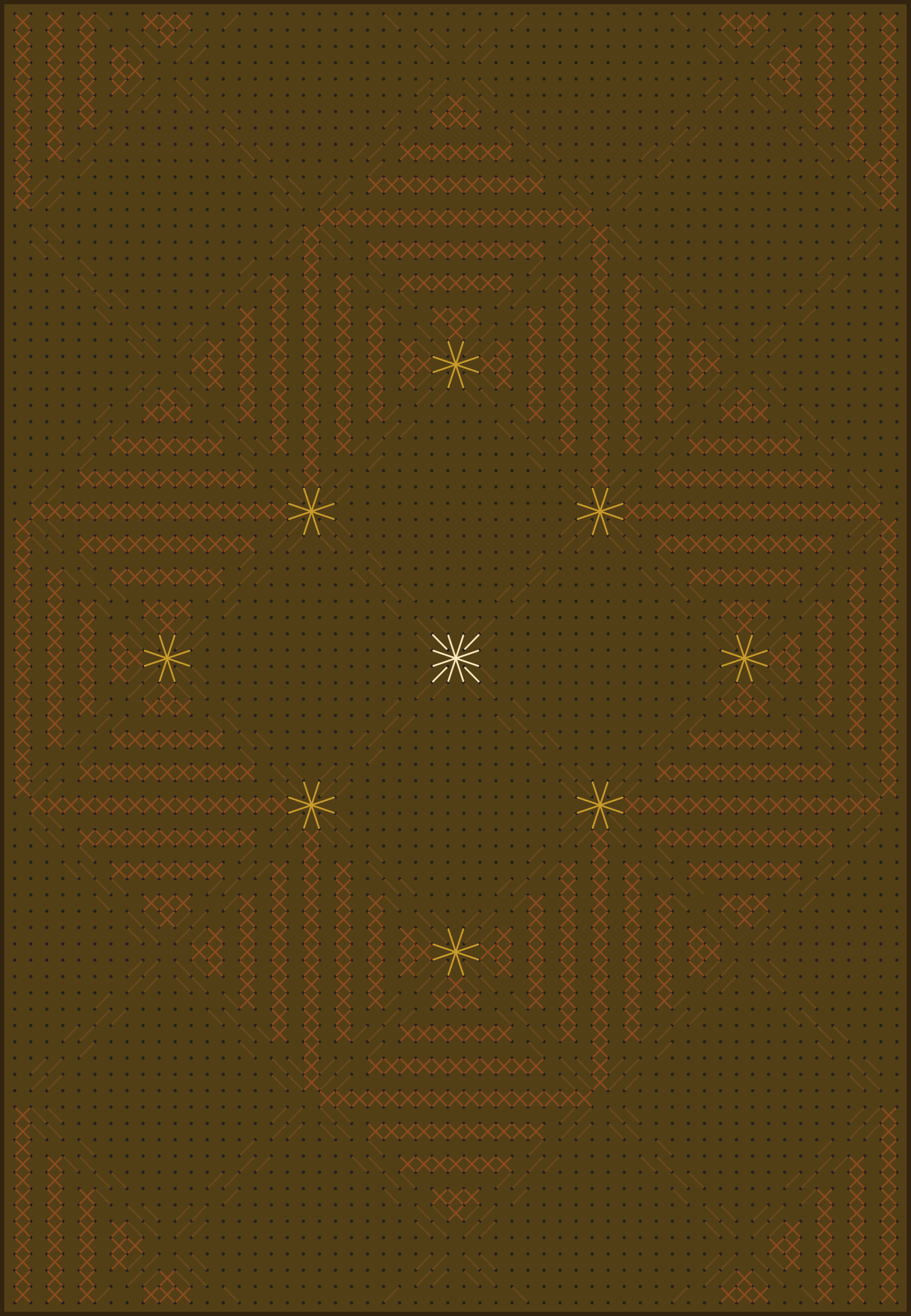

Staying Sane in the Political Lane - What I wish I knew when I applied for a Local Government Rangatahi Role!

Nicole Grey

What is Local Government and how do Youth Councils work?

Just a few short years ago (although the Covid earth is its own little lifetime...) I couldn't have defined Local and Central Government very well if you put me on the spot! For those like 'pre-public servant' me (Nicole) who might not be aware, Local Government is our City, Regional and District Councils, and Central Government refers to Parliament and/or the Executive currently governing the country. Here's a great resource to help you or your rangatahi understand more. (Department of Internal Affairs).

Youth Councils, Committees, or Advisory Groups come in many shapes and sizes; in fact there seems to be an endless array of structures and arrangements. I love Aotearoa's diversity and creativity! For the purpose of this article I will be generally referring to those groups with a close proximity to Local Government. I do want to acknowledge that many other areas of the public sector, organisations, and even the business world, have incredible spaces for these youth voice groups too.

It's a Journey

Trying to summarise or articulate the complexities, opportunities, and limitations of Local Government in Aotearoa when we think of Whai Wāhitanga for young people made my ADHD-diagnosed brain wonder if 'some pigs were going to fly past my window' before I found the kupu. I stumbled into this space not realising it would be the perfect fit for how I'm wired and I could harness some of my excess energy while meeting the need for extreme variety. Finding 'the sweet spot' if you're neurodiverse (which is probably pretty common for youth workers!) is a process, but I encourage you to keep looking - you deserve to thrive in a space that celebrates your unique skill set and niche nerdy interests.

I believe you may already know some of the dynamics around Local Government from firsthand experience. Let's take a moment to acknowledge the challenges, the memories, and the frustrations when you think of this 'beast' of our system. Remind yourself that complex is not bad. Acknowledge that the ability to 'pull levers' in political spaces carries exciting potential and is worthy of tackling.

Stories are powerful. They are the currency of **change**. The way stories interact with humanity can't be overstated. As I reflected on my haeranga / journey of understanding and realising Youth Participation or Engagement is a favourite 'thing' for me, I noticed that every good story requires a journey to have happened, that's literally the way the story is created. Those of you who, like me, are recovering Type A's, might still want tidy boxes and fixed rules! Instead, this is a process. As you walk on this path, what do you notice? What do you gather to put in your kete? Are you drawn to a particular colour, or flavour?

Hā ki roto, hā ki waho

- a whakatauki I am using more and more to approach daily life.

Hā. Breathe. Roto (in) Waho (out)

Open yourself. Let's take some steps on the journey together.

Bridging the River

There is a clear gap between our dreams of beautiful Whai Wāhitanga on one side of a riverbank, and the realities of how Local Government operates on the other.

The skill lies in bridging this gap, both practically and in the intangible ways required to maintain ethical youth work. To bring our whole selves, and to still engage. To do this space justice and give rangatahi what they deserve.

I'm going to assume we're in this rangatahi space because we care. We aren't motivated by collecting a paycheck (if there is one to collect!) We want to make a difference and do our best and we have high standards for ourselves.

There's a great question filter to apply to anything we are doing:

What's good?

What would be better?

What's the best?

These questions can be used to encourage excellence and high quality work by always aiming for 'best.' Yet, in the face of such a river that needs a bridge, we must become comfortable with good. We must go home knowing that often giving our best in this environment is still only a 'good' result. If we don't allow ourselves to feel okay about the 'good' then we risk not being able to find ways to bridge the gap and becoming disheartened, cynical or negative.

Building this bridge is also a process. Bridges aren't built overnight. A particular bridge I know of was constructed entirely on one side of the riverbank, and then when completed was pulled across the river. One day there was no bridge at all - the next there was! Imagine if the bridge builders had gotten discouraged during the building process by the people continuing to point out that no one could cross any part of the river yet. Sometimes progress doesn't look like much on the surface and a lot of the right things are happening in the background.

When I got the opportunity to help mold a youth participation group, I remember checking the address list and noticing many young people were from the same suburbs. While this doesn't necessarily indicate lack of diversity, it explained a lot of the culture I was observing. I had a vision of young people over 18 in different life circumstances being part of the group. It officially went to age 24, but had struggled to retain the older age group. In particular, I used the idea of those in trade apprentices and young parents to help put language to what this could look like.

Transition and change of staffing are chaotic times for any organisation, let alone when young people are involved. But when spaces quickly became available in the group - let's just say it didn't make my entry into the role look very successful! Knowing the goal, we were strategic about how and where we marketed the opportunity. Then, while nervously waiting for applicants or nominees, the suspense was real. Recruiting diversity alongside competency can be challenging for anyone, and on top of that, many youth participation groups have different systems and processes for how the spots available are filled. While facing a pretty significant gap or 'river' over the months our process took, I kept my language and mindset fixed on that vision of the future.

Sure enough, the finished product was absolutely a bridge built. So much so, that the greater challenge became adapting the environment to meet the needs of this group, which were radically different from previously. And, as you'll see below, it's important to have agreement about the purpose of the Youth Participation group as there are often reasons that specific areas of diversity are more challenging, depending on the activities of the group.

> *Have a clear vision as a bridge builder. Be strategic, smart and construct wisely. Trust the process.*

It's likely there are rivers out there with active opposition to building a bridge. In this case perhaps your bridge building skills and desire should be moved to another river, it would be a sad outcome to use your energy to build a bridge that is never pulled across a river.

Working in Local Government

When I was employed directly by a Council, something that kept me returning each day was the knowledge many kaimahi would find the environment too challenging to sustain personally. The fact I enjoyed politics, had interest in other activities of Local Government, and felt able to manage the style of the organisation gave me a sense of 'taking one for the team.'

An anecdotal observation of all of Local Government (and probably Central Government too) is that in general the roles in any profession can be overloaded, underpaid, and less creative compared to the private sector. You will also carry the stigma and social dynamics of working for Local Government into your personal life, not to mention the stress of actually working in a political environment day to day (It's not everyone that sees their hard-working and skilled colleagues being run down in facebook comments regularly). This is quite the combination. So it's no surprise that recruiting can be a challenge and the quantity of the 'willing workforce' is lowered. This then sparks a circular pattern where there isn't a great reputation in the community of the organisation and high quality workers willing or available to apply for the roles are few and far between. I say all this not to offend anyone working in Local Government - there are so many incredible people playing their part and truly serving the public. I simply use it to inspire the need for people who are willing to step up and bring the best to this crucial and complex space. If you haven't considered it, please do!

Thankfully, I also believe there is often great freedom and potential in the youth-related roles that many Councils offer, and the challenges lie in managing your mindset and wellbeing while you are in a youth role as part of an organisation that is about as 'adult' as you can get.

For anyone who is not working in a youth-friendly organisation, here's some practical things to build into your mahi world as a starting point. I'd say they're a good idea for anyone!

- Consciously and constantly frame why you are doing this - Put sticky notes on your desk, repeat key affirmations and quotes to yourself as part of your morning routine, and my absolute favourite thing was to start my work week by heading up to a lookout over the area I served and reminding myself that I'm tackling this for the wellbeing of the young people in this beautiful place.
- External supervision or mentorship - have an intentional safe place to debrief and speak openly about the workplace dynamics and get good questions and advice.
- Friends and specific supportive relationships - sometimes it can feel so isolated and like every other youth worker gets to work in a team or with a manager who is as passionate about young people as them! Openly acknowledge to some people you resonate with that you need to connect due to this isolation - having a list of a few people you can call when it's all too much and you feel yourself getting down is priceless.
- Don't compromise on networking, professional development and other opportunities to feel supported on a larger scale - you are not alone, even if you are the only one in your organisation that is doing your type of mahi. Make these spaces a dealbreaker.
- Know who you are, work out what energises and drains you - and find ways to do enough of what energises you to stay well. Learn your greatest emotional needs, working styles and personality. Be open and process these areas with those around you, professionally or personally.
- Be creative about getting what you need, have a solution-focused mindset. For example, I found ways to volunteer and be on the ground with other young people outside of my role, to keep my love of youth work fresh. Or you could look at something like working one day a week in another organisation's building.
- Know your limits - have good 'letting go' practises and boundaries, you are just one person after all.

What Question are you Asking?

Best practice theory and training in Youth Participation/ Whai Wāhitanga in Aotearoa is well resourced for anyone who looks for it - and this publication adds significantly to that offering. How privileged are we to join in at a point and time of history where so many have done the hard mahi before us? This knowledge should fuel our optimism in the face of a system where we are often only in control of a small corner. I am yet to come across anything that is not relevant to our mahi in a Youth Council/Local Government context, so I'll let the experts' korero remain the loudest.

But how do we take that theory and training, summarise and condense it, and then layer it over our day-to-day reality? One metaphor I especially love when operating in an 'adult' organisation like Local Government is that there's a big difference between asking Rangatahi "What do you want for breakfast? (and, by the way, here's the menu)" or

"Wait, before we start - are you hungry?"

A key skill needed to apply Whai Wāhitanga is facilitation. A facilitator's most prized weapons are questions.

"To ask the right questions is already half the solution of a problem"

Carl Jung

"Without a good question, a good answer has no place to go"

Clayton Christensen

Questions can be open or closed - they can promote or minimise discussion. Remember that our words make up a measly 7% of the impact you have on an audience. (Dearnell) How we say something matters.

With the above example, the preference would be to ask "Are you Hungry? Okay, what would you like to eat? Sweet, let's cook that together." aka Co-design - what a great language upgrade for 'Youth Participation'.

The reality is, a large proportion of Whai Wāhitanga in Local Government is bringing rangatahi voices to a table that is already established, and then getting meaningful contributions on policy, strategies and other highly structured projects from their involvement. Which means we are often in the position of having to ask "What do you want for breakfast? Pancakes or Bacon & Eggs?".

When we are in this place - there are still things we can do to ensure quality engagement.

- We can acknowledge some might not be hungry
- We can aim to not have a set 'menu' - if this is not possible we can still provide a menu with plenty of variety - or encourage creative creations and combinations from the menu

- We can support and champion spaces where the better questions are, never underestimate the power of your referral in a young person's future
- We can work on our tone of delivery and suggestion and even be intentional about the energy or wairua we bring to the room.

Handling Paradoxes

Whether we like it or not, paradoxes are an integral part of working in change environments - as we've seen with the 'bridge' analogy, what we want can feel just out of reach of what we have to use to get there. We need to be able to live with the 'already but not yet' reality of life, and leadership.

If you aren't familiar with how paradoxes play out, this is a great tool and mindset to master, especially in complex and relational spaces - which is all of rangatahi mahi.

A paradox is defined as

"a seemingly absurd or contradictory statement or proposition which when investigated may prove to be well founded or true"

(Oxford Dictionary)

I've carried a definition personally for a number of years now - loosely based on a favourite author's blogging (Escobar): Embracing paradoxes is about being comfortable holding two opposing or contradicting ideas or truths at the same time. Local Government and Whai Wāhitanga can be a bit of a paradox!

Psychology and wellbeing practices speak a lot about being able to accept and integrate both the good and the bad in ourselves and others. If you are struggling professionally with the challenging paradoxes in our community - I would highly recommend you look internally and ask some questions about your ability to accept the human paradoxes we all face.

An either/or or all/nothing mentality is only going to add to the rigidity of some of the systems that we operate in, rather than creating spaces to untangle and progress. Here's an example of a common paradox in Youth Councils.

Young people who are interested in gaining political experience may come from a variety of cultures, have different passions and ideas or views, and other characteristics that could appear to be great diversity at a first glance. Yet when I think about the ingredients required to thrive in the environment that achieves the desired outcome of a political experience, it significantly lowers the nature of the diversity. If you achieve great interest and buy-in politically, it's likely there is a lack of the diversity required to meet the goal outcome of broad and accessible peer-led youth voice. If you gain great diversity and have true peer representation across all young people in the community, it is unlikely the political environment is a fit and provides a sustainable leadership development framework for these individuals.

Political Experience vs Youth Voice

Upon first glance, a Youth Council seems pretty simple and just makes sense. But there are actually some very different purposes and outcomes for a Youth Voice group and they do have the potential to work against each other.

Some examples of a desired outcome

- We want young people to have exposure, and gain skills and confidence in political and formal environments. The Youth Council is a mini-Council experience and culture with modelling from the current system and the goal is brilliant future politicians and engaged citizens.
- We want to know that all relevant decisions have been adequately consulted on and young people are intentionally included in this process - the goal is submissions and other engagement in existing Local Government activities, strategies and processes. (by the way - this is in legislation, so it's pretty important and should be happening everywhere).
- We want the youth of our rohe and community to have a voice, a landing place for any of their thoughts, ideas and opinions to get to the decision-makers and to be well-represented by a diverse and relatable group of peers.

Yes, these purposes can work together and have crossover, but not always.

Let's say we want to achieve both

a) Providing a mini political experience

b) Creating a space for all youth to have a voice via peer representation.

Now let's look at recruiting or advertising this opportunity or need. With the political experience, the starting point is young people who have this interest, as well as the raw skills needed to engage politically (while you can learn skills, we all know some personalities that find speaking up or conflict very challenging regardless of how much exposure they get to this)

Yet with the peer youth voice outcome, diversity is the top priority and it's most important these young people are accessible to peers and truly represent all corners of the community.

I'm not going to provide solutions as I whole-heartedly believe these need to be developed in collaboration by those who understand the unique and specific needs and dynamics of those in their area, the starting points of communities are so wildly varied. However, there are a wealth of incredible examples and ideas around the motu and I also welcome anyone who wants to reach out and request brainstorming and creative/strategic thinking.

I hope this sparks healthy and productive wānanga about the goals and outcomes of any groups you and those around you might be involved in. If we can start a conversation around the table about where we are at, with a goal of coming up with solutions that are a "win-win" - the solution will present itself and there will be a resounding "yes" around the table. It's a sweet, sweet moment.

> *I Would Spend 55 Minutes Defining the Problem and then Five Minutes Solving It*
>
> ***Unknown (Quote Investigator)***

You can't Pour from an Empty Cup

In the face of tackling these complex paradoxes and Local Government mashed with Youth Work, I truly believe keeping ourselves well is the primary focus and area that we need to develop skills. Creating lasting and meaningful change is impossible if we are unable to sustain the day-to-day grind required. Now more than ever, we need to work out how to care for ourselves.

First of all, our behaviour and mindset stems from how we see ourselves. Strap in for the ride, you're a kick-ass worldchanger on a mission! For example, if war is used as an analogy for Whai Wāhitanga in Local Government/ Youth Councils, then our role becomes one of 'taking ground' and so if you feel battle-weary, perhaps you've been expanding territory for a noble cause.

We can use the analogy of an athlete, warrior, or any other successful leadership role. I suggest picking something or someone that's not too far away from where your current self-esteem is at so you can truly begin to believe that's who you are and embody the habits and actions of this role. Who we are can always be upgraded as we grow and progress.

How can we best stay hopeful and passionate?

a. Have good role models

Change takes guts - that's why we're warriors. Let's take our inspiration from stories of those who operated in challenging environments but are now celebrated for the change they influenced. Focus on the first part of their story - not the victory that is widely acknowledged. Remind ourselves that these changemakers stayed positive and focused on the solution for x number of years - so we can too!

b. Reframe the obstacles

If a situation or system needs change - shift and movement is clearly required. This means resistance will exist. A key to handling opposition is reframing it positively. Examples:

The greater the river you want to build a bridge across - the greater the potential impact of having a bridge built!

The more opposition, the more important it is that you persevere and succeed, therefore what you're doing matters.

Oh, you're emotionally hurting about this or personally invested? Wow, how great you care that much.

Frustrated? It's usually a sign you're passionate or have something to bring to the solution.

We must find ways to reframe the negative forces opposing the good we are trying to achieve, if we go around all day stating that the wall is too big or it feels hard - we'll start to believe it. Whatever we focus on grows.

c. Face your limits

Doing our best has to be enough when we head home at the end of each day. It's as simple as that. Except it's not so simple to apply.

We're just one person and if we're getting the message from those around us that we're being too hard on ourselves, this is an area we need to look at.

d. What's going in?

We can't control everything, but we can control a significant amount of what's going into our eyes, ears and mind. Here's a non-exhaustive list.

- Switch off the radio, TV, and social media - know your triggers or what exhausts you
- Find uplifting and inspiring playlists/music
- Limit time with those who don't understand your mahi if possible
- Identify the people who reframe challenges positively and prioritise time with them
- Find some podcasts or books that are relevant and keep you inspired
- Have daily affirmations and reminders.

e. You are more than your mahi

I've definitely learnt this one the hard way. What place do our roles have in our lives? We are so much more than our job, even if we love it and it's meaningful. The more that we can make sure we are also identifying and finding meaning in other roles we play (like a parent, partner, coach, volunteer, runner, skater, or TikTok star) the more it can actually help our performance in our role. As I've stepped back and started saying "it's just a job, not my life" I've gained a huge amount of resilience to handle challenges and frustrations, because how I spend my evening or weekend is a lot healthier. Then when it's time to engage and bring my best self - I'm far more rested and equipped to embrace the challenge. Win-win.

Tēnā koe. You are seen. It is my hope you feel more supported and resourced in this space and that we continue to see the momentum building in this wild and wonderful area.

Resources

I cannot help myself but to highlight an incredible organisation I have recently discovered.

Business Lab are on a mission to change how organisations work with their communities and this includes significant expertise in Local Government and Rangatahi spaces. There are some awesome articles on their blog and they also have a brilliant podcast. They are definitely bridging the gap and helping other bridge builders too. Check them out at **www.businesslab.co.nz**

If you are in a space where you need to 'make a case' for these types of groups to improve the offering for rangatahi in your region, this presentation by (Colcord) is a helpful resource. It's also a great tool to explain what these groups are and do.

Youth Engagement Planning Questions

The following questions are designed with Local Government in mind as a checklist resource for staff to use when setting out to engage with youth.

- Why are we engaging with youth?
- Are our project parameters already established?
- Are we able to implement and apply the things we will hear?
- What are the limitations and boundaries of the project?
- Is there ongoing opportunity for young people to be involved?
- Are our questions too narrow or too broad?
- How are we prioritising the most vulnerable?
- How are we going to ensure diversity – of ethnicity, backgrounds, ages, and lifestyles?
- How will we overcome the common barriers for young people?
  - Technology or internet access
  - Transport and general accessibility
  - Literacy to engage with and understand the questions
- Staffing
  - Do we have access to the skillsets we need?
  - Can we abide by the Code of Ethics for youth work?
  - Are we able to establish long term relationships?
  - Can we meet youth where they are at?
- Communication methods
- Language they can understand
- A safe and supportive environment.

Nicole Grey is taking small but consistent steps towards the ultimate vision of seeing all 'youth voice' groups and kaimahi in Aotearoa supported and networked. When she's not ADHD advocating, loudly single parenting, exercising or jumping into freezing Lake Taupo; she consults, facilitates, loves growing leaders & is on the Wellington Regional Youth Workers Trust.

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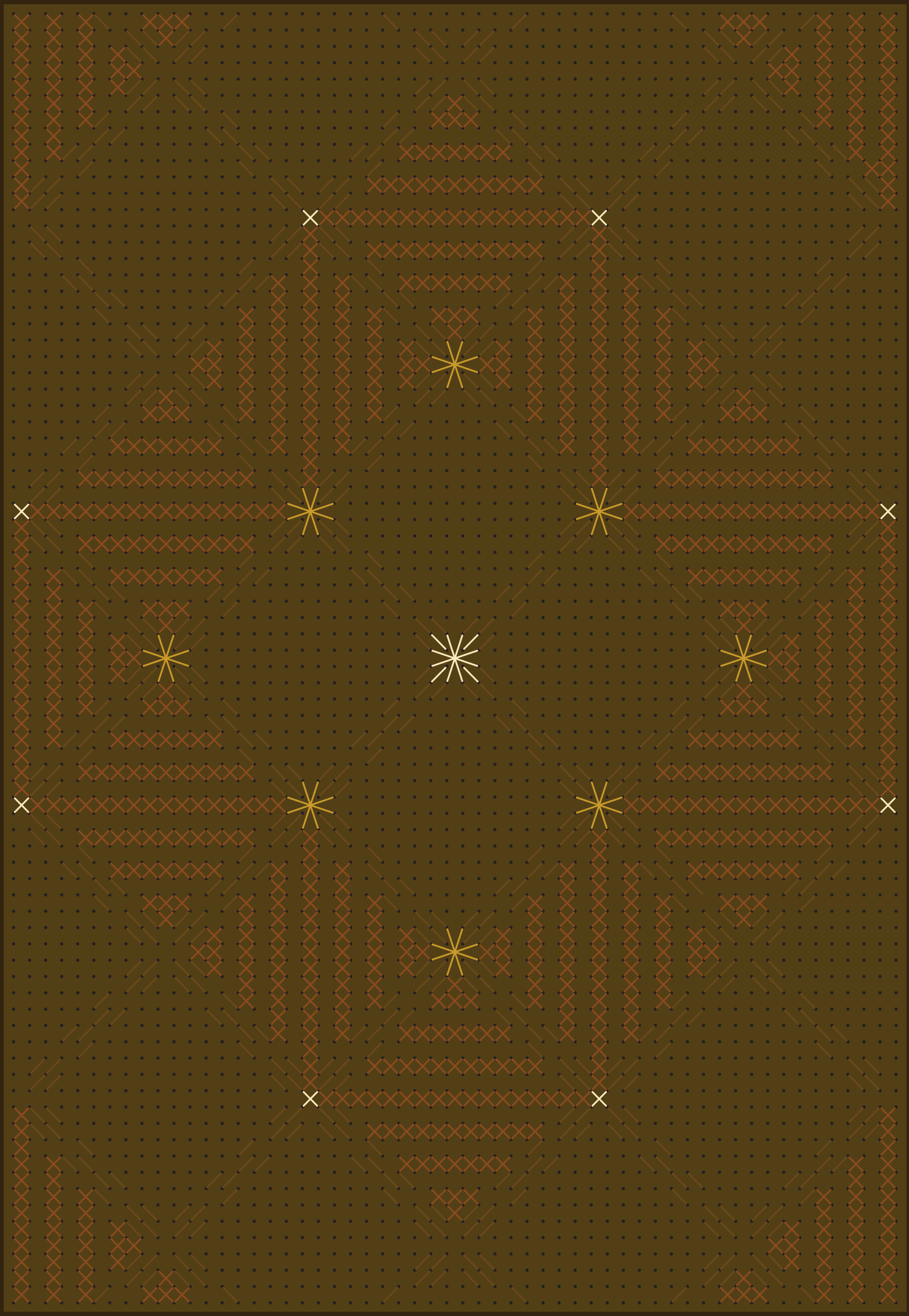
Hā ki roto,
hā ki waho



Active Youth Participation in Mentoring

Joy Eaton

Tohaina ō painga ki te ao.

Theoretical models of youth participation have been in the literature since the 1960s and include seminal works such as Hart's Ladder (1992) and Shier's Pathway (2001) but at the 2018 INVOLVE Conference, the New Zealand Youth Mentoring Network (NZYMN) was introduced to Wierenga's Star (2003). Since then, with the support of Rod Baxter, we have explored the Star as our preferred model for youth participation in the mentoring relationship.

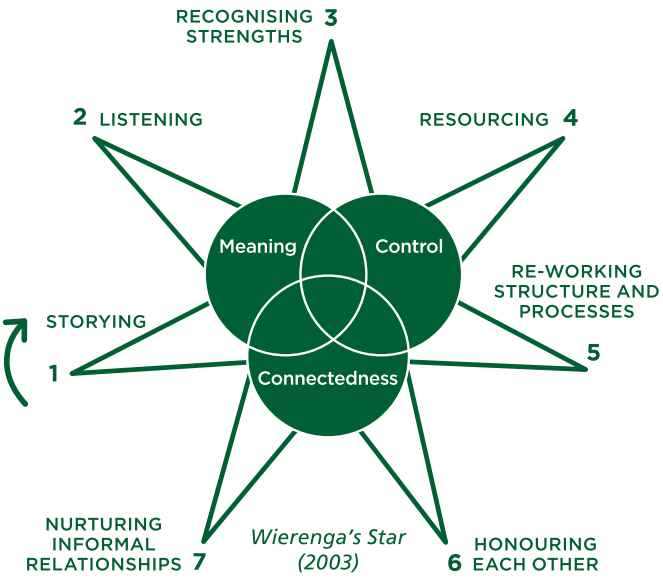
The power of this model comes from the fact that it has been co-created by academic Ani Wierenga along with young researchers interviewing young people. Based on Australian stories the work speaks clearly to concepts of mana, purpose, direction, power, and relationship important in the context of Aotearoa.

> *[There is] no judgement, no sides, no expectations - you can't disappoint a mentor.* ***(Savannah)***

> *A lot of youth have lots of stuff they bottle up and can't talk about – having someone who will listen to you and talk about your problems is really important.* ***(Connor)***

> *Yeh, young people can't have a choice about things that are against the law.* ***(Cory)***

Wierenga's Star



The model has a strong core of essential elements that are needed for positive experiences in whai wāhitanga. These elements enhance mana of those participating in the mentoring relationship.

Meaning:

This element focuses on purpose and direction. Young people believe in mentoring and see its value in their lives.

> *A mentor is different from a psychologist and a parent – it's a different type of relationship and most kids need that, and it has helped me a lot.* ***(Savannah)***

Control:

Mentoring acknowledges young people have choices and power: with resources and skills they can exercise leadership.

> *I think a lot of kids don't get to have multiple choices. I think this kind of thing lets them realise they are allowed to have a say, that it's OK.* ***(Savannah)***

Connectedness:

Young people develop a sense of belonging by connecting with others and being part of something bigger than themselves.

> *Obviously, a lot of young people have had a lot of similar experiences – you can go up to someone and see what has gone on in their life, and know what has gone on in your life, kind of thing – it's a different kind of bond, I think we gelled together through mentoring.* ***(Connor)***

The three essential elements are strands of a plaited cord, stronger and more useful together than as a single strand. A two-strand twist will fall apart without the third. Meaning and Control with no Connectedness leads to alienation and isolation. Meaning and Connectedness with no Control leads to manipulation and powerlessness. Connectedness and Control with no Meaning leads to triviality, tokenism and a lack of direction. (Wierenga (2003) p.41)

As a star, the model includes 7 pointers. These provide a focus of practice that supports whai wāhitanga. Mentors and organisations adopting these practices encourage active youth participation enhancing the potential of young people's agency, leadership and decision-making roles.

- **Storying:** key to understanding experiences and values of taiohi.
- **Listening:** an essential skill for both mentor and young person. Important for groups and organisations as well.
- **Affirming Strengths:** identifying and naming a young person's strengths makes visible their superpowers and highlights ways they can contribute.
- **Resourcing:** in the widest sense of the term, resourcing enables things to happen. Time and space are as important as skills, knowledge and funds.
- **Creative Re-working:** being prepared to change and adapt.
- **Honouring the formal relationships:** adhering to the purpose of the programme; enhancing the intentional nature of the relationship; acknowledging achievements.
- **Nurturing the informal relationships:** developing friendships, forming bonds, establishing community cohesion and having fun.

Incorporating Wierenga's Star into mentoring helps find projects and activities that are meaningful for young people; where they have control or share control over what happens with skills and resources to make it happen; projects and activities that connect young people with others and the community. This can be as simple as giving taiohi choices about places they want to meet, activities they want to do or kai they want to eat, to more complicated and complex projects on topics relevant to today or the future – for example thinking about sustainable practices in your organisation or supporting full scale youth activism.

> *It's kinda like having an older brother for people who don't have brothers – like a better friend – someone older so they can help you and guide you.* ***(Hemi)***

> *From my experience the most important thing, the most impactful thing you can do for young people is just to listen – listening for the sake of listening rather than listening to respond.*
> ***(Sarah)***

NZYMN workshop at Cromwell

A Reflective Tool

In Kaiparahuarahi vol 1 no.2 (2019) p 68, Rod Baxter has adapted Wierenga's work and created a reflective tool for Aotearoa. Later Rod worked with NZYMN to produce a simplified matrix that we have used in our workshop *Whai Wāhitanga: Active Youth Participation in Mentoring*.

Although it is possible for mentors to see the questions as a self-reflection tool or an organisational review, they are most powerful when used to involve young people in conversation.

The matrix has been converted to 21 cards that can be grouped in many ways. The use of cards as a tool of reflection encourages flexibility of thinking. You can think through a line or a column, or choose cards at random and so think across the star. Wierenga's model clearly identifies a starting point and uses an arrow to indicate a pathway around the pointers.

Starting with **STORYING** makes absolute sense but it quickly becomes apparent that there is no reason to progress step by step in a clockwise direction. There is a danger that working through the pointers 1 to 7 may take focus away from the 3 essential elements at the centre.

WHAI WĀHITANGA: YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN MENTORING **REFLECTIVE TOOL**

Kaupapa	MEANING	CONTROL	CONNECTEDNESS
Storying	How important is mentoring and what does it mean to you?	How do/can young people's voices get heard in mentoring?	Who is involved in youth mentoring and what are their roles?
Listening	What are your hopes and dreams and how can mentoring assist?	What do young people need, to engage and participate in mentoring?	What would make you feel sure that mentoring was effective and valuable?
Affirming strengths	What can other people learn from you?	What can young people do really well?	How and when do you celebrate mentoring goals and achievements?
Resourcing	What do you need, to feel like you belong in youth mentoring?	What skills are needed to do well in youth mentoring?	What do we have to offer each other?
Creatively re-working	Do young people have enough space to discover their preferred way of doing things?	What's flexible and negotiable in mentoring, and what's not?	Who can help make things work well, for you and others involved in mentoring?
Honouring formal relationships	What are the best ways adults and young people can work together in mentoring?	How do you influence the way mentoring relationships are built?	Who should be hearing about the great stuff you do?
Nurturing informal relationships	How can mentoring relationships evolve over time?	What gives other people a chance to contribute?	Who do you refer to from the past and how are you building people for the future?

7 sets of 3 or 3 sets of 7

When looking at the matrix the initial instinct for people trained in the sinistrodextral system of reading is to read across the table (left to right): to see 7 sets of 3. And, yes, that works.

If you are interested in thinking about one aspect of Whai Wāhitanga it is powerful to discuss all three related cards. For example, **Resourcing**.

Hear the views of young people about what is needed to achieve the intended outcome of the activity. What skills and practical resources are required to achieve the goals of the project? How can taiohi access and manage those resources? How can young people participate in organisational or community projects where they can they offer skills and knowledge to others?

But you get a totally different perspective if you read down the columns of the matrix: seeing 3 sets of 7. The example below highlights the **Meaning** suite, but you can take a similar view if you pull out the **Control** cards and those related to **Connectedness**.

A focus on the Meaning cards could be great in an introductory discussion: defining the purpose of the activity: exploring the problems to be addressed: gathering the views of taiohi: finding direction for the project.

Giving attention to another column of cards will promote a different dimension but Wierenga emphasises that all three stands are strongly inter-related and warns that a focus on one alone will weaken the attempt to involve young people.

And what happens if you choose cards at random or in a semi-structured way (eg choose one card at random from each of the 3 essential elements)?

This random selection provides a young person with the opportunity to open a space for others in the activity; to see themselves as supportive and caring. This set of cards gives a platform to discuss the connectivity of a team project with the young person's contribution highlighted.

These randomly selected questions could be asked following the **Meaning/Control/Connectedness** sequence (as they appear left to right above) but it would be just as helpful to mix them, perhaps starting with the **Storying** card.

These cards seem to elicit some very practical responses that could be quickly put into individual or organisational practice.

NZYMN workshop at Heretaunga

NZYMN, with the support of the Tindall Foundation, has taken a series of workshops across the motu to introduce Wierenga's Star and the associated Reflective Tool to mentors and mentoring organisations. Participants are finding it valuable to explore the Reflective Tool.

> *Even though stuff might be terrible, and we might not make the best choices – just having someone who is there for you, regardless of the situation, who is not a parent – they listen and validate you and help you feel heard and it's a really big thing.* ***(Sarah)***

The Mentor's Role

Wierenga (2002) says that mentors translate or re-translate reality, bringing new stories, languages and meanings. She believes that the most effective mentors are those who richly know the mentee's own universe of meaning. They are fluent in the young person's stories, theories, passions and convictions, in their languages of words and other symbols. NZYMN believes that by sharing this model and tool we are able to support mentors to find the way to strengthen active youth participation and to enhance young people's sense of purpose, power and positive contribution.

> *In organisations there are always a couple of standout kids that aren't shy to talk to the bosses – get them together with all the other kids and having a chat about it.* ***(Hemi)***

> *I think the kids of this generation have very creative minds. I think it [participating in decision-making] will help them decide they want to be mentors in the future as well.* ***(Connor)***

Acknowledgments

The young voices are those of Connor, Cory, Hemi, Sarah and Savannah who are part of the Heart 4 Youth Mentoring Programme. Thanks for their wonderful contributions.

Thanks also to Rod Baxter for his inspiration and support in developing a workshop that puts youth voice at the centre of mentoring practice.

NZYMN acknowledges the work of Ani Wierenga and the young researchers from the Australian Youth Research Centre. We also acknowledge the important work of Ara Taiohi and the Mana Taiohi Framework that places Whai Wāhitanga as a key foundation of youth development.

E tipu e rea mō ngā rā ō tau ao.

Joy Eaton is the General Manager of the New Zealand Youth Mentoring Network, the organisation fostering intentional mentoring with taiohi in Aotearoa.

"I have been fortunate to have many skilled mentors in my life and it is a privilege to support mentors holding such a vital role in the lives of young people today."

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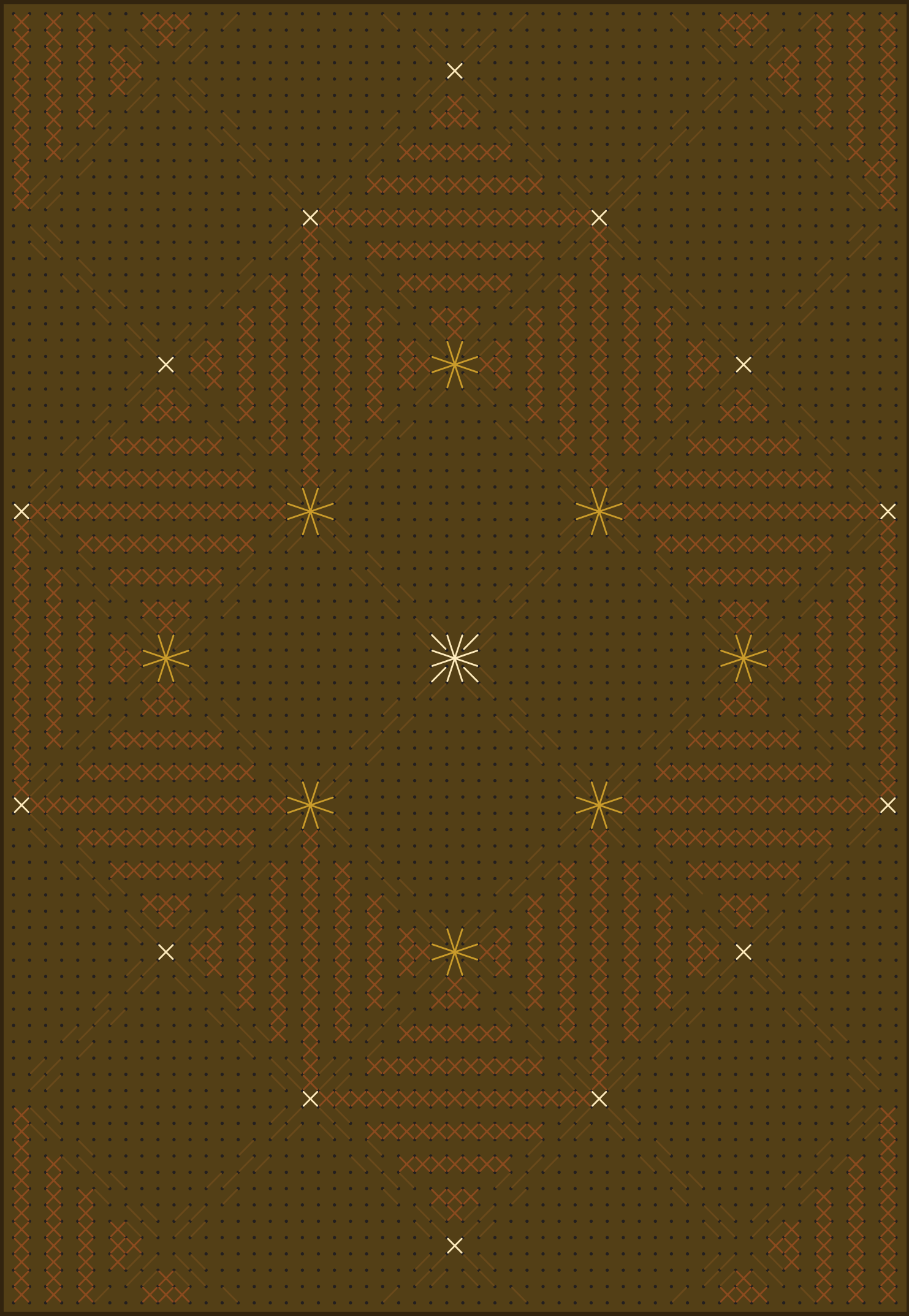

Considering Whai Wāhitanga in the context of childhood; Reflections on the relational context of youth participation

Sarah Finlay-Robinson

Raising a young child in the 2020's as a youth worker and passionate advocate of whai wāhitanga, empowerment, and youth voice has made me think beyond the programmes and structures of how we practice enabling youth voice to a lifespan approach. All the models of practice seem lacking when my strong willed and spirited three-year-old has very clear words around what they want to do, or want others to do. And what they do not. The tension is always how do I respect the mana and the mauri they hold, and how to I help them navigate the challenges of t life as a preschooler without losing their sense of agency (when they have so little control over their world).

Furthermore, participatory opportunities have been critiqued for being too narrow in their form and style and have been seen at times to enable 'super young people' to continue to be involved in more of these opportunities while excluding young people who don't feel as comfortable in these public and civic environments for a myriad of reasons. Participation then becomes an activity some young people do for a project, programme or organisation, rather than something which is holistically embedded within community and society.

The Participatory tree

In 2007 The Building a Children's Rights Culture Working Group in Nicaragua discussed the idea of a participatory tree in which the seed of participation is first nurtured within family, and then children and young people are given more opportunities to practice the skills in community, when they are given opportunities to extend and practice their skills in participating and contributing to society. From there their skills and confidence grow until they can take up positions within the community as community leaders, upholders of culture, advocates for change.

This echoes the concept of Whai Wāhitanga discussed in Rod Baxter's Involve 2021 Keynote address, and in Finlay-Robinson, Dunlop and Baxter (2019).

"Whai wāhitanga: to chase a place = youth participation. There's a beautiful symmetry here, as whai wāhitanga conceptually and practically existed before any of the international youth participation theories, and is (re)discovering new relevance in contemporary times. We come full circle and are reminded again of urunga (Baxter et. al., 2016; Caddie, 2011; Hemara, 2000), the aforementioned traditional indigenous approach that translated for some as 'education through exposure', as young people were gifted responsibility, leadership and decision-making power, for the wellbeing of the collective. We note that urunga features in our Code of Ethics, with the clauses clustered under youth participation, and it is helpful to remember at this point the educative power of participation through leadership and responsibility."

The Participation Tree

By the "Building a Children's Rights Culture" working group, CODENI, Nicaragua, August 2007
Translated from the original Spanish by Harry Shier

To understand the tree, start at the roots.

The fruits: Respect, equality, respect for human rights, development, peace

The leaves of the tree: Children and young people empowered

- Children and young people as community educators
- Children and young people in community development
- Children and young people supporting others in difficulty
- Children and young people as defenders of children's rights
- Children and young people reporting abuse and exploitation
- Children and young people in educational policy and planning
- Children and young people as renewers and defenders of traditional culture
- Children and young people as spokespeople and representatives in local democracy
- Children and young people as protectors and defenders of the environment
- Children and young people in their own groups and organisations
- Children and young people in direct action for social change
- Children and young people in media and communications
- Children and young people as mediators of conflict
- Children and young people as a new generation of community leaders.

The branches of the tree are the various activity groups and spaces in which children and young people gradually develop their active and pro-active participation in tune with the growth of their knowledge and experience

The seed from which the tree grows is the family home: the first setting where the child learns to participate and be a part of the community

The trunk: The strong central trunk that holds up the whole tree is made up of all the learning processes through which children and young people gain awareness of their rights, raised self-esteem, awareness of themselves as members of society and rights-holders, as competent and capable of achieving anything in life; ability to express themselves and to organise.

The growing seedling is strengthened by attendance at organised activities outside the home: That's to say, the child becomes a "Participant".

Fertile soil: Participation is rooted in the children's rights focus and the legal framework that guarantees these rights: Children's Rights Code, UNCRC

Key aspects then of whai wāhitanga are (Finlay-Robinson, Dunlop and Baxter, 2019):

- to give exposure to; an opportunity to learn or practice skills,
- to chase a place; to find a place in whanau, community and society utilising one's skills, knowledge and interests,
- the relational context in which these opportunities and roles take place. For example, the role of tuākana-tēina and rangatira mentoring young people as they practice their skills and seek their place.

What is interesting in these two descriptions of youth participation is that they are broader than European or western models of participation. They are not just about children and young people having a voice. It is about the right for every child and young person to participate in their families and communities to contribute to society through a myriad of roles. The value then of children and young people's participation is seen differently through a life-span view. It is then about serving and contributing, to community, whanau, culture and society; to utilise their gifts, talents and interests to learn, grow and find their place. The value of participation is not only seen as a right, but it is intrinsically about enhancing collective, community life.

Whai Wāhitanga - begins at birth

If we consider a relational view of whai wāhitanga, we must view in the context of generations. Participation doesn't then begin in adolescence; Children are being exposed to information, knowledge and skills to support their participation and learning. The Building a Children's Rights Culture working group from Nicaragua have it right. Children start learning the skills for participation in whanau. They continue to practice and learn skills in community. It is from here that young people find a role, a placed in society where they contribute.

Upcoming generations of children and young people will have more exposure to child lead learning and a deeper understanding of our country's histories than previous generations. Many will learn previously untaught skills to regulate their emotions. And as they grow up in a rapidly changing and increasingly diverse environment, so too will their approaches to life, learning, and community become increasingly diverse. What's critical also is our increasingly politically polarised world, and are concerns for our economy and democracy as the population ages and the ratio of those working to those in retirement flips.

How precious then are our young people and children. How critical that every life is seen as having mana and mauri, and a contribution to be make (Ara Taiohi, 2019). For the life spark of all tamariki (children) and taiohi (young person/people) to be cultivated and protected. Every child not only has rights, but also needs to be given opportunities to develop and achieve success. (Hewett, 2001).

We need then to look back at how we are enabling children to participate and chase their place. In Aotearoa we have a model of child development and learning that fits well within a participation understanding. In fact, Perrot, Beals, Hay, Finlay, and Te Moananui (2017) argued that it could be a relevant model of positive youth development too given the holistic approach it takes to including health and wellbeing of individuals and community; and an intergenerational perspective. In Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 2017) tamariki learning and development is supported through a 'mat' woven between parents, community, children and whanau. It recognises the rights and mana tamariki have from birth (Ministry of Education, 2017). It sees them as competent and confident learners with their own strengths, abilities and interests. Each child has a unique way of seeing the world, and their own way of learning. Importantly each child has the ability to act on their own ideas to develop knowledge and skills, and make decisions that are important, interesting and meaningful to them (Ministry of Education, 2017). The focus of Kaiako (teachers) is to create a collaborative environment in which tamariki engage in experiences, where barriers are removed, where they are safe, and where they are given equitable opportunities for learning and play (Ministry of Education, 2017). Tamariki are able to lead their own learning, and input into the curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2017). Play is key to inviting tamariki to participate and engage in opportunities. These then are the learning processes (The trunk as described in the participatory tree) where tamariki learn essential skills for their participation in the world, enabling them to chase their place through exploring their interests, developing their knowledge and skills and making decisions that are meaningful to them.

Created by Malaguzzi, the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood development offers further insights into the seed of participation nurtured by whanau and gives opportunities to extend and practice those skills further. In the Reggio Emilia approach the child is seen as capable, wonderful, and brimming with creativity, curiosity and beauty (Hewett, 2001). Therefore, their competence, ideas and thoughts need to be taken seriously, cultivated and protected. It is a child's right to engage in learning, meaning making and problem-solving in the process of building their knowledge. It is also their right to develop their knowledge and skills so they may experience success and find their place in society (Malaguzzi, 1993 as cited in Hewett, 2001).

For the Reggio Emilia approach child development and learning is centered in the social context of relationships with others. While leading their own learning, discovery and research children work alongside other children, teachers and family members practicing negotiation, cooperation and collaboration (Hewitt, 2001). They work through dialogue and conflict to co-construct solutions to problems and questions (Hewitt, 2001). Together they make meaning. The relationships are reciprocal, each learning from the other and adjusting in the process of making discoveries (Hewitt, 2001). And while adults in the relationships may be able to perceive what the child does not yet see the focus is on facilitating the child's discovery (Hewitt, 2001). It is about mutual participation and action, rather than the adult dominating or controlling the situation (Hewitt, 2001).

The role of the adult and teacher parallels aspects of the youth work relationship especially in regards to youth participation in a number of ways. They engage in continual reflection on their practice and the discoveries children are making. They draw out children's observations

and knowledge, documenting and displaying this (Hewitt, 2001). They provide a visual record of what has been done and display this to support children to revisit ideas or create new ones (Hewitt, 2001). The visual record also supports the involvement of family in children's learning.

Reggio Emillia recognises there are multiple forms and expressions of knowledge:

"The child
is made of one hundred.
The child has
a hundred languages
a hundred hands
a hundred thoughts
a hundred ways of thinking
of playing, of speaking..."

(Malaguzzi, n.d)

In childhood these 100 languages might be painting, dance, drama, sculpture, writing, puppetry for example (Valentine, 2006). Moreover, Malaguzzi argues that using different languages in this sense enhances children's understanding, and inspires new ideas and deeper meaning (Valentine, 2006).

When we limit youth participation to youth voice in a discrete decision-making process and use only written or oral knowledge, we limit the depth and meaning of participation, and the diversity of forms it could take. Perhaps we also restrict the diversity if we favour traditional political forms of participation and do not consider the languages young people are familiar with, and comfortable with expressing their perspectives, and knowledge within.

What then does this mean for participation and for whai wāhitanga? If youth participation is about young people chasing their place, then their participation should allow them to explore and express their knowledge in forms that are relevant to them. Not only may this enable them to express themselves more fully, it may also enable them to discover new knowledge and perspectives in the process and find a deeper meaning in their participation. By expressing their lived experience, perspectives and knowledge in a greater diversity of language they may also be able to explore greater diversity in the roles that they could take up in society, for example the roles described in the participatory tree.

Concept of citizenship

Active citizenship believes that through young people participating in democracy and civic life, the systems can bring change and be transformed for young people. Citizenship is about social, political and civic participation Marshall (1950; 1977; 1981) cited in Matthews (2001). It is about sharing power and responsibility with young people (Matthews, 2001) and about young people taking up roles in society that are both expected and transformative (Wood and Black, 2014). Active citizenship works to correct and dispute the idea of young people as being disengaged and demonstrate that young people actively participate and contribute to civic life (Tsekoura, 2016).

Tsekoura (2016) argues that everything is political, and therefore active citizenship includes both the personal and public domain. For example, the choices young people make as consumers are part of their active citizenship as much as their citizenship as participation in formal civic activities. Active citizenship works in formal and informal spaces, local communities and national affairs, new and emerging opportunities and traditional civic activities (Tsekoura, 2016). And because everything being political, Tsekoura (2016) argues that active citizenship speaks of the right of young people to participation in life, community, society and public and civic spaces. It acknowledges that young people's lived experiences now are affected by decision-making and this is especially important to consider as they may not have the same rights as adults to vote.

Wood and Black (2018a) describe the relationality of citizenship well:

"Young people's citizenship is constituted at the intersection of relationships with others. It is not carved out in an isolated endeavour, but is lived, practised and shaped in the context of others. Citizenship is defined and experienced above all as 'a set of relationships by which membership is constructed through physical and metaphorical boundaries and in the sites and practices that give it meaning' (Staeheli, 2011, p.394). These relationships are both inclusionary and exclusionary and form landscapes of both belonging and exclusion for young people that are highly marked by race, gender, and class (Wood, 2016)... This may be particularly true for young people, especially in instances where their citizenship is precarious or poorly recognised by the adults and institutions of the local places in which they live and learn".

(p10)

How critical then if young people are to find their place in society that we recognise the rights of all members of society including tamariki and taiohi to participate. Active citizenship is not only about participating in civic spaces, or acting politically. It is about the right of all tamariki and taiohi to learn, gain skills, create knowledge, express themselves, make decisions, to contribute to family, community and society, and to belong.

Conclusion

Whai Wāhitanga needs a collective approach. Youth participation is not made up of one off, stand-alone programmes. We need to see the interconnectedness of these opportunities we provide for young people, and their communities. We need to see them in the context of their development, and their brilliance, and the value of their lived experience. We need to consider where the opportunities our youth participation opportunities sit within the context of their lifespan, and the generational, relational and geographical context they are a part of. With humility we need to recognise our connectedness to the many others working to enable their participation such a parents and family members, elders, leaders, coaches, teachers. We also need to pay attention to the context, the diversity of culture and time and space these youth participation opportunities are offered within. This is crucial to ensure that we are considering the enablers and barriers for young people's participation; and that we are creating equitable spaces for young people to practice and share their skills, learning, knowledge and lived experiences.

Youth participation and whai wāhitanga needs to be relational, dialogical and transformative. Perhaps we have been guilty of thinking too narrowly of what participation entails, and thereby limiting participation itself.

Questions for further reflection

- How might we consider the tamariki participation and its relationship to the participation of taiohi?
- What skills might we need for intergenerational work in youth participation?
- How might we utilise the 100 languages of children? And what might the 100 languages of taiohi look like?
- Consider the diversity of roles in the participatory tree. What might youth participation opportunities look like if we consider the diversity of roles young people take up in society?

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Sarah lives near the Waitakere ranges in Tāmaki Makarau and feels very fortunate to have also called Waikato, Whangarei & Ōtautahi home.

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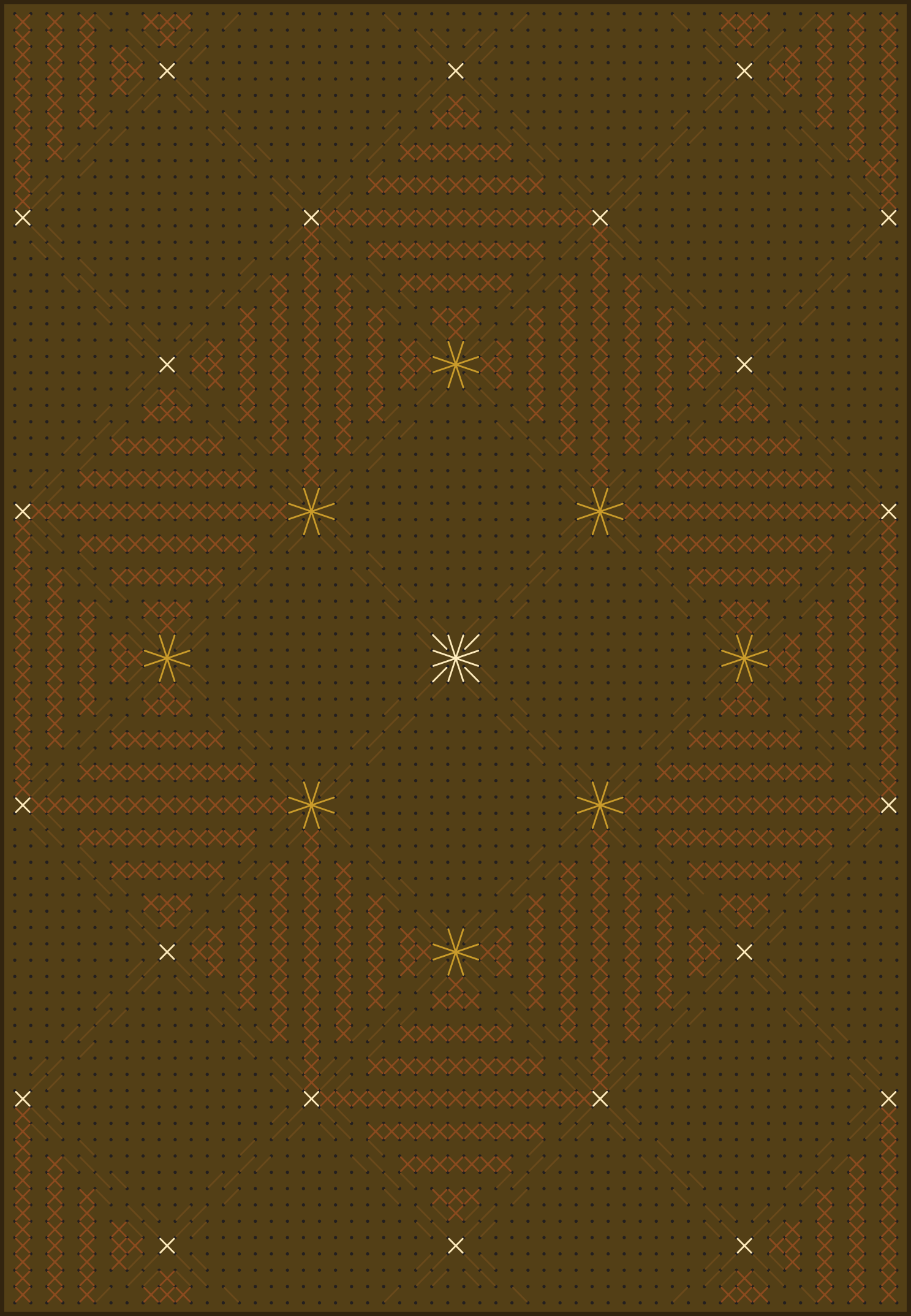

Putting Youth Workers back into Youth Participation

Eddy Davis-Rae

Much of the youth participation conversation in the youth development sector and in the academic literature has been focused on young people themselves. However, the role of youth workers and supportive adults is often overlooked. In this article I utilise findings from my Masters research to celebrate the role of youth workers within youth participation and highlight some of the problems with an approach that is too focussed on young people.

My study which involved a youth participatory action research [YPAR] project, provides evidence to suggest that adults and young people have distinct but equally important roles within a youth participation project that if understood can lead to better youth work and more authentic Whai Wāhitanga.

As a sector we are very good at celebrating young people and this very much influences the way we talk about youth participation. The narrative around the school strikes for climate for example, have been a celebration of young people single-handedly navigating the systems that work against them to stand up for what they believe in.

Table 1:

ROLES UNDERTAKEN IN THE YPAR PROJECT BY YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

ROLE OF YOUNG PEOPLE	BOTH	ROLE OF ADULTS
• Story Telling	Creating Participatory Space	Deep Listening •
• Sharing Ideas		Evaluating •
• Encouraging/Inspiring		Managing Momentum/Pace •
• Identifying points of connection with community		Providing a Platform •
• Analysis and writing		Reworking processes •
• Communication of ideas		Interrupt systems of power •
		Valuing Youth Voice •

Furthermore, stories around youth participation often read like a quest for the sacred golden egg of youth voice extracted directly from young people in its purest form. They are riddled with cliches like "children are our future" and "let them lead" that are all well and good when we are sitting around a campfire singing kumbaya but lack a bit of nuance when we're talking about youth development.

The truth is, while there is still some work to do on a societal level, as a sector we are pretty good at valuing what young people have to say and therefore have outgrown the need for this sentiment. While I have huge admiration for the young people who are celebrated in this way and achieve great things in spite of the barriers in place, the removal of youth workers and adults from these success stories is problematic in a number of ways.

Firstly, there is the issue around access. Young people don't have the same access to decision making systems as adults do. Barriers such as the voting age, the language used in traditional processes and even the timing of town hall meetings or oral submission events often put young people on the back foot immediately. In schools we see power dynamics at play that can prevent authenticity in the perspectives that young people share for fear of upsetting the teacher student power balance. Each of these barriers and more, are at play when young people attempt to have their say and by only focussing on the young people who navigate these structures, mean that decision makers aren't forced to consider the issues around access but blame the issue of youth disengagement on young people themselves. "Darn those bloody young people and their apathy - I wish they would just get out there and vote!"

We can see parallels in the media's attempts to celebrate young first home buyers and play down the impact of their parents' small contribution worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. If the issue is young people buying avocado on toast once a week and not the underinvestment in housing then the accountability does not lie with decision makers but with (you guessed it) the youth of today. In this metaphor the financial contribution of the parents is similar to the mammoth effort of youth workers and supportive adults who help young people to navigate the systems and are under appreciated for it.

A second issue is when power structures are reinforced in the name of youth voice. A youth worker's role within a youth participation can be to hold participatory space and interrupt systems of powers that arise naturally within youth voice projects. The participatory space is one that allows all young people to participate and contribute within the context of the project. As Gallagher (2008) suggests, while power has often been viewed in the literature as something that adults should work to reduce the impact of within participatory projects, it can also be an effective way of interrupting systems of power that have been instilled in young people. He uses the example from within his Masters' research where he felt uncomfortable about asserting his adult prescribed power onto a group of children to ensure that they completed the assigned activity resulting in the activity being disrupted and not completed. He witnessed power relations within the group of young people, in particular, a young boy who refused to do the activity and infringed on a young girl's ability to also do the activity. This presents a question of whether certain displays of power or domination are preferable to others. That is, should adult prescribed power be enacted if it works to ensure that other power systems (such as patriarchal) do not simply take its place?

While utilising power in this way results in a project that is not indicative of a totally youth-initiated and implemented project in its purest form, it does work to reduce the risk of power merely being transferred from the youth worker, to, for example, the next oldest white male in the room (Gallagher, 2008). While power may technically be being transferred to a young person in this instance, if that young person is a dominating force that does not allow for the perspectives of other young people to contribute within the project, then the project fails to uphold best practice Whai Wāhitanga.

In part due to the nature of existing power structures, adults (albeit in partnership with young people) tend to hold greater access to networks of power and it was easier for them to access and implement changes to established systems.

Therefore, part of adults' role within youth participation can be to provide a platform for young people and utilise the power they are afforded as adults to amplify youth perspectives.

In my project, adult connections and status helped to provide the group with a platform at: an event at Parliament, a youth development conference and in Wellington City Council Meetings. These were opportunities that many of the group had not experienced before and despite many of them being totally capable of initiating these opportunities for themselves, this study suggests that they may have felt underqualified or uncomfortable going through the processes available (even I felt overwhelmed at times). While these processes are *available*, the various barriers ensure that they remain inaccessible for every day young people and therefore adults can play a role in opening up doors for young people who are wishing to participate.

Adult involvement also helped increase young people involvement in the context of my project. For example, seeing the project progress was something that motivated the young people to attend sessions and stay involved with the project The youth workers had the most capacity to dictate the speed at which the project progressed and utilised relationships and observations to determine young

people's enthusiasm and energy during different phases of the project. Furthermore, youth participants reported that the simple fact that the adult leaders said that they wanted to hear young people's voices and then continued to back this up throughout the process by allowing them to see the impact of their perspectives within the project also encouraged the young people's sustained involvement Adult involvement as a catalyst for progress is particularly important when considering the ethics of working with young people within the context of a youth development organisation rather than within schools. First, because young people had no obligation to be part of the project and could simply choose not to show up if they became dissatisfied or disengaged, ensuring that young people were sufficiently stimulated by the progress was an effective way of encouraging sustained involvement in the project. This was a role primarily (but not only) played by adults. In this study, adults worked to ensure youth sustained involvement through strategies such as deep listening, evaluating young people's energy levels within sessions and looking to resource them. While researchers might hope for participatory processes in which young people are meaningfully participating in every part of the project, this study shows that some may not wish to be so heavily involved and withdraw at times and then re-engage with high participation levels later.

One might argue that good participation practice calls researchers to allow young people to have a say about when they do not wish to participate

(Cullen & Walsh, 2019; Gallagher, 2008)

Second, adult involvement can also enable participatory processes to involve the oft forgotten, 'ordinary' young people (Nairn, Sligo, & Freeman, 2006). While, high achievers, or, young people who are celebrated for their ability to navigate adult spaces, may also be able to progress projects without adult intervention, ordinary young people, however, may struggle to progress a project efficiently enough to feel motivated. Therefore, adult involvement again may increase youth participation because it removes the necessity for youth participation to require a monumental effort from a young person to learn, engage with and succeed in an adult dominated arena despite the exclusionary practices and barriers that they face. If these monumental efforts or child-initiated projects are, as is unintentionally suggested through Hart's (1992) Ladder, the purest form of participation, youth workers may be wary of initiating their own projects for fear of championing something not considered to be best practice. Increasing the accessibility of youth participation in this way, helps to ensure that more young people's rights supported by conventions such as United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Chilrd by providing opportunities for them to share their perspective on decisions that affect them.

Despite my study providing evidence to suggest that youth participation can be enhanced by adult involvement, a critical consideration of this evidence raises the question of whether the need for, or benefit of, adult involvement would be removed if there were wide spread changes to engagement processes and systems to ensure that they work for young people. For example, one of the benefits of adult involvement in this process that worked to amplify youth voices was the opportunities that it afforded the group to share their findings beyond their own circles. While these opportunities inserted young people's voices and perspectives into traditionally adult settings, the gatekeepers of these settings should consider how ordinary young people, who do not necessarily have the backing of adults or organisations, can engage meaningfully within these spaces. If more inclusive and accessible systems at all levels of decision making become the norm, then adults' ability to provide these opportunities for young people is a less than convincing argument for their inclusion in participatory processes.

As youth participatory practice develops across different sectors over time these particular benefits of adult involvement may come to have less of an impact on the authentic participation of young people within YPAR. However, they are important factors to consider in the current youth participation climate and may serve as vehicles to more aspirational levels of youth participation within all institutional decision-making processes.

Eddy Davis-Rae My name is Eddy Davis-Rae and I use he/him pronouns.

My ancestors originally came from the UK but I was born in Dunedin and moved to Wellington in 2016 to work for a youth development organisation called BGI. While working there I completed my Masters of Education with a focus on Youth Participation at Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington and became a registered youth worker with Korowai Tupu. I now work as a Senior Advisor at the Office of the Children's Commissioner. I am passionate about allowing young people to have their say in decision making and am excited about the incredible matauranga that is being gathered through this journal.

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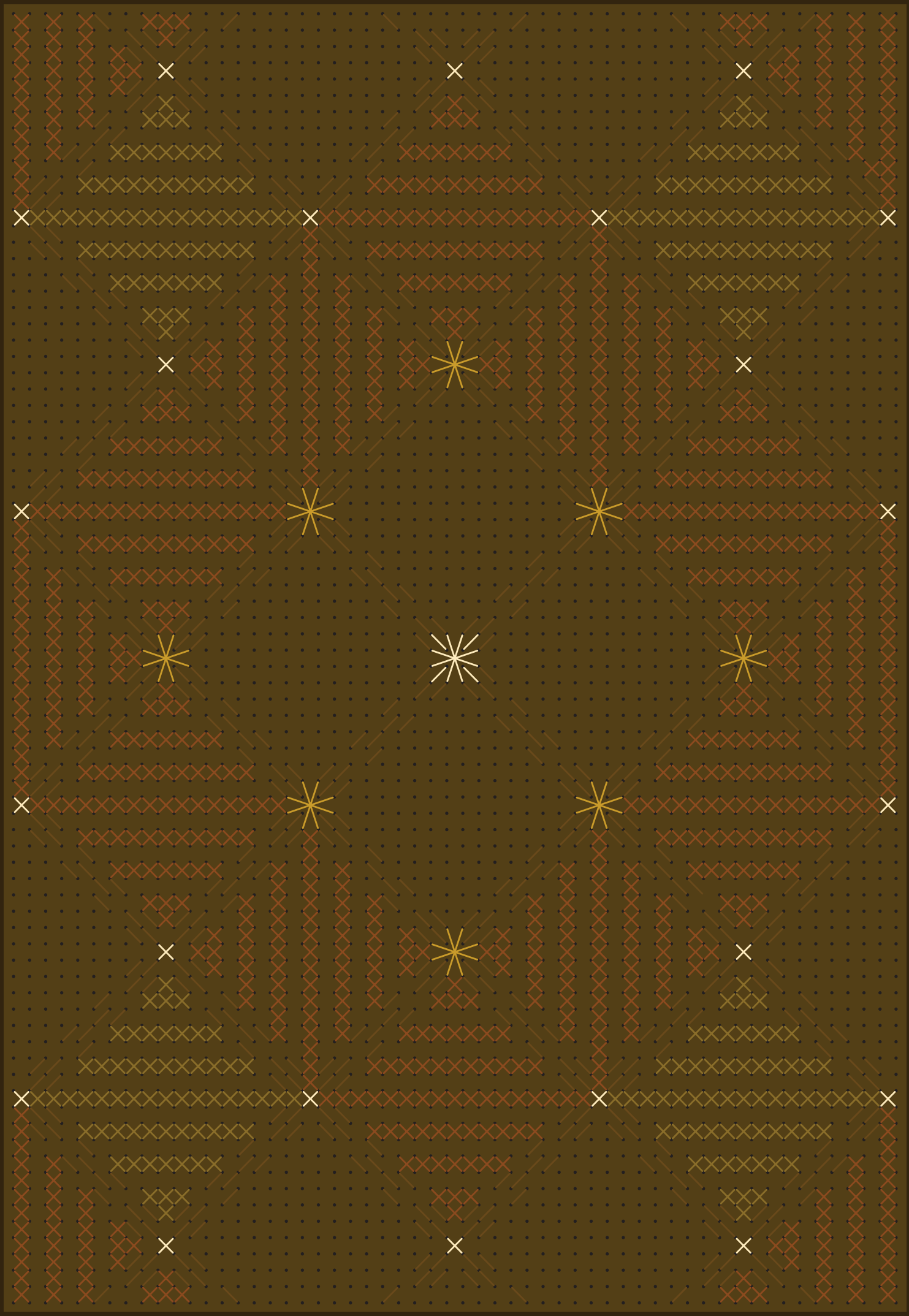


Walking the Talk of Effective Youth Participation Practice: Insights from Not-For-Profit Organisations

Jennifer Braithwaite and Kelsey Deane

Youth participation in Aotearoa New Zealand has deep roots that connect back to traditional Māori practices (Finlay-Robinson et al., 2019), but policy attention to the topic has waxed and over the past few decades (Braithwaite & Deane, in press). At present, it feels like we're back on an upswing and we're excited to have been a part of re-invigorated conversations about youth participation within youth policy and practice spaces. Nevertheless, our excitement is tempered by the learnings we've gained from both overseas and domestic reports that the "talk" often doesn't match the "walk" (Children's Rights Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand, 2020; Graham et al., 2006; Wheeler, 2010).

As one of the core principles of Mana Taiohi, the refreshed framework for effective youth work in Aotearoa New Zealand, *whai wāhitanga* acknowledges the mana [inherent authority and agency] young people already have and recognises the valuable contributions they can and do make to society. Accordingly, *whai wāhitanga*, in principle, encourages those working with young people to create space and opportunity for all young people to take on responsibility, express their agency and participate in decision-making processes that have relevance to them.

Exercising choice with regards to the degree and type of participation a young person wants to engage with is an important feature of *whai wāhitanga* within the Mana Taiohi framework (Ara Taiohi, 2020). The inclusion of this principle in what is effectively the guiding document for the youth sector both recognises the importance of authentic youth participation and gives a high-level directive not only to government agencies but to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working with young people at the coalface that youth participation is an essential part of ethical youth work.

But what does it look like to effectively translate these ideas to practice? What can we learn from the youth participation experiences of youth development organisations across the country?

These questions were top of mind for Jennifer when she began her Masters thesis in Social and Community Leadership at the University of Auckland under Kelsey's research supervision. At the time Jennifer had a leadership role with YouthLaw Aotearoa and the organisation was interested in embedding youth participation more firmly within its policies and practices. Jennifer was interested in conducting research for her thesis that could meaningfully inform the work being done at YouthLaw as well as within other youth organisations. As an academic who teaches youth development and youth work practice, conducts research in these areas, and runs a youth mentoring programme, Kelsey shared Jennifer's interest in contributing to the knowledge base on effective youth participation, particularly within the Aotearoa New Zealand context. Our shared interests and our recognition that further research in this context was needed led to a research partnership with Ara Taiohi.

Ara Taiohi had recently completed an online survey of youth participation experiences with its organisational members but had limited capacity to analyse the findings. We were able to offer support in this regard by using the survey data collected by Ara Taiohi for an initial phase of Jennifer's thesis research and she used the survey findings to inform a second phase involving interviews and focus

groups with young people and leaders from NGOs that had been nominated by other organisations as demonstrating exemplary youth participation practice. We're thrilled to be able to share the findings of this research and to offer some evidence-informed implications for practice as part of this issue of Kaiparahuarahi.

The Research Design

The research included two phases (as noted above) and the design was approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee. For the first phase, an Ara Taiohi staff member de-identified all the responses from the online survey that had been circulated to their membership and then shared the data with us. Jennifer quantitatively analysed the closed questions to provide a descriptive profile of the participating organisations and their youth participation practices. She also qualitatively analysed the responses to open-ended questions about the challenges and benefits organisations experienced in implementing youth participation practices using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is an approach that allows the researcher to identify important patterns of meaning within a qualitative dataset (Braun et al., 2019).

One of the questions within the online survey asked respondents to identify organisations they felt demonstrated excellent youth participation practice so in the second phase of the research, Jennifer reached out to the nominated case exemplar organisations and invited each to be involved in the research.

Adults who had a leadership role within the organisation were invited to take part in a semi-structured interview and young people who were involved in the organisation were invited to be part of a focus group interview.

The topics covered in the interviews and focus groups included the organisational structure and context, rationales for youth participation, participation methods, barriers to participation and strategies to mitigate these, and the effects of youth participation. Jennifer again used thematic analysis to identify meaningful patterns (themes) across the responses.

We first share the findings and insights from the first survey-based phase of the research and then outline those from the second phase focused on the case exemplar organisations.

Phase 1 Survey Findings

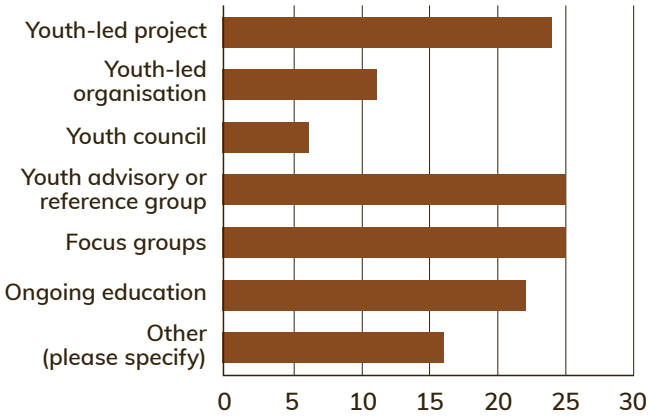
Fifty-six respondents from non-governmental organisations completed the online survey. Just under 20% indicated that their organisation worked nationally, 11.5% were Auckland based, 12.5% were in Wellington, 10% were in Northland, approximately 17% in the South Island, and the other groups were spread across the remainder of the country. The most frequent operating contexts (each selected by 20-30% of respondents) were adventure-based learning, mentoring, schools, volunteering, and youth health. Between 10% and 19% of respondents selected alternative education, camps, community centre, faith-based, iwi [tribal], outdoor education, social space, sports & recreation, youth justice or other. Between five and nine percent of respondents selected arts, (dis)ability, ethnic, NEET, Pasifika, rainbow, rural or statutory contexts.

Respondents were asked about the age ranges of the young people they worked with or that were involved in youth participation in their organisations. The majority of respondents selected multiple age ranges with the most frequently selected age ranges being 15-16 and 17-18. It was not possible to determine whether this age range was for those participating in decision making or service users or both because there was a single question in relation to ages of both groups.

Respondents were also asked how young people are leading or participating in decision-making in their organisation. Many respondents selected more than one **method of participation** (see **Figure 1**). including co-design, evaluation, partnership in decision-making processes, and board membership which included representation on a parent organisation.

Figure 1

HOW YOUNG PEOPLE ARE PARTICIPATING IN DECISION-MAKING



The survey respondents were also asked to comment on the challenges they had faced and the benefits they observed from involving young people well. In this following sections, we highlight the core topics explored using **bold** text and the themes using *italics*.

With regards to **challenges**, a significant proportion of the respondents commented on *young people's lack of motivation, commitment or accountability* and expressed frustration about young people not thinking about the consequences or the effort that had gone into planning and the difficulties created from pulling out at the last minute. Some acknowledged that young people also have busy lives including school and work commitments, and it was these other commitments that made it hard for young people to participate. Others raised concerns about young people's ability to work together and how easily they get distracted. Limitations such as their lack of knowledge was noted but solutions, like time for mentoring, were also offered.

Some of the respondents described how young people's previous experiences had created barriers or challenges including a "perception of not being listen too" that led to *young people's reluctance to engage*. Shyness, or low self-confidence could also contribute to this reluctance. Other respondents commented on the difficulty of establishing *"a group that is both diverse and yet representative"*. One placed the blame for lack of diversity on the young people that were already involved in the organisation noting that challenging power dynamics can exist amongst youth in leadership roles and this could lead to them "actively exclud[ing] minority voices". Some respondents described the *negative adult attitudes* to youth participation held by others elsewhere in the organisation or by adults in general as a barrier. Many also described *practical challenges* to youth participation including the time, resources, transport, and skills required, which can be difficult to address in the resource limited NGO sector. However, in some cases, it seemed that the practical barriers were created by adults, for example: "[t]he timing of adult meetings during the school day".

With regards to the **benefits**, many respondents described how involving young people resulted in *increased organisational effectiveness*. Related to this, some commented on how youth participation benefitted those working in the organisation both personally and professionally by contributing to team or staff satisfaction and development. Staff developed an increased awareness and understanding, youth participation gave them new ideas for programmes, and meant that they could better focus on young people's needs, ultimately making their work more effective. Some respondents also described how having young people involved in decision-making had resulted in increased volunteer retention and engagement.

Many of the respondents also described how being involved in the organisation had also led to *personal and professional development for the young people*, including increases in confidence and the development of new skills.

Phase 2 Interview and Focus Group Findings

Analysis of the survey data highlighted some limitations in terms of our inability to distinguish comments made about young people's participation as service users vs. their participation in organisational decision-making. We were also unable follow up to clarify points of confusion or to ask for more detail. Phase 2 of the research provided an opportunity to explore some of the insights that came through the survey findings in greater depth, and to ask different questions, especially with regards to learning from organisations who were identified as doing youth participation well.

Four organisations were involved in this phase of the research. The small sample included organisations with a national and regional focus; that were youth-led as well as adult-led; and were a mix with respect to targeting all young people or specific groups. Jennifer conducted a one-to-one interview with an adult from each organisation and a focus group involving between four to six young people from three of the four organisations. The youth participants were an ethnically diverse group between 16 to 25 years of age with a range of gender identities and ability statuses.

In terms of **methods of participation**, the case exemplar organisations involved young people in a range of ways including young people being on the board, volunteering as office interns, delivering training and workshops, running a radio show, creating content for resources and/or workshops (both through co-design and youth-led projects), running a drop-in centre, and facilitating groups of other young people. Some organisations also had deliberate strategies to employ young people as staff members or formal structures such as a youth engagement group that advised both their board and staff members.

Related to this, three of the four organisations spoke about the *importance of giving young people options for participation*. They offered a range of ways young people could be involved as well as development pathways through the organisation with increasing levels of commitment and responsibility. Many of the young people spoke about being involved in a range of activities and how their involvement had developed over time, starting with moving from being a service user to casually helping out. Participants commented that having options is important because it means that how young people participate can reflect the time they have available as well as their individual skills and interests. It also means the young people do not have to make a high-level commitment right away. As well as more formal structures of methods of participation, both adults and young people talked about the *value of informal and casual opportunities for youth participation*. Just coming in to a drop-in centre, for example, and hanging out with staff led to meaningful conversations that deepened the adults' understanding of the young people's needs and prompted spontaneous brainstorming sessions to generate new ideas for the organisation.

Giving young people options for participation and placing value on informal opportunities were two ways that the case exemplar organisations could move past some of the **challenges** or barriers to youth participation. Some challenges identified by the participants in this phase were similar to those expressed by the survey respondents but there were also important differences in how these

challenges were perceived. For instance, both the adults and young people talked about negative adult attitudes inhibiting youth participation. Some commented on the negative attitudes of adults in the community outside the organisation. As a result, even the perception of negative adult attitudes could be a barrier to youth participation because adults within the organisation sometimes seemed to actively protect young people from other adults which affected the opportunities the organisations were prepared to make available to young people. Many of the young people were insightful when discussing tensions between adults and young people, noting that a lack of communication exacerbated the issue.

Ensuring diversity and representation across the young people participating in the organisation was also noted as a challenge. It was acknowledged that existing youth leaders stood out, making it easy to pick them but that it was important to create space for those who "haven't come into their greatness yet". Also in line with the survey findings, ***sometimes it's just the practical stuff that gets in the way***. Distance and travel, including both the time and cost were identified as barriers in all the interviews and focus groups, along with other time intensive requirements, other commitments and limited resources (for both the young people and the adults in the organisation).

Discussion of the barriers did provoke some participants to rhetorically ask what's the real barrier though? It was clear that many challenges were interrelated, and the perspective taken could affect what was seen as a barrier. Having the time to invest in young people or needing to provide transport for them were not barriers if organisations had the resourcing to fund more staff time and travel costs which suggests the root of the problem is actually resourcing. In some cases, the question also arose as to whether the stated barrier was the real barrier. For instance, were the barriers really about practicality and young people's lack of motivation or an adult's attitude and their decisions about how to prioritise their time?

Although there were some common challenges, it was clear that ***different communities and individuals have different barriers***. Barriers for rainbow young people included not being out in their gender or sexual identities. One organisation that involved disabled young people talked about the additional complexities of transport for those with physical disabilities and how some organisational practices could create different barriers for young people with other disabilities. For example, requiring written application forms could create a barrier for some neurodiverse young people. For young people living rurally, it was the cost and time associated with travel to the city.

The flexibility of the interview and focus group methods allowed very useful lines of inquiry regarding the **strategies and supports** these case exemplar organisations put in place to enable authentic youth participation and address potential challenges or barriers. One important factor was that ***exemplar organisations create a culture that enables participation***. The young people talked about how the environment their organisations created made them feel comfortable and accepted, which for some was in stark contrast to how they were treated outside the organisation. Both adults and young people discussed various organisational practices that together create a culture of participation including embedding youth participation into organisations' formal structures and constitutional documents. Both adults and young people also talked about steps taken to allocate resources to youth participation, provide pathways through the organisation for young people to develop, and taking active steps to address any potential barriers to participation such as developing new mechanisms to support participation of different groups.

The recognition that the young people need to be able to exercise choice in terms of the way and level of participation they want to engage with and of informal and spontaneous youth participation opportunities speaks to the ***value of being flexible and responsive as an organisation***. This appeared to be intentional and began with staff being open-minded and accepting, capitalising on the young people's interests and strengths and not requiring consistent or time-intensive commitments when staff understood that other aspects of the young people's lives needed to take priority. The adults and young people described the organisations as being responsive to their needs, feedback and ideas. This included providing or accessing support for specific young people. It also included a willingness to change in response to feedback.

Both adults and young people also spoke about how ***the staff actively support young people to participate in the organisation and at a personal level*** by providing them with practical support including arranging venues, financial support for travel costs, and the professional support they need to do their jobs well, for example, training, mentoring or supervision and opportunities to develop their careers. Adults in the organisation also advocated for young people when they felt they had not been heard in other contexts and they redirected adults who overlooked the young people to take notice and address them directly. Some young people also described how the adults frequently told them how important their work was to the organisation. These actions by the adults in the organisation appeared to be very validating for the young people at a personal level as well as being a concrete and visible example of how the organisation valued youth participation. The young people were also clear about how valuable support from adults was to them and how much they appreciated how the adults in their organisation interacted with them, including communicating honestly and openly even when the answer isn't what they were looking for.

This leads us to underscore the ***importance of positive relationships with staff*** to effective youth participation. Many of the young people talked about how much they valued their relationships with the staff, describing how easy it is to talk to them because the staff had a good understanding of their lives, experiences and even the terminology they used. This allowed them to "relax into being [them]selves" and feel safe. Adults also talked about how strong relationships meant that the staff were better able to support the young people and their participation.

In line with the survey findings, the **benefits** of participation identified by the adults and young people in the case exemplar organisations included ***increased organisational effectiveness*** because youth participation meant adults in the organisations had a better understanding of young people's needs and what they had to offer. Some participants described how involving young people led to the creation of new activities and services, ensured the content of resources were relevant to users, and helped to increase the capacity and reach of the

organisation when resources were limited. Young people also indicated that it created a more inclusive environment that increased other young people's engagement. Some young people described how youth participation had an impact on the structure of the organisation, making it less hierarchical and more inclusive of diversity in general.

Many of the young people also spoke about how their participation in the organisation ***supported their personal and professional development***. This included development of self-confidence; new skills, perspectives, and opportunities; with several talking about how their experience helped them with recovery after experiences of negative mental health. Beyond their own development, many young people also talked about the ***development of interpersonal connections that produced new friendships and a sense of belonging***. The impact of mutually beneficial relationships with both peers and adults were profound. For some this was because it connected them to role models who had had similar experiences and had overcome difficulties, and some had not experienced this sense of connection anywhere else.

In contrast to the survey, the interviews and focus groups provided the opportunity to inquire about the **rationales** both the organisations and the young people had to be involved in youth participation. Interestingly, even though young people spoke about benefitting through personal and professional development, it was not a reason these young people got involved, despite this being a rationale for organisations. Some young people were adamant that ***they don't do it because of what they get out of it***. Instead, many young people and adults in the case exemplar organisations talked about young people's motivation coming from seeing a gap and wanting to make things better for themselves and for others. Young people also explained that their own experiences of being supported by the organisation led them to want to give something back and support the staff.

Many young people also noted that ***loneliness brings them in, and the organisation motivates them to stay***. A sense of isolation prompted them to look for ways to make connections. Some indicated that these feelings were particularly prevalent in the rainbow community, although one young person from a disability community also commented that it helped them get out of the house.

The organisations' rationales for engaging with youth participation aligned with some of the benefits noted above, such as a desire to ***support young people to develop professionally and personally, and to make the organisation more effective***; but one adult also explained that it is about ***giving the power back to young people***, including opportunities to speak that they don't get elsewhere in their lives.

Interestingly, when both adults and young people from youth-led organisations were asked why the organisation involves young people, some initially struggled to answer. When they did respond many spoke about how ***youth participation was so ingrained in the identity and history of the organisation that it was difficult to consider it as separate to their core business.***

Key Insights and Implications for Practice

Reflecting on the pattern of findings across both phases of the research, it is reassuring to see that people working with young people across the country are interested in youth participation, are attempting to create opportunities for this within their organisations and see some of the benefits of doing so.

Still, challenges are prevalent. In a poorly resourced context with complex pressure points, some of the frustrations survey respondents expressed in relation to organisational limitations to support youth participation are understandable, and the challenges are not unique to the Aotearoa New Zealand context. However, the attributions to young people's deficits appeared to reflect adult-centric perspectives that conflict with the youth development principles expressed in Mana Taiohi. Our ability to explore this further was limited by the Phase 1 survey method and secondary analysis of the data. Phase 2 of the research was therefore revealing in terms of presenting a more nuanced understanding of both adult and young people's perspectives of what contributes to effective youth participation practice. We offer some key insights and implications for practice based on the rich accounts the case exemplar organisations provided.

The Why Matters

Both young people and organisations' rationales for youth participation matter and should determine both the form of participation, other features such as the supports provided, as well as what is considered successful or effective participation.

It is also important to recognise that the organisations and young people themselves may have quite different rationales. Where this occurs it is necessary to be clear what these rationales are and, provided that they are not in conflict, to then ensure that participation is done in a way that reflects both the organisational rationale, and the young people's rationale. In some cases an activity or support may fulfil more than one objective. For example, the organisation's rationale may be personal and professional development for the young people whereas the young people may simply be seeking connection and not be interested in developmental benefits. A participation programme that involves young people working together with their peers in a way that teaches them new skills could meet both objectives. Organisations seeking to involve young people in their work should start by identifying why they want to involve young people as well as asking the young people what would motivate or interest them. These objectives or rationales should then guide the form the youth participation will take and supports to be provided, as well as determining how effectiveness is measured.

One Size Does Not Fit All

One size does not fit all when it comes to youth participation with different groups of young people and different individual young people having different reasons to get involved, experiencing different barriers, benefitting from different kinds of support, and preferring different methods of participation.

This reflects the simple reality that all young people are not the same but rather have diverse lives, experiences, and identities. One size doesn't fit all when it comes to organisations either. Different organisations will undertake youth participation for different reasons meaning that different methods of participation may be appropriate and that effectiveness should be measured in different ways. Organisations should not assume that what will work for some young people will work for all. Similarly, what works for one organisation will not work for all.

Getting to Know You

In order to identify young people's motivations, their barriers or challenges, and which supports they may need, the organisation needs to have a good understanding of the young people they are working with and see things from their perspective.

Having a positive, non-judgmental culture and strong relationships between staff and the young people are important part of developing this understanding. Both adult and youth participants in these best practice organisations described the strength of their relationships including how the young people felt understood and safe and how the strength of their relationships meant that the young people were comfortable telling staff what they needed or when there was a problem so staff were able to respond accordingly. Organisations need to get to know the young people they want to work with so that they understand the barriers they may experience, what sort of support they may need to address these barriers, and how they want to be involved. This means focussing on developing the relationships between key team members and the young people, as well as between the young people themselves then using the understanding they develop to figure out what the real challenges or barriers are both for the organisation and for the young people.

Importance of Flexibility and Responsiveness

It is also important that the organisation is flexible and responsive to the young people it is working with so that youth participation is tailored to these young people, the support provided addresses any barriers they are experiencing, and results in change where appropriate.

For example, in this study participants described how organisations were flexible allowing young people to choose how they wanted to participate and could step back if they needed to with one adult participant describing their approach as

"meeting people where they're at, what they want, and can reasonably contribute".

Participants also described how the organisations responded to the young people's needs by providing or accessing support for them and were willing to change in response to feedback as well as to implement ideas from the young people.

Tailoring youth participation opportunities to the young people involved in it and being responsive to their needs, concerns and inputs does not always mean doing what the young people have suggested, but if organisations do not follow through with the ideas young people contribute, this needs to explained to the young people who were involved.

Don't Just Focus on Formal Participation

Informal forms of participation may appear to be less meaningful, but they can be very effective. For example, young people hanging out in a drop-in centre and having chats with the staff about things they are working on could easily be dismissed as non-participation.

However, structures that create space for informal interactions between adults and young people can enable youth participation opportunities that may not otherwise occur. For instance, such opportunities can address barriers like young people's lack of time or mental health challenges, meet the young people's desire for connection, help to create a culture of participation, normalise young people being involved in planning and decision-making, and increase staff understanding of young people's needs.

Organisations need to be creative and keep an open mind about the form youth participation should take rather than defaulting to standard, formal mechanisms like youth advisory groups because informal or everyday participation can have a range of positives either as an alternative to or to complement other common forms of participation.

The key factors will be what the purpose of participation is and what form of participation is best suited to the young people and the organisation itself.

Conclusion

NGOs that offer youth services are a primary context for youth development outside of home and school. The opportunities for youth participation in this context are rife and it's heartening to be hearing a louder buzz about the topic across the youth sector, in addition to having up-to-date principles to support effective youth participation practice. Nevertheless, there is still a big gap to close between the "talk" and the "walk". This is difficult to do with such scarce research on the topic in Aotearoa New Zealand but it is clear from this research that many organisations are confronting difficult challenges and providing authentic opportunities for youth participation. We hope these insights and practice recommendations help other organisations to overcome their own challenges and further develop their youth participation practice. The effort is worth it because doing youth participation well is incredibly rewarding for the young people involved and the organisations that serve them.

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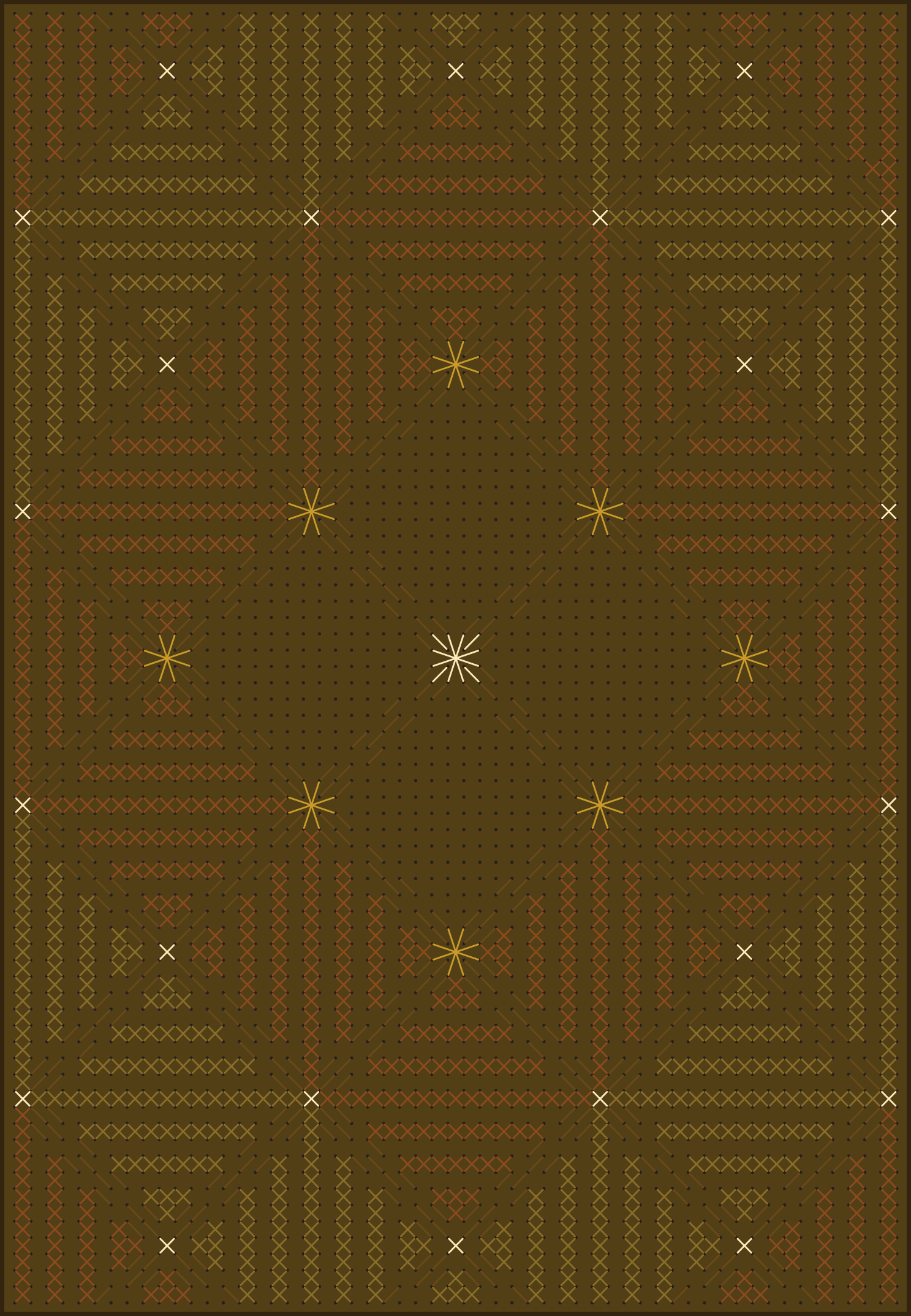


Whakataki Whai Wāhitanga

Te Rehia and Kahukura Ritchie

Pepeha

Most people living in Aotearoa will have had at least some experience with pepeha before, either in learning their own or hearing those of others. What many people in our country don't understand is the significance and beauty of this taonga that has been passed down from our tīpuna.

Pepeha connects us to our whenua, our whakapapa, our whānau, our community and helps us understand who we are in context and in relation to all of these things and the countless others who share the same connection.

As Māori we always stand with all of those who have come before us and for all of those who will come after us, pepeha provides a constant reminder of this, grounding us within our whakapapa.

Pepeha allows others to not only understand who you are but who and where you come from, and how they may connect to you.

Whai wāhitanga

The key to whai wāhitanga is to understand who is in the room, not just who they are but everything that makes up who they are at that moment. From there we, as youth workers, are able to alter our space to allow for rangatahi whai wāhitanga of the highest standard.

Often when we talk with rangatahi about how we are, we do so as individuals, not recognising that from a te ao Māori view our wellbeing is tied to the collective, to our whānau, to our whenua and to our whakapapa.

We've adapted pepeha to provide a meaningful way of understanding rangatahi and their wellbeing in relation to their whakapapa so that we can bring more meaning to our kōrero with the hope of then being able to create better spaces for rangatahi to practice whai wāhitanga.

Ritenga

Below is the process in which to begin your kōrero with rangatahi, following our commonly known structure for pepeha.

- Maunga – Our landmark of belonging, shelter and grounding eg. Culture, activities, people...
- Awa – Our life source that cleanses and nourishes eg. Connection to significant places...
- Waka – Takes us to new horizons, new opportunities eg. Mentorship, learning, experiences...
- Iwi – Our whakapapa; the connections between people eg. Community, kura, mates, kaupapa etc...
- Marae – Place that our 'iwi' gather; Safe place/things, home base eg. Marae, the homes of whānau and friends etc..
- Whānau – Our support systems; whatever that means to us eg. Close friends, family, supporters and people that have your back etc...
- Ahau – How are we in relation to all of these things?

How

To best utilise the pepeha framework the actions below are key:

- **Consistency** – This should always be the first port of call at the beginning of your session or kaupapa. Doing so will normalise the process for both you and your rangatahi and will build to allow more depth over time.
- **Interconnectedness** – There will likely be overlap between the different ritenga. Encourage rangatahi to assess how these things are, in relation to the different roles they play in their life. For example, a young person's nan may represent their maunga and whānau. While one of those ritenga may be thriving, the other could differ causing stress to both.
- **Understand the importance** – The youth worker should strive to grow their understanding of te ao Māori, and everything that entails. Pepeha are a taonga, everything within them are of utmost importance and we must value everything within as such.
- **Influence** – Youth workers should model the kind of kōrero we want to see from our rangatahi, this also means caring for, expanding on, and valuing our pepeha to inspire the same from the rangatahi.
- **What are they?; how are they?** – The first time exploring this with rangatahi should be spent learning what and who are the people, places and things within their pepeha. From there you will understand who those rangatahi are and then you will be able to facilitate the process of seeing how they are.
- **Connection** – We should strive to find the connections between our whakapapa. How can we connect to who these rangatahi are, how they are doing? Our points of connection will build the relationship that allows us to understand our rangatahi and then create the space for them to whai wāhi.

Conclusion

The intended outcome for these whakaaro are to support youth workers with a simple process to better work with and understand our rangatahi. This is just a beginning and a broad concept. The encouragement is that through wānanga with those around you there is room for development. This must, however, be done with caution not to marginalise the taonga that is pepeha.

Different iwi, hapū and whānau have different understandings and tikanga around pepeha and we encourage all youth workers to learn first from the mana whenua of your rohe and then utilise this knowledge to better develop and expand on this process. With a commitment to Mana Taiohi and Whai Wāhitanga there too must be a commitment to te ao Māori and the aspirations of tangata whenua.

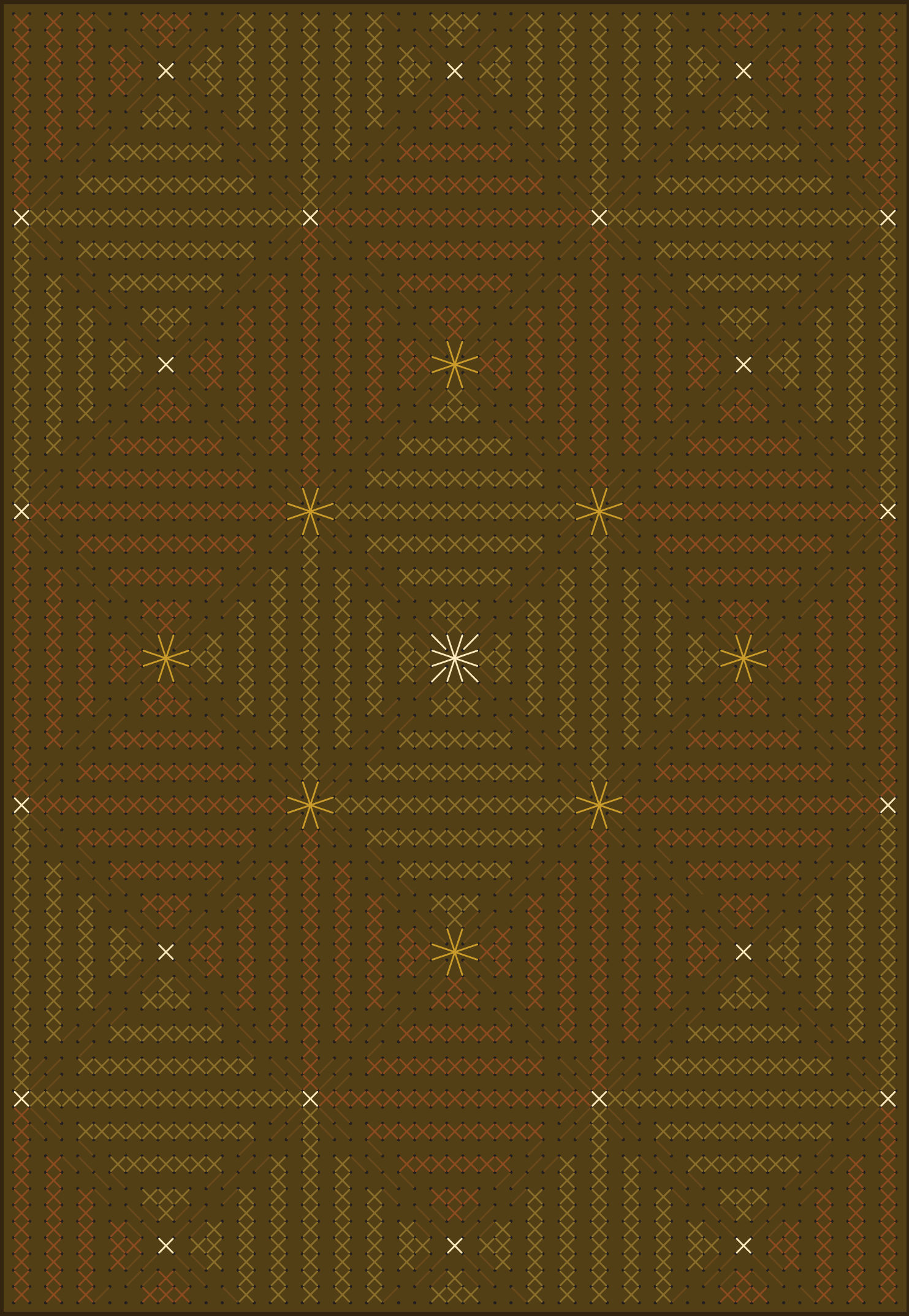
Nei rā te mihi ki a koutou ngā ringaringa manaaki i ā tātou rangatahi, tamariki, mokopuna.

Te Rehia Lake Perez Ngāti Maniapoto, wahine youth worker at BGI and contributor to the Tuia kaupapa.

Kahukura Ritchie Rangitāne, Ngāti Kahungunu, tāne youth worker passionate about supporting rangatahi Māori to stand strong in their whakapapa and identity.

The key to whai wāhitanga is to understand who is in the room, not just who they are but everything that makes up who they are at that moment.

From there we, as youth workers, are able to alter our space to allow for rangatahi whai wāhitanga of the highest standard.



Practical resources

Resource 1: Ethical considerations for hearing the voices of mokopuna within your own organisations.

Ethical Considerations

There are consent and ethical considerations that you will need to think about before you engage with children. Here is some basic guidance to support you to engage in a way that is both meaningful and safe for children.

1. Do you have consent?

You must always ask children for their consent. Children need to be provided with age appropriate material that tells them the types of questions that will be asked and what their information will be used for. It should be clear to them that they are allowed to change their mind about participating at any time during the process.

Young people 16 years and over can legally make many decisions on their own without parental permission, including major decisions like leaving home and school. Therefore, you do not need to seek parental consent to gather the views of this age group. Their informed consent is sufficient (unless there are reasons to believe the young person needs support to make informed decisions, e.g. due to a severe learning disability).

For children and young people 15 years and younger, whether you seek parental consent (in addition to the child's consent) depends on:
- the nature of the questions (i.e. whether a question could be considered sensitive for some children to discuss);
- the engagement methods you choose (i.e. an online survey, or focus group); and
- the ability of the children to make informed consent decisions.

For non-sensitive topics, it may be ok to inform parents or caregivers of the engagement in advance without seeking their consent (e.g. an anonymous survey asking children their views on recreation activities they would like to have in their community). If you are unsure about whether parental consent is required we advise you to seek parental consent to be safe.

2. Is your engagement ethical?

Your engagement with children should never cause them harm. As well as seeking consent, you will need to ensure that:
- adults working directly with children are experienced or trained to work with children, and they are screened and police vetted.
- if the nature of your enquiry is deeply personal for the child or young person you seek ethical advice and approval from an ethics committee.
- when children share information that identifies risks to themselves or others, the right support is provided to them.
- children are not stigmatised or discriminated against in your process.
- individual children are not identified when you report your results.
- when possible, you should report back to the children how the information influenced decision making.

3. Will your engagement with children be inclusive of all children?

Children are diverse in age, ethnicity, culture, vulnerabilities, and disabilities. You should consider how your engagement activities will be inclusive for all children. This may require individuals who have the experience and expertise to engage with some child population groups.

Aug 2022 - This document is provided as a starting point, and is a living document developed by the Mai World team at the Office of the Children's Commissioner

Resource 2: Consent form template to ensure mokopuna are providing informed consent to be involved in your engagements.

Consent Form

Please tick yes in the boxes if you agree to the following:

I have been told about the _____ project and why _____ from _____ [organisation] are here. I agree to take part. ☐

I understand that the project team, and my family, will be the only ones who know I have taken part in this project. ☐

I also understand that if I say something about a serious risk to me or someone else, that _____ will need to tell someone so they can get help. They will talk to me first though.

If I need some help I can ask, and I will get support. ☐

I understand that I don't have to answer every question and I can choose to stop participating at any time. ☐

I have been told that what I say might be used in reports that are shared or published publicly by people who work at _____ [organisation] ☐

I understand that if my views are shared or published, I will remain anonymous. That means no one will know it's me that has said things that are in the reports. ☐

I know that this activity is being recorded by a scribe or dictaphone, and that photos will be taken of my writing and artwork but not of me. Anything recorded will be kept secure and safe. ☐

If I want, I can add to this consent form by writing extra things on the back of this piece of paper. ☐

If you need one of us to talk you through the information again before you sign, please feel free to ask us.

Is there anything you want to tell us before you sign this?

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Resource 2: Consent form template to ensure mokopuna are providing informed consent to be involved in your engagements.

Consent Form

Child or young person:

I agree to take part in the Group Session at _____

My name _____ **Signature** _____

Date _____

Do any of the following describe you?

☐ I have a disability
☐ I am a refugee or have refugee background
☐ I have migrated to New Zealand recently

Parent/Caregiver/Legal Guardian:

I agree to my child _____ **participating in the activity.**
(name)

Age of Child _____

Ethnicity _____

Signed _____

[Optional information]

Whakapapa (Iwi/Hapū) _____

Do any of the following describe you?

☐ I have a disability
☐ I am a refugee or have refugee background
☐ I have migrated to New Zealand recently

Should our team know anything about your child so that we can support them to participate?

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Resource 3: Recording template to record the perspectives of mokopuna within your engagement programmes.

Voices Template

Please complete the below grid at the end of each of your interviews or focus groups:

Note: Please add boxes to the below template as necessary to include all information gathered, including additional questions asked and responses from participants.

Date:	
Reference code for participant/ engagement (same as on consent form)	
Facilitator:	
Engagement type:	
Location:	
Organisation:	

Introductory questions: (Use discretion when asking these questions – not appropriate in some contexts, or will come up organically during some conversations)	
Demographic information • Only collect information you have gained informed consent for • Only collect information that is necessary	

Recording the voices during and then after the session:				
Questions to explore	**Prompt questions and guidance (only use what's relevant, and adapt for participants)**	**What the participants tell you (evidence)**	**First impressions, observations, key things to note for further analysis and to support insights process (complete at the end of the session)**	**Analysis and insights drawn from the korero (complete during de-brief and after the session)**
Q1				
Q2				
Anything else?				

Post engagement evaluation discussion	
Reflections on practice	
Changes to approach for next engagement	
General discussion	
Organisation:	

Keep photos of all raw engagement (post its, art etc.) to bring to the consensus meeting. Let children and young people take home their art etc. once you have taken photos.

At the end of each engagement, complete this template and store it, along with the consent forms, and any photos of artwork.

Any disclosures? Yes/No

Summary of any pastoral care follow ups. Note what was needed by child and how you responded.

Record of any Incidences

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Korowai Tupu

We've named this journal

Kaiparahuarahi

to honour the trailblazers who humbly create paths where there was not a way before.

This kupu was gifted by the late Matua Bruce Stewart in the build up to the first Ara Taiohi wānanga.

We will continue to invite specific people to share unique perspectives from the multifaceted youth development sector. We also really like publishing ideas that were previously unpublished, like something someone's talked about often in workshops, or emerging trends in our practice.

The existing three issues have presented a wide range of experiences from the field. This journal is a chance to capture the evolution of our mahi in real time.

VOLUME 1:

- Number 1 celebrated 20 years of Youth Work ethics in 2017. Originally conceived as a one-off publication, an irregular journal emerged naturally.
- Number 2 explored Mana Taiohi principles in practice, shortly after the launch in 2019.
- Number 3 recorded a series of blogs written during the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.
- Number 4 captured definitions of the Youth Work profession after emerging kōrero in 2021.

VOLUME 2:

- Number 1 begins right here: unpacking the ins and outs of Whai Wāhitanga 3 years on from the principles graduation from Youth Participation.

Got something to say?

It could be published in a future issue of Kaiparahuarahi.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO READ ABOUT IN FUTURE ISSUES?

Send us an email: admin@arataiohi.org.nz
Subject: Kaiparahuarahi.

This journal is a little bit different. We aim to reflect the diverse and developing practice of Youth Work in Aotearoa New Zealand. That means we welcome contributions in various shapes, sizes and forms. That's right: there's no word limit, no style guide and no money. All contributions are voluntary. The editors might offer you some feedback and do a tiny amount of grammatical polishing, but generally we avoid censorship and promote free and honest voices.

Tukutuku design - artist's statement

Tokarārangi Poa

He uri ahau nō Te Awa Tupua. Nō Ngāti Rangi, Te Ātihaunuiāpāpārangi, Ngā Ruahine, Ngāti Ruanui, Ngāti Maniapoto, Waikato, Ngāti Porou, Te Whānau a Apanui, Whakatohea me Ngāpuhi hoki.

Ka tū au I ngā ripo tupua e mārohirohi ki ngā rekereke e. Nā wai te ihi? Nā wai te mana? Nā rātau kua whetūrangitia. Nā reira, kautau kua tukutukuhia ngā Whare kōrero o tēnā marae, o tēnā marae, tae noa ki a koe Te Tikaraina, maringi noa aku wai kamo i runga i te aroha.

Nā reira, kautau, tātau, ngā waihotanga, mouri ora ō Nuku, mouri ora ō Rangi, tihei mouri ora!

These designs were inspired by the tukutuku housed in Tikaraina Ringapoto at Maungarongo Marae. The works are very different, however they share some patterns in common, particularly the whetu in the middle. The concept behind these designs speak to the experience of taiohi growing up in this world.

They begin as mouri, a living energy with its own nature. As they explore the world they start to build their foundations and values, which is interpreted here as the eight whetu, or perhaps the eight Mana Taiohi principles. The white crosses in the background are the many whetu that decorate our world - our people, our families and our homes. The faint brown patterns represent the hononga that are created in these interactions between the taiohi, their principles and their whetū. The green and red patterns symbolize the giving and receiving of the taiohi, te aroha atu, te aroha mai.

Kaiparahuarahi: Aotearoa's youth work journal

Volume 2 Number 1 October 2022

Whai Wāhitanga: Rediscovering the Future of Youth Participation

AraTaiohi
Peak Body for Youth Development

Korowai Tupu