



Whānaungatanga

Jono Harrison

He kokonga whare e kitea, he kokonga ngākau e kore e kitea.

A corner of a house is visible but a corner of the heart is not.

He hono tangata e kore e motu.

A strong bond that will never break.

The two whakataukī above are both whakataukī of whanaungatanga, the essence of people being strengthened by their relationships. “He kokonga whare e kitea, he kokonga ngākau e kore e kitea” refers to having limitless appreciation and love for all the whānau. “He hono tangata e kore e motu” referring to togetherness is strength, and being together creates an unbreakable bond.

Whanaungatanga is about developing and maintaining quality relationships with all young people and encouraging young people to build to that – Whanaungatanga – consistently building a wider whānau network.

Quality relationships are built on the foundations of whanaungatanga through making and acknowledging the inter-generational connections to the community we live in. Connecting with young people through whakapapa, knowing who they are and where they come from.

Rural communities come with many advantages, such as having the ability to actually connect with people and knowing the people you are connecting with. The culture of whanaungatanga in a rural community stems differently from that of the busy life of a big city.

I interviewed 10 different people – some youth workers, some young people and our youth leadership group. I asked each person to answer “**Whanaungatanga to me is...**”

“What you do at the start of meeting with somebody, showing manaaki, aroha and respect that impacts on the rest of somebody’s life.”

“Whanaungatanga is acceptance, warmth compassion and togetherness. It’s the waka that holds all relationships.”

“Whanaungatanga is compulsory, it’s what you are born into in communities like ours.”

“Whanaungatanga is the connectedness that keeps communities alive.”

“Whanaungatanga is care, endless love, support and guidance.”

“Whanaungatanga is about whānau being there supporting each other. Loving each other through the good, the bad, the ugly. The working togetherness of more than one person to help achieve the same goal. A happy family, breaking it down and everyone doing what they can do to help them reach their goal.”

We can all agree that whanaungatanga is simply what you do, one’s everyday life would revolve around whanaungatanga, just being present in young people’s worlds’ is whanaungatanga. Having formed quality relationships and connecting young people to other agencies, services, young people, places this is all creating and expanding a young person’s pool of whānau.

Whanaungatanga is the crucial component to every young person’s journey, giving young people the ability to have somewhere they can stand and stand proud. Their own place of belonging, their connection to the whenua, to the people, to the world.

Whanaungatanga is having the ability to go to the people and asking for support. Having the recognition as a professional but more seen as a person, as an aunty, a uncle, a friend, as whānau which gives us an advantage when working with young people.

Often in rural communities we are left out of service development so rural communities have services that tend to do a lot more than what contracts allow, adapting to the needs of our communities and our young people. This all helps support the connectedness of whanaungatanga.

Nā,

Jono Harrison and the team at TCYS!

Poipoia te kakano kia puāwai.

**Nurture the seed,
for it will grow.**

Jono Harrison and the team at Tararua Community Youth Services are incredibly busy doing amazing things with rangatahi in Dannevirke.