



Whānau Ora
COMMISSIONING AGENCY

The Whānau Ora Journal
WHĀNAU ORA VOICES

*Special Edition:
The voices and experiences behind the
Whānau Ora response to COVID-19*





Ko Whānau Ora te korowai kia tiakina te whakapapa. Rau ringa ka oti ai te mahi.

Whānau Ora is the cloak that protects whakapapa. Many hands make light work.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency Journal will uphold and explore the principles of Whānau Ora through the diverse voices of practitioners, researchers and whānau. The journal will provide a platform for Whānau Ora-centred insights and knowledge to inform and inspire positive change for whānau, both here in Aotearoa New Zealand and in other indigenous communities across the world. Whānau Ora is about supporting indigenous whānau to achieve their aspirations for health, wellbeing and prosperity. The journal will reflect this kaupapa by publishing articles that speak to the resilience and strength of whānau, hapū, iwi, hāpori and other Indigenous collectives to build better futures for themselves and their whānau.

The Whānau Ora Journal Whānau Ora Voices Special Edition:
The voices and experiences behind the Whānau Ora response to COVID-19

Edited by:
Professor Meihana Durie
Hector Kaiwai

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Whānau Ora



CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	7
PREFACE	8
Merepeka Raukawa-Tait, Chair, Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency	
FOREWORD	11
John Tamihere, Chief Executive Officer, Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency	
FOR THE READER	12
EDITORIAL	14
Professor Meihana Durie	
SETTING THE SCENE	16
A WHĀNAU AND THEIR STORY OF CONTRACTING COVID-19	18
– An interview with the Kaha whānau [pseudonym]	
RESPONSE TO IMPACTS ON FORESTRY DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN	22
– An interview with Ruby White	
MĀTĀTOA	26
A FRANTIC WARNING FROM ITALY: THE AROHA EVERYONE HAD FOR EACH OTHER	28
– As told by Willow Salvador	
ACTING ON GUT INSTINCT: LEADING A SUCCESSFUL RESPONSE FOR RAUKURA HAUORA O TAINUI	30
– An interview with Terina Moke	
THE DESPERATE RACE FOR PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT FROM CHINA: IT WAS LIKE WAR	33
– As told by Christine Wu	
APANUI WORLD: HOW APANUI ESTABLISHED A SUPERMARKET WITHIN A WEEK	36
– As told by Liisa Wharepapa	
KAUMĀTUA/RANGATAHI	42
INCREASING KAUMĀTUA DIGITAL LITERACY IN KAWERAU	44
– As told by Bree Solomon	
HOW RAUAWAAWA KAUMĀTUA CHARITABLE TRUST SUPPORTED THEIR COMMUNITY THROUGH THE PANDEMIC	48
– An interview with Rangimahora Reddy, Mary-Anne Tainui and Royce Richards	
RANGATAHI MAKE POSITIVE HEADLINES DURING THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN	52
– An interview with Nadine Hapuku, Georgia Barnett, Koia Tēpana, Kewene Cave, Jovita Williams and Cora Lambert	
RANGATAHI DEVELOPS INNOVATIVE SOFTWARE FOR NGĀTI HINE HEALTH	54
– An interview with Waimate Wihongi and Jonette Chapman	
ENGAGING YOUTH, SOUTH AUCKLAND STYLES	56
– As told by Te Kaha O Te Rangatahi	
WHANAUNGATANGA IN WHIRINAKI LED BY FATHER OF SEVEN	62
– An interview with Dwayne Rawiri and Mary Korewha	
WAIRUATANGA	66
A TIME FOR PAPATŪĀNUKU TO HEAL: THE WAIRUA HAS EVERYTHING TO DO WITH THE KĀINGA, THE HOME, THE WHENUA, THE LAND	68
– As told by Maria Hoko	
‘THEY ARE MAGIC PEOPLE TO ME’: THE WHĀNAU ORA DIPLOMA: STUDYING DURING COVID-19	72
– Author: Donna Morrison	

KOTAHITANGA	76
‘WE’RE LIKE COUSINS, TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE’ – As told by the Kotahitanga Collective	78
Papakura Marae – Tony Kake	81
Turuki Health Care – Te Puea Winiata	82
Huakina Development Trust – Maria Clarke	84
Manurewa Marae – Takutai Kemp	86
ESTABLISHING A COMMUNITY SAFE ZONE WITH APANUI	88
– An interview with Ora Barlow	
MAHI TAHI 101 AT THE WAIPAREIRA COVID-19 TESTING CENTRE	92
– Author: Chris Smythe	
WORKING TOGETHER IS THE WAY FORWARD	98
– As told by Erena Mikaere, Elijah Pue, Melanie Evans and Megan Howell	
WHANAUNGATANGA	102
WHĀNAU FELT SO COMFORTABLE THEY TURNED UP ON HORSE OR BIKE WITH THEIR DOG	104
– Author: Anna Hughes	
STRENGTHENING TIES BETWEEN TE AO HOU TRUST AND TE WHĀNAU-A-APANUI	108
– An interview with Memory Mio and Rangikia O’Brien	
‘WITHOUT WHĀNAU WE DON’T HAVE ANYTHING’: FACING PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL CHALLENGES ON THE FRONTLINE	114
– An interview with Gail Poihipi	
TINO RANGATIRATANGA	118
WE ARE HERE TO SERVE OUR WHĀNAU	120
– As told by Hayden Wano	
THEY NEEDED US MORE THAN WE NEEDED THEM: ASSERTING MANA MOTUHAKE IN THE BUREAUCRACY OF THE PANDEMIC	124
– As told by Materoa Mar	
HANDLING THE EMERGENCY RESPONSE IN THE WHANGANUI REGION – As told by Wheturangi Walsh-Tapiata	126
THE BONDS OF TE ARAWA HOLD STRONG AND TRUE – As told by Jenny Kaka-Scott	131
MANAAKITANGA	134
MANAAKITANGA: THE PRIDE OF AHURIRI – As told by Tessa Robin	136
SURVIVING LOCKDOWN THROUGH GENEROSITY AND AROHA IN THE FAR NORTH – An interview with Jessica Hobson (Jess) and Tania Edwards	138
HARNESSING WHĀNAU CONNECTIONS THROUGH DANCE - An interview with Alice (pseudonym) and Mary Korewha	142
DIVOC – TURNING THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC AROUND – Author: George Kingi	144
STEPPING UP RESOURCES FOR WHĀNAU: BEHIND THE SCENES – An interview with the Whānau Direct Team	148
BUILDING A NEW FUTURE THROUGH TE AO MĀORI – Author: Joseph Andrews	151
GLOSSARY	154
WHAKAMARAMA, UNDERSTANDING THE COVER	156



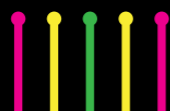


**Tēnei te whakapāoho atu nei i te reo
whaakaaraara ki te tī, ki te tā
E ngā maunga whakahī, e ngā pari
karangaranga, e ngā tai e whā o te motu
Huri atu ngā mihi ki a koutou katoa e whai
kaha ana ki te manaaki i te taha whānau
Ko Whānau Ora tēnei e whai atu ana i ngā
kōrero whakamārama
I te kauperenga o te iti me
te rahi i Te Mate Urutā
Tēnā tukua mai o kōrero hei whare ako, hei
whare kōrero, hei whāre wānanga**

Mō ngā iwi katoa e tau nei.

**Broadcasting a voice of
awakening to the multitudes
To the lofty mountains, the many kinships,
and the tides of the country.
Turning to honour you whom have the
strength to care for whānau.
This is Whānau Ora
acquiring enlightenment
in the fight of many against COVID-19.
Bring forth those narrations to house
learning, discussion, and education**

For all that are here.



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The editorial team would like to thank all of those who have contributed to this special edition of The Whānau Ora Journal Whānau Ora Voices Special Edition: The voices and experiences behind the Whānau Ora response to COVID-19 March 2020 to June 2021. We are deeply grateful to the Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency², their partners and whānau (families) from across Te Ika-a-Māui, North Island of Aotearoa, New Zealand for sharing their kōrero (stories), trials and triumphs in responding to COVID-19. In particular we would like to thank the following contributors:

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- › Joseph Andrews (Ngāti Whātua, Ngā Puhi)
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- › Kewene Cave (Ngāti Maniapoto)
- › Koia (Sherkquoia) Tēpana (Ngāti Raukawa)
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- › Maria Hoko (Ngāti Tūwharetoa)
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- › Mel Pakai-Evans (Ngāti Kahungunu)
- › Memory Mio (Ngāi Tai, Te Whakatōhea, Te Whānau-a-Apanui, Tūhoe, Ngāti Porou)
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- › Nadine Hapuku (Ngāti Wai, Ngāti Hine)
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- › Nicole Teava (Ngāti Whātua, Te Uri o Hau)
- › Ora Barlow (Te Whānau-a-Apanui)
- › Paris Daley (Ngāti Wai, Ngāti Porou)
- › Rangikia O'Brien (Te Whānau-a-Apanui, Otuwhare)
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- › Ruby White (Ngāi Tūhoe, Te Aitanga-a-Hauiti)
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- › Tessa Robin (Ngā Puhi, Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Tūwharetoa)
- › Tony Kake (Ngāti Hau ki Ngā Puhi, Ngāti Mahuta, Ngāti Whawhakia Waikato Tainui)
- › Waimate Wihongi (Ngā Puhi)
- › Wheturangi Walsh-Tapiata (Te Ātiawa, Taranaki Tūturu, Ngāti Ruanui, Ngārauru, Ngāti Rangī, Te Ātihaunui-a-Pāpārangi, Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga)
- › Willow Salvador (Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Tūwharetoa)

We would also like to acknowledge Te Whānau o Waipareira whose journal, Te Kura Nui o Waipareira³ provided the spark and impetus for this special edition Whānau Ora Journal and provided an initial framework that the editorial team was able to leverage and build upon.

Finally, we extend our sincere thanks to all those who have worked tirelessly to support and care for our whānau during this difficult time. We hope that the stories contained within this journal will provide inspiration and guidance for all those working towards a safe, healthy, and prosperous future for our whānau and communities.

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou,

The Editorial Team

¹ Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.

² The Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency is contracted by Te Puni Kōkiri (Ministry of Māori Development) to invest in initiatives and services for communities in the North Island. Commissioning Agencies work with their communities to determine the best ways to support their development.

³ Te Kura Nui o Waipareira was launched by Te Whānau o Waipareira in 2017 as a way of highlighting and documenting the impacts of Māori-led whānau-centred strategies, services and initiatives across the broad dimensions of health, wellbeing, social, educational, environmental and economic domains.



PREFACE

As Māori we have a high degree of humility when it comes to our achievements and our robustness. Whilst character building, when it comes to COVID-19 we should not hesitate to acknowledge just how pragmatic, resilient and effective we are.

It is not through accolades that we measure how successful we are and continue to be. It is through the voices of whānau and their memories that we were fortunate to capture during one of the most historic times in Aotearoa.

I am regularly asked why Whānau Ora¹ was so triumphant in our response to COVID-19. There is no secret or magic to our methods. We anticipated the needs of our people because we live in their communities, we have loved ones residing there and because we are all one whānau who unequivocally support one another.

I feel a great sense of pride reading all of the wonderful moments encapsulated in time through the experiences of our kaimahi and whānau. Whānau Ora played a pivotal role during this crucial period when we were all feeling anxious and uncertain.

Those feelings drove us to respond automatically, switching into gear, setting off a wave of rapid response to support, and connect with our people no matter where or who they were. Our priority was our people, our kaumatua, whānau and one another.

Our distribution network was immediate and effective delivering much needed hygiene supplies and kai. But we never stopped there. We went above and beyond from establishing a much-needed supermarket in a remote community, to our kaumatua designing and making essential face masks at their kitchen table.

These incredible stories will generate many emotions; surprise, shock, relief, sadness and joy. I am impressed and humbled by the sheer honesty of these whānau who have generously given their time to share their experiences with you and I. Many of whom were overcoming other challenges as well as COVID-19.

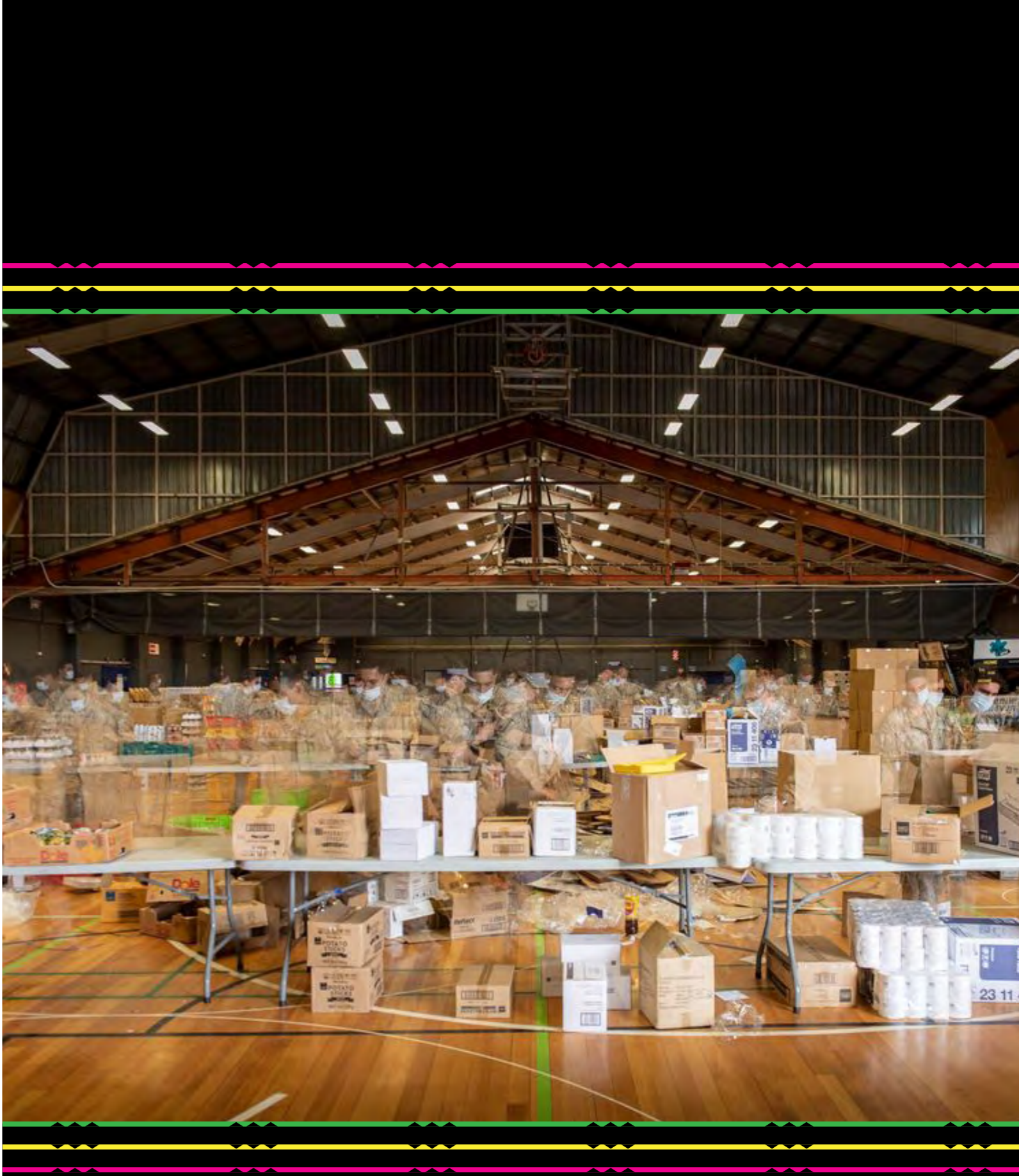
We can stand up and say how incredible we were collectively because we have the results to prove it.

I hope you enjoy the remarkable kōrero in this special edition, Whānau Ora Journal. It is shared with unlimited aroha and tautoko. It is a true demonstration of the ‘Whānau Ora Way’ – by Māori, for Māori, with Māori.

Merepeka Raukawa-Tait
Chair
Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency²



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² The Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency is contracted by Te Puni Kōkiri (Ministry of Māori Development) to invest in initiatives and services for communities in the North Island. Commissioning Agencies work with their communities to determine the best ways to support their development.



Kākaho kotahi ka whati, Ki te kapuia, e kore e whati. Alone we can be broken, Standing together, we are invincible!





Hui Tūhono, Otiria Marae, Moerewa –Kokiritia I Roto I Te Kotahitanga, Progressively Acting In Unity.

FOREWORD

No matter what role you play in Whānau Ora¹ it goes without saying that we all should be deeply proud of ourselves and the fearless workforce we collectively generated in response to COVID-19 in 2020.

More recently this workforce automatically and instinctively responded to the Delta outbreak in Aotearoa. Our people were at the frontline from whatever position they hold in this organisation with kai and hygiene packs. As a massive collective we were at the testing stations around the motu and ready to protect our people with vaccination clinics in large stadiums, marae and mobile units. Whānau Ora does not need to be shown what to do, we in fact led the way. It is no longer about eliminating COVID-19, it is about protecting our whakapapa and ensuring all Māori have access to vaccines.

This journal is pulling back the curtain to expose the realities of life for so many of us in our first encounter with COVID-19. From our very senior executives to front-line staff, from our people protecting their region to a Matamata whānau describing what it is really like to test positive.

These whānau stories are raw, they are real and I want to thank each and every one of them for allowing their memories to be shared here.

You will experience the challenges they faced and overcame both professionally and personally, something that is a true testament to the resilience of the people in this organisation – a resilience which knows no bounds.

There is no doubt 2020 exposed us to emotions that we were not prepared for, changes to our lifestyle that we instinctively adjusted to whilst also checking on our neighbours over the fence. We grew, we bonded, we experienced sadness, triumph and uncertainty.

We also collectively know that we could not and will not rely on the Government to anticipate our needs and wants. It is a fact that we led from the front.

That is mana motuhake at its finest.

COVID-19 showcases our forward-thinking mentality while encapsulating the diversity of all our kaimahi from the first confirmed case here in Aotearoa. Our Chinese kaimahi utilised their international networks to source thousands of critical hygiene packs to be shipped from China straight to us and then distributed throughout our Whānau Ora Network within days.

There was no mandate to work from, no guidance from our administration, we were drafting the blueprint as we went along. This confirms our instincts are accurate as we continue to protect and support our people in the communities we work and live in.

Whānau Ora is about ngākau Māori – our commitment to the development and display of cultural values, whanaungatanga, aroha, manaakitanga, whakapapa and wairuatanga.

This is The Whānau Ora Journal Whānau Ora Voices Special Edition: The voices and experiences behind the Whānau Ora response to COVID-19 – a time we thrust our pou in the ground and showed everyone else how it should be done, and how we always do it: From the front.

John Tamihere
Chief Executive Officer
Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency²



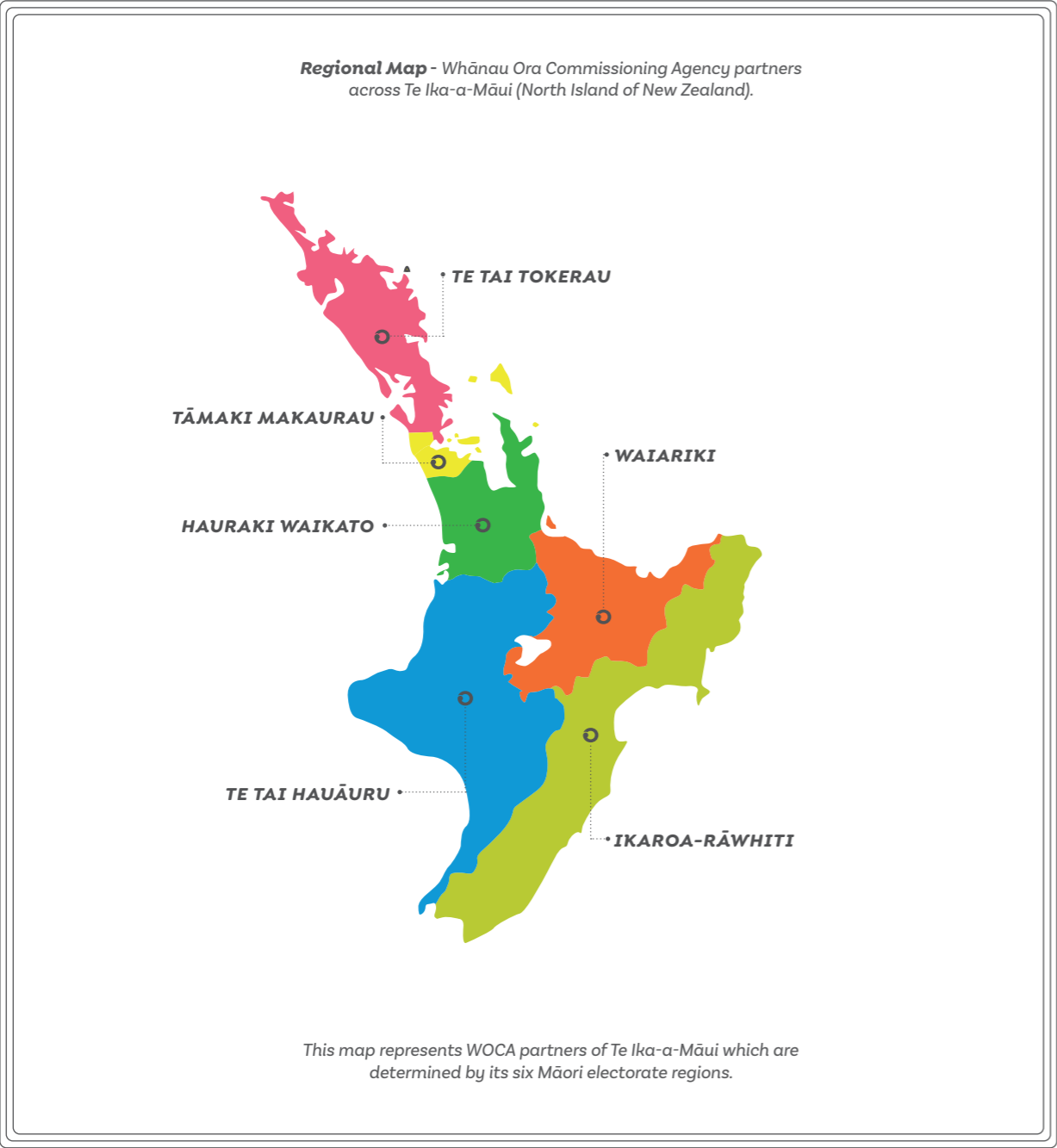
¹ Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.
² The Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency is contracted by Te Puni Kōkiri (Ministry of Māori Development) to invest in initiatives and services for communities in the North Island. Commissioning Agencies work with their communities to determine the best ways to support their development.



FOR THE READER

This journal issue builds upon the platform provided by Te Kura Nui o Waipareira¹, a research journal launched by Te Whānau o Waipareira in 2017 as a way of highlighting and documenting the impacts of Māori-led whānau (family)-centred strategies, services, and initiatives across the broad dimensions of health, wellbeing, social, educational, environmental and economic domains. Issue I, Whanaungatanga, focussed on the inextricable connections forged between people and communities. Issue II, Manaakitanga, explored ways in which Māori and Indigenous communities are nourished and nurtured through care of provision reflecting manaakitanga. Issue III highlighted the ways in which the concept of kotahitanga, or unity, was given emphasis through strength-based initiatives at whānau and community levels.

This Whānau Ora special edition journal seeks to uphold and continue to explore the principles of whanaungatanga (relationship building), manaakitanga, and kotahitanga, and emergent themes of mātātoa (courage), kaumātua/rangatahi (elders/youth), wairuatanga (spirituality) and tino rangatiratanga (sovereignty) through the diverse voices of Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency²



(WOCA) partners and the whānau and communities they serve. While each of these stories transverse multiple kaupapa (themes), the editorial team has tried their best to align each story to the values or kaupapa that are most evident within each account. This form of categorising seeks to both highlight and demonstrate the ways in which WOCA partners have given unbridled expression to the Whānau Ora kaupapa, and help guide the reader on a journey that traverses the various accounts.

The reader will notice that the journal has been divided into several sections, each marked by kaupapa and followed by a short description of the purpose (kaupapa) of that section.

Accordingly, the first section titled ‘Setting the Scene’ is exactly that. It provides some context for the COVID-19 pandemic in Aotearoa (New Zealand), specifically as it relates to the challenges and realities that partners and whānau faced and experienced in the early days and weeks of the pandemic and how WOCA partners and their teams used Whānau Ora values as a framework to develop new services and initiatives or adapt and pivot existing ones in order to meet the needs of whānau.

The following section looks at the value of mātātoa, which speaks to the courage, determination, and perseverance required in overcoming adversity. COVID-19 has been a formidable adversary and one that has impacted our whānau and communities in ways that we could never have imagined. The first section of this journal captures the resolute nature of our WOCA partners and whānau and their refusal to succumb to the challenges that COVID-19 has presented.

The next section of this journal is dedicated to the value of kaumātua/rangatahi. COVID-19 has shone a light on the vulnerabilities and strengths of our elders and rangatahi, and the ways in which they have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. In this section, we hear from WOCA partners and whānau about the innovative ways in which they have sought to support and care for our kaumātua as well as the important role that rangatahi played in supporting their whānau and communities during COVID-19.

The third value of this journal is wairuatanga, which recognises the spiritual wellbeing of our whānau and communities. COVID-19 has had a profound impact on the mental health and wellbeing of our people, and in this section, we hear from WOCA partners about the role of wairuatanga in supporting the wellbeing of whānau, particularly in terms of how partners used wairuatanga as an important connecting and healing force.

The fourth value explores kotahitanga, or unity, and the way in which Whānau Ora partners have worked together to respond to COVID-19. These stories showcase the importance of collaboration, the ways in which providers have joined forces to support one another, and how communities have come together to care for their own.

The fifth section explores the value of whanaungatanga, and the way in which relationships are everything when it comes to providing care and support. These stories explore how providers have gone above and beyond to maintain contact with whānau, how whānau have stepped up to support one another, and how communities have come together to care for their own.

The next section explores tino rangatiratanga, or self-determination, and how this has been evident in the way Whānau Ora partners have responded to COVID-19. These stories showcase the importance of self-determination in times of crisis, the ways in which providers have stepped up to support their communities, and how whānau have taken charge of their own wellbeing.

The seventh and final section looks at the value of manaakitanga, and the way in which providers have demonstrated care and compassion in their response to COVID-19. These stories highlight the importance of self-care, the ways in which providers have gone above and beyond to care for their communities, and how whānau have stepped up to support one another.

The reader will also notice several ‘Feature’ stories sprinkled throughout the journal for your enjoyment. The purpose of these stories is to provide the reader with a mental “palette cleanser”, that is, a moment to linger, digest, and reflect as you work your way through this incredibly rich and substantial journal. Without giving too much away, these stories speak to a different aspect of the Whānau Ora COVID-19 response and how it has positively affected those involved. From Whānau Ora teams working together to get things done to the importance of culture and tradition in everything they do, to the career changes that some have made as a result of their experiences, it is clear that Whānau Ora is making a difference in the lives of those involved.

The editorial team has also attempted to retain the voices of our contributors as much as possible in order to provide an authentic and rich account of the COVID-19 response. Hence, this journal is in no way typical of an academic research journal. Rather, it is a COVID-19 Whānau Ora special edition that provides an opportunity for our WOCA partners and whānau to share their COVID-19 kōrero (stories) with a broader readership.

We hope you enjoy reading this COVID-19 Whānau Ora special edition journal and that it provides some insights into the amazing work that our WOCA partners are doing in Aotearoa to support and care for our whānau during these unprecedented times.

¹ Te Kura Nui o Waipareira was launched by Te Whānau o Waipareira in 2017 as a way of highlighting and documenting the impacts of Māori-led whānau-centred strategies, services and initiatives across the broad dimensions of health, wellbeing, social, educational, environmental and economic domains.
² The Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency is contracted by Te Puni Kōkiri (Ministry of Māori Development) to invest in initiatives and services for communities in the North Island. Commissioning Agencies work with their communities to determine the best ways to support their development.



EDITORIAL

The profound impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to be felt here in Aotearoa (New Zealand) and around the world. For Māori communities, the emergence of this virus both reaffirmed and exacerbated ongoing inequities for whānau (families). It is well documented that Māori face a number of challenges and barriers in the healthcare system including higher levels of comorbidities (e.g., chronic diseases including respiratory diseases), barriers to accessing medical resources, and more broadly racism and poverty – all factors that make Māori particularly susceptible to the social, health and economics of COVID-19. The inadequacy of mainstream public health and social services to protect whānau and respond, and persistent historical social and health inequities, confirmed the need amongst Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency¹ (WOCA) partners to front-foot a community-led and tailored response for Māori in Te Ika-a-Māui (the North Island of New Zealand). The overall New Zealand response to COVID-19 has been heralded internationally, with the Māori response being described as ‘even harder and faster’ than the central Government response. Certainly key to the Māori response was the wellbeing and protective factors offered by core Māori values and principles, and the powerful platform this provided for collective impact.

Accordingly, this special edition Whānau Ora Journal brings together the kōrero (stories), trials, and triumphs of WOCA partners and whānau from across Te Ika-a-Māui in response to the arrival of COVID-19. Each account highlights the sheer determination, innovation, creativity, and unwavering fortitude of partners and whānau in seeking to protect and care for themselves and their communities.

An invitation to contribute to the journal was sent out to WOCA partners in March 2021, with offers to contribute coming in thick and fast. The generosity and sheer volume of contributions from WOCA partners and whānau, despite the pressures and challenges of COVID-19, were both humbling and staggering. Partners contributed a total of 31 stories from the regions of Te Tai Tokerau, Tāmaki Makaurau, Hauraki-Waikato, Waiariki, Ikaroa-Rāwhiti, and Te Tai Hauāuru.

Unlike in previous years, support writers were also made available for any contributor who required help putting their stories together. This process resulted in a diverse range of stories. Some were self-authored with the help of our support writer team. Other stories were told in interviews with our support writers who wrapped further context around the story. We also have many first-person accounts which were taken from interviews that were edited for clarity. All our stories have been peer-reviewed.

It is the 2020 response, in particular, that has provided the primary impetus for this journal. You will read stories of amazing resilience, innovation and enterprise, inspirational leadership, rugged determination and unwavering belief in the collective capacity of whānau. You will read first-hand accounts of how the distinctive leadership and diverse talents of our iwi (tribes), hapū (subtribes), and communities have been activated to care for and to look after one another. Each story is aligned to the values or kaupapa (theme) that are most evident within each account. This form of categorising seeks to highlight and demonstrate the ways in which WOCA partners have given unbridled expression to the Whānau Ora² kaupapa (initiative).

In many ways, this special edition journal represents far more than just accounts of collective responses to COVID-19. It provides a seminal precis of what can be achieved when Māori have autonomy over critical decision-making processes that ultimately affect the welfare and wellbeing of Māori. This special edition journal also signifies the growing advancement and prominence of Whānau Ora and its kaupapa. The kaupapa of Whānau Ora is founded on the values of manaakitanga (hospitality and care), whanaungatanga (family relationships), aroha (compassion), rangatiratanga (chiefly authority and leadership), kaitiakitanga (stewardship and guardianship), wairuatanga (spirituality) and mauri (life force). The Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency partners are at the cutting edge of values-based service delivery, working within their communities to support whānau to achieve their aspirational goals.

These stories should also serve as a powerful message to Government decision-makers and members of Opposition alike, that Whānau Ora works. It works because it places the greatest needs and aspirations of whānau at the centre of everything. It works because the efforts of WOCA and their partners are guided by the kaupapa, or values, passed down to them by their tūpuna, their ancestors. It works because it is an approach that is informed by the evolving mātauranga (knowledge) of Māori and the rangatiratanga of our kaumātua (elders) and pakeke (adults). And it works because tikanga Māori, Māori practices, reflect values that are grounded in Māori ways of knowing and doing.

Since these stories were collated, COVID-19 has returned once again to Aotearoa, by way of the Delta, and more recently Omicron, variants. Both of these strains are far more transmissible and infectious than COVID-19. The response plans of WOCA partners for whānau and communities in responding to Delta and Omicron have required even greater and more sustained efforts in protecting communities from the spread of infection from these more virulent COVID-19 strains. With the main concentration of cases centred in Tāmaki Makaurau, the greater Auckland region, Whānau Ora teams have ramped up COVID-19 testing and vaccinations. Testing stations and vaccination centres led by our Whānau Ora teams have been inundated on a daily basis. New processes and protocols have been shaped and adapted to allow response teams to quickly pivot for Delta and Omicron and to account for the critical needs of whānau. There have also been periods of frustration and anguish as self-interest and political agendas have worked to undermine the Whānau Ora response, quickly earning harsh condemnation and public criticism from Māori leaders. This, however, has not in any way lessened the impact of the Whānau Ora response to Delta and Omicron, but it has served to once again highlight the vast inequities of the existing health system. Whānau Ora provides the waka (canoe) in which whānau can navigate the ongoing risks and threats of COVID-19, while also pointing to the urgent need for systemic reform and change in how we collectively respond to pandemics and public health crises.

Professor Meihana Durie
Editor

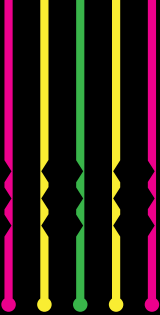


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² Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.





SETTING THE SCENE



The editorial team chose the following ‘scene-setting’ stories to give context for how COVID-19 has impacted whānau (families) and communities – and how Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency¹ (WOCA) and its partners have responded. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a trying time for everyone with the pandemic bringing a whole host of challenges, both known and unknown.


In the first story, the Kaha whānau recount their experience of being some of the first COVID-19 positive cases in the country, and one of the first whānau Māori (Māori families) to come forward to the public about it. Much like the early days of the pandemic, they wish to share their story again, in order to help other whānau by talking about the stigma they had experienced in their own communities as a result of having the virus. This family’s story is one of courage in the face of adversity. It highlights the strength and resilience of this whānau, as well as the amazing support they received from their WOCA provider, which made all the difference in getting them through this tough time.

The second story shares the experience of the Horouta Whānau Ora team who served one of the first communities in the country to face the impacts of COVID-19. Situated on the East Coast of the North Island, this community is normally dependent on the forestry industry and features a high proportion of Māori. With the pandemic shutting down timber exports to China, this signalled one of the first real impacts to Māori workers in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

The team reflects on how they responded to the pandemic and the challenges they faced. Despite these challenges, the team emerged stronger and more resilient, with a greater sense of collaboration with related health agencies. This story is also a timely reminder of the importance of supporting communities and whānau to develop new skills and knowledge, so they can build resilience in the face of change and uncertainty. The team’s work in providing much-needed services and support to their community during this difficult time is a shining example of the power of Whānau Ora²!

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A WHĀNAU AND THEIR STORY OF CONTRACTING COVID-19

REGION: HAURAKI-WAIKATO
An interview with the Kaha whānau (pseudonym) – April 2021

The Kaha whānau (family) chose honesty over secrecy in their community when they unwittingly became part of the Matamata COVID-19 cluster.

Arihia and Tāmāti Kaha have been together since meeting at Matamata College 34 years ago. Three sons and two moko (grandchildren) later, they reside in their hometown where parents, siblings and other whānau are within a twenty-minute drive. Matamata is known worldwide as Hobbiton and with over 8,000 residents it was about to make headlines for another reason.

This interview was conducted inside their warm whare with their Kaiārahi (Whānau Ora Navigator). Te Hauora o Ngāti Hauā and Te Kōhao Health helped support the whānau during their experience of COVID-19. Their sons had been expected at any time and it was not until the conclusion of this interview that their absence was explained. They had suspicions the purpose of the conversation was to enforce a COVID-19 vaccination on the family and assurances were made this was most definitely not the case.

The family can trace their link to COVID-19 back to 17 March 2020.

We had heard all about COVID on the news and we were concerned that there was going to be a lockdown and all of that. We know they had the St Patrick's Day get together at Redoubt Bar in town and our middle son, Wiremu who is 27, his brother-in-law was there. They had a dinner at their place the next night after St Patrick's Day with our daughter-in-law's family and then they came here the day before lockdown.

Daughter-in-law Hinurewa was especially concerned about COVID-19 as her toddler daughter Maia was on the waiting list to get her tonsils out. She was reluctant to visit her in-laws and told them they had already turned their garage into a gym as they did not want to go anywhere. At this stage, there had been no reported confirmed cases of COVID-19 in that area. That was about to change as Arihia soon discovered.

One day, not long after that, Wiremu got symptoms. He had a sore throat, headache and flu-like aches and pains. It was fairly well known that if you were feeling like this to go and get tested and he did. There was no testing clinic here in Matamata, the nearest one was in Te Aroha which is about a 30–40 minute drive from here. He went over with Hinurewa and at this stage she never had any symptoms. So he got tested and had to wait, as back then you had to wait a few days for your results.

Wiremu's results came back positive, sending shockwaves through the family. He isolated at his home with Hinurewa and their three-year-old daughter. A few days later, wife Hinurewa lost her sense of smell and after heading off to get tested, she too was told she was positive with COVID-19.

At this time news of the Matamata cluster had started to emerge in the media putting the town squarely in the headlights of the country.

Meanwhile, Tāmāti discovered his co-worker's partner had been working at a local bar around St Patrick's Day, so he decided to also get tested as he was considered a 'close contact'. He drove with wife Arihia to the Te Aroha testing station.

We went in the car with him – me and our eldest son, Hone, who was living here with us at the time. At this stage we didn't really know what was going on. Both Hone and myself were not told to get tested, only Tāmāti, and so he did.

Within two days a phone call to Tāmāti confirmed he had contracted COVID-19 and this was closely followed by texts confirming this. The next day a representative from the local DHB (District Health Board) was in touch and Aotearoa (New Zealand) went into lockdown.

For Tāmāti and Arihia details were scarce and they were worried about friends, family and workmates. So, Arihia posted their status publicly on Facebook.

We thought nah bugger it. They can hate us all they want but we really needed people who had been in contact with us to know, and if they felt sick to go and get tested. And at that time Matamata was blowing up with cases. We were so worried that we had given it to other people.

The reaction online was positive as people commented with their support.

Meanwhile as the Matamata cluster was growing so was the media coverage, something Tāmāti and all the Kaha whānau found very surreal to watch on the 1:00pm press conferences and evening news. *"You watch the numbers increase and then you realise that you are part of that. It made you really understand that COVID can get you no matter where you are and how careful we needed to be".*

Uncertainty prevailed in this community where positive cases were increasing daily, but Arihia says it was a daily phone call to their whare (home) that kept them calm.

The DHB were really good with us – I don't know about other people but they were so good with us. They rang us every day at 7:30am in the morning and the longer lockdown went, the longer we slept in. So those calls were like an alarm, but we really appreciated them. They were informative, supportive and always there.

Simultaneously daughter-in-law Hinurewa started feeling like she had the flu, but suspected the worst once she lost her sense of smell. A COVID-19 test came back positive but her immediate concern was three-year-old daughter Maia, sentiments shared by Tāmāti and Arihia.

At this stage we didn't know how it affected kids, all of a sudden Maia got a really high temperature and we freaked out. They got her to go to Waikato Hospital, they didn't want to take her to the doctors as her Mum and Dad had COVID and they were panicking. They didn't just want to leave her there. When patients went to Waikato they were left at the door and greeted by medical staff in PPE (personal protective equipment) gear, but they let Hinurewa go in with her once she was fully dressed in, like, hazmat gear. Hinurewa was put in an isolation room near Maia which was good. Baby girl was given Panadol and then gradually her temp went down. They observed her and once her temperature stabilised they let them both go home.

By this time both Hinurewa and Wiremu had fully recovered from COVID-19. Arihia was concerned for Tāmāti as he had been sick with the flu a few months before COVID-19 and spending a lot of time in bed.

'We still didn't know much about it. There was so little information around and his reaction was so different to Wiremu and Hinurewa. Their symptoms weren't as bad and they recovered quite quickly. I was worried about Tāmāti'.

Unable to leave the house, Arihia was struggling to find any sanitiser or hand wash online until the team from Te Hauora o Ngāti Hauā with Te Kōhao Health supported the whānau with kai (food) and hygiene boxes.

They were all in their PPE gear and they would leave them by the letterbox. They were awesome – big boxes of groceries, big packs of hygiene products. Getting those parcels was such a relief because then I didn't feel like I had to rely on anyone, thank goodness for Te Kōhao Health, we could completely isolate.

Then another family member tested positive, this time their 29-year-old son Hone who was living with them. The result shocked Arihia.

He was isolating in a separate part of the house and I was vigilant with the cleaning and sanitising and then boom, he's got COVID. Weird thing is I was tested four times and it was always negative. How they got it and I didn't is a mystery to me.

Even though Tāmāti had suffered a chest infection earlier in the year, he was not afraid for his life and described how it feels to have COVID-19.

To me it was like your balance is off and you have a really high temp. It's not like a fever and it doesn't make you sweat but it is all concentrated around your forehead and head and you're actually quite up. So when you walk you are wobbling, you are leaning to one side. You can't control that at all. All you want to do is sleep because you are so tired. You are totally drained. And you completely lose your sense of smell and taste.

There was a major turning point for Tāmāti during his time with COVID-19. A moment that he believes is the difference between succumbing to COVID-19 or surviving it.

COVID at its worst makes you feel like someone is sitting on your chest – or they have put a brick on your chest and they are pushing down. One night when I had COVID I could feel myself stop breathing and it took me right down, right down deep. But I must have been aware of it as all of a sudden it clicked, and in my sleep I gasped for breath and it woke me up. I can see how some people don't wake up in time. It's like you're holding your breath for a bit, and it's up to you to react and consciously take a breath, or just not be aware of it at all.

Arihia got tested a couple of times and both times she came back negative, something that still surprises her to this day.

It was supposed to be so highly contagious, but I never had symptoms. We were in the same house and I got tested but I was negative. We had to isolate in this house but separately. It was crazy because I should have got it. Our son Hone shut himself away in his room the whole time. To be honest I just lived like I did have it because I wanted to keep an eye on Tāmāti all the time. I wasn't that worried about myself, we were more worried that we had given it to other people. Before lockdown my parents would come over a lot – Dad's 70 and Mum is 69 and she had had a heart operation. And Tāmāti was worried that before he knew he had it, he might have passed it onto his workmates and a lot of them are older. We had no idea if any of us had been in contact with someone who had a compromised immunity system before we tested positive.

While the reaction to their honesty on Facebook was positive, in real life it was completely different which was disappointing to Tāmāti.

At this stage Matamata had blown right up, there were heaps of cases. Our daughter-in-law went to hospital here and she was identified as a member of 'that Kaha whānau that had COVID' and they would not attend to her. There was also a community testing clinic set up but they closed that down because it was known the COVID had affected the Kaha family. They made people wait in their cars or turned them around to go to Te Aroha to get tested.

Arihia is still disgusted at the amount of negative reaction.

We live in town and it should not have affected anyone in Waharoa. We put it out there for sure. We were really honest about it and I knew there would have been haters. We still didn't know if I was carrying it – they were treating me as asymptomatic.

The public reaction since Tāmāti recovered and tested negative has been mixed, some locals were hesitant to be around him, stand next to him or even serve him in their stores and even some instances of people not being honest about why they were not being tested.

You go into shops and you know the assistant but she'll just look at you, it was unwelcoming and so obvious they don't want you in there. Having COVID really brought out the good in people, and the bad. Just the way they reacted to me and the way they conducted themselves. It was disappointing.

Being part of one of the biggest COVID-19 clusters in Aotearoa still has that feel of disbelief and Arihia says the worst part of the whole experience was the unknown, was her family going to survive, and she hated relying on people.

The supermarket online delivery was always booked well in advance, but we were really restricted as we couldn't go anywhere. My sister would make the 20-minute drive to come and do our groceries. If it wasn't for Te Kōhao Health we would have solely had to rely on other people and there weren't a lot around.

When cases started appearing in smaller parts of the country COVID-19 was becoming more real for people and the stigma associated with having the infection was blatant which still disappoints Tāmāti.



It was really hard seeing your own people treat you differently. Putting our family in one box like that without knowing us, without talking to us. What they didn't know is we did not want to infect other people.

Arihia also knew there were neighbours she suspected also tested positive but they remained silent.

I knew there was a house down the road because they had their rubbish all wrapped up in big things that you had to wrap your rubbish up, all your rubbish in, to put inside your wheelie bin. Not everyone had to do that, only those with positive cases. And not everyone wanted to let that be known, I don't know anyone else that posted it on Facebook like we did.

COVID-19 also brought out the conspiracy theorists around the world, with everything from it being a way to clear out the elderly and vulnerable to those who did not believe COVID-19 existed at all. As a survivor of the disease Tāmāti laughs off the cynics.

Oh, just wake up. We watched all those documentaries about Wuhan, and they got rid of it quickly, they shut everything down like we did. The places that haven't taken it seriously are still feeling, battling it.

If it wasn't for Te Kōhao Health we would have solely had to rely on other people and there weren't a lot around.

A year later despite staying negative, Tāmāti says the effects of having COVID-19 are still there.

We've noticed that our immune systems are weaker. A common cold can take any of us right out now and we can get quite sick, whereas before we might have felt a bit off for a day or two. It's definitely affected our resistance.

Arihia also acknowledges the beneficial and long-term effects COVID-19 has had on them as a family.

Tāmāti and I got closer in our relationship. The other day we talked about being more positive, we have to be a lot more positive about everything. And as a family unit we have always been close but COVID brought us even closer. It's made us stronger.

Tāmāti agrees with his wife, *'We really discovered what we can do within our own whare along with our whānau and I really enjoyed that. It also showed us what and who is really important in our lives.'*

To this day some Matamata residents still judge the Kaha whānau for contracting COVID-19, ironically, they are the same residents Arihia and Tāmāti were trying to protect by being honest about it.



Te Kōhao Health kaimahi packing thousands of hygiene boxes for whānau.



RESPONSE TO IMPACTS ON FORESTRY DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

REGION: IKAROA-RĀWHITI
An interview with Ruby White – June 2021

I te taha o taku pāpā
Ko Kiiha te maunga
Ko Hinemateroa te awa
Ko Maatatua te waka
Ko Ngāti Tawhaki te hapu
Ko Ngāi Tūhoe te iwi
Ko Ōpūtao te marae

I te taha o taku māmā
Ko Titirangi te maunga
Ko Uawanui-a-Ruamautua te awa
Ko Tereanini te waka
Ko Ngāti Kahukuranui te hapū
Ko Te Aitanga-a-Hauiti te iwi
Ko Hinemaurea ki Mangatuna te marae

Ko Ruby White tōku ingoa

On my father’s side
The mountain is Kiiha
The river is Hinemateroa
The canoe is Maatatua
The subtribe is Ngāti Tawhaki
The tribe is Ngāi Tūhoe
The meeting place is Ōpūtao

On my mother’s side
The mountain is Titirangi
The river is Uawanui-a-Ruamautua
The canoe is Tereanini
The subtribe is Ngāti Kahukuranui
The tribe is Te Aitanga-a-Hauiti
The meeting place is Hinemaurea at Mangatuna

My name is Ruby White

It was Monday 3 February 2020 and whānau (families) were waking up to the news that it was going to be one of the hottest days of the summer with temperatures estimated to reach 40 degrees in Ikaroa-Rāwhiti. That news was soon overtaken with the announcement that China was ceasing all imports from Gisborne due to the escalating Coronavirus cases. The forestry industry ground to a halt and the Tairāwhiti (Northeast Coast of the North Island) community was in disarray.

COVID-19 saw millions of Chinese stop working due to their lockdowns and inevitably this rolled down to the ports. While supply was robust in Aotearoa (New Zealand), there was no one at the other end to unload the ships. Adding to that, around 90 percent of the volume of logs from Gisborne usually get exported to China and 75 percent of forestry workers are Māori.

Horouta Whānau Ora Collective (Horouta) was asked by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) for assistance as their system was unable to respond to the crisis or the immediate needs of impacted forestry workers. Horouta immediately mobilised Kaiārahi (Whānau Ora Navigators) to engage with whānau to bridge the urgent financial needs of affected forestry employees.

Ruby White has been a Kaiārahi (Whānau Ora Navigator) lead for Horouta since 2018 after returning from Australia with her whānau to settle in Gisborne. Ruby knew the Whānau Ora¹ model matched her own skillset plus her desire to make a difference in the lives of whānau through tikanga (customs/protocol) and whanaungatanga (relationships):

If you have aroha (love) for whānau, the initiative to help, and the resilience to be able to instigate change, then that’s all you need. Our role is all about genuinely wanting to help whānau, watch them grow, achieve their goals and support their journey to where they want to go.

Priority for Kaiārahi was to connect whānau to first response services as a short-term wraparound approach until the Government fronted with a relief package.

Ruby recalls switching straight into response-mode as the initial announcement had immediate impact:

We established a network of hubs across Tairāwhiti to provide easy access and a safe environment. Whānau were frustrated and had lost hope in the Government after they were denied access to financial resources and assistance. A lot of employees in that industry were being laid off, or being stood down with no promise of work the next day. Some were using their leave and their savings until they heard from their boss that they could go to work. Others were left in limbo and trying to find other work. Or worse, that there was no work.

Ruby and her team started Forestry Response to help whānau through this unpredictable time, unaware those times were about to get a lot tougher:

Stress levels were high and tears were shed as whānau searched for a listening ear and a shoulder to lean on. It was so difficult. A lot of the whānau would camp out during the week and then return home at the weekends. Sometimes they were camping out and then not able to work. They couldn’t fell any trees because the ports couldn’t take them. No ships were coming in to collect logs so it was a real big roll on effect from China closing their borders.

The Forest Industry Contractors Association estimated that nationwide up to 1,500 forestry workers were out of work:

The Ministry of Social Development was notified of the impacts it was having on our communities here in Gisborne. So MSD had approached Te Rūnanganui o Ngāti Porou and our collective to ask if Whānau Ora could go to the ground and support whānau who were directly impacted. Even if they wanted to, MSD couldn’t help with food because their system wouldn’t allow it, there was too much red tape. So they came to us with a pot of \$50,000 and asked if Whānau Ora could use this fund to support whānau until Government assistance was released.

Ruby and her team had put together a response plan on how Whānau Ora could do that for families in Gisborne:

What that looked like was, initially MSD, Manaaki Tairāwhiti, Toitū Tairāwhiti and Whānau Ora were all going to match that money. That didn’t actually happen but it certainly didn’t stop us doing what we were planning. We contacted whānau that we could immediately support. What that looked like was us helping to bridge a two-week gap, a two-week rescue package. Whether that was food for that time, connecting them to social services for a benefit, just trying to smooth things over until that MSD money kicked in.

The red tape preventing any further assistance from MSD did not deter Ruby who knew the real hard work was finding ways to overcome the challenges whānau were facing with the resources she did have:

Income from the forestry sector is not your average income. They could be getting over \$2,000 a week. Their income threshold blasted through the MSD limits. Whānau went from say, \$2,000 a week, to nothing. So it meant that a lot of them weren’t eligible for that MSD assistance despite having no money coming into their whare (home).

Ruby knew she and her colleague needed to be resilient at a time when stress was starting to increase across their community:

It was decided before we started that we would have to deploy [to focus on the forestry crisis]. My colleague and I had notified our existing whānau that for a period of time this is what we are doing, it doesn’t mean you won’t see us, but unless it’s really urgent, we will be focusing more on this area. Thankfully they understood that as the forestry work was drying up it was going to have a ripple effect throughout our region. Initially we did that, then all partners within our collective were asked to deploy their available Kaiārahi to the response. Because this was new to us and changing regularly, we were unable to say how long this was going to be for. Not only is that unsettling for our whānau, it was unsettling for all of us too. However, there really wasn’t any other choice.

The team started off with six people. As word spread temporary staff were hired alongside volunteers to help manage the increasing workload. People were on the ground meeting with whānau assessing their needs, while others loaded information into a national database for accurate reporting on supply and demand for essentials and hygiene packs:

Turanga Health were great, they stepped up and helped us provide food vouchers from Pak’nSave [supermarket]. We were constantly measuring whānau needs and making sure we always had some form of support for them. At the barest minimum we had whānau at least walking away with food vouchers.

Fast forward to June 2021 and things are back to ‘normal’ – albeit the new normal – but it is a new journey that is helping to slowly create some stability and forward momentum. However, Ruby recalls certain moments that have changed whānau forever and left a lasting impact on her:

I guess, maybe November 2020, things slowly started to go back to normal in the forestry sector with whānau returning to mahi (work). However post-COVID the battle is still raging for many Māori in Gisborne and the East Coast. Unfortunately in all of that whirlwind around COVID and its impact on forestry, other businesses foreclosed. There were whānau who started selling off their own personal assets to stay afloat because pre-COVID they had used their equity in their homes and work to expand. It was so sad that so many people were becoming bankrupt and we could also see that affecting people’s mental health. Right in the middle of our response to whānau needing support and directly impacted by the decline of the forestry industry, we had a suicide. So this whānau had reached out for support but unfortunately we never got to engage with him, and he was well known in our community, he worked in this forestry industry. Unfortunately it just got a bit much for him. His income, his self-worth, his relationships all suffered. Very, very sad and hard to accept.

While that memory is the most devastating for everyone involved, there were many high points during those first few months of 2020:

Seeing whānau walk away with that little bit of hope and knowing that we contributed to that. They weren’t very forthcoming with asking for help. I mean, these are whānau who know nothing other than going to work and earning for themselves and their families. That’s the only way they know how to feed and care for themselves and their households. These are whānau who have never been on a benefit or been in a position where they had to ask for help. So it was really humbling that we were able to help them without them even saying or asking for it. A lot of whānau came to just share what they were going through and how it was impacting them as an individual, a couple and a family.

The forestry industry is prominent in Tairāwhiti, with generations of whānau involved across all levels:

Whole families were putting their all into setting themselves up so they could benefit from that industry. Not just for themselves but to be self-employed, to be able to hire family members and to have that turned on its head was hard. And then having to tell family members they were unable to pay them that week, it was gut-wrenching. But I was so grateful that we were able to provide them with a safe space and a forum to share that because they couldn’t take it anywhere else. No one was listening.

¹ Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.

As a flow-on from the forestry response Ruby and her colleagues rolled out a redeployment strategy to help affected whānau back into employment:

Anyone from the forestry response who indicated they wanted retraining to allow them access to other sectors, we supported that. Or we redeployed them into a new role. We recontacted every single whānau we helped during that time to continue our support as well as gauge their needs. This was either a phone call, email, text or a knock at the door. It was also an opportunity for us to get feedback on how it actually helped them.

During this time other agencies had opened their doors to assist whānau:

Knowing that we as Kaiārahi couldn't do everything, we had services like MSD, IRD (Inland Revenue Department), a budgeting service all on site every time we had a hub. So if whānau said they had been without an income for six weeks but WINZ (Work and Income New Zealand) said they were not entitled to anything, yet their bank is wanting payments, we could help. They would come to us, we would identify their needs and then walk them into another room that had a representative from that agency ready to help. Their support and assistance was immediate. It made a huge difference to whānau.

For the Horouta Whānau Ora team over \$300,000 was funnelled to almost 900 whānau members in a 420km radius. This was a team that needed some time to exhale and acknowledge how hard they worked to support their region, their people through not one, but two unexpected challenges:

It wasn't easy, as a team we have reflected on that time and how we responded to whānau. Not only did we have our forestry response, we then rolled straight into the COVID lockdown response. At the same time we had a Matariki (Māori New Year) celebration and our graduation for the double diploma for Whānau Ora. Yeah, we had a lot happen last year and in October 2020 our team did a retreat, a wānanga (seminar) to look back at what we did. There are things we could have done better, but it is what it is, sure it could have been different but

I regret nothing. It was awesome to be a part of it. I mean how many times in your lifetime do you get to be a part of a recovery rollout from a worldwide pandemic? It is a once in a lifetime opportunity to rise to the occasion and shine really, which we all did in our own way.

They did not come through this completely unaffected by what they had seen and experienced:

To be honest, some of us really struggled with it and as a result we had a couple of casualties. For one kaimahi (staff) she admitted it wasn't what she signed up for, which I think is a fair call. Afterwards she was unable to return to normal functionality, good on her for being honest about that. One thing she did say was the amount of 'mum guilt' she felt having to be redeployed and working such long hours in response to COVID.

As a mum of four, Ruby discovered this was new territory for her also and she sympathises with her former colleague:

My youngest is five and she would see me at home while she was doing her schoolwork in the lounge. I had to explain to her that, 'Yes, Mummy is here physically, but really Mummy isn't here, she is busy working,' and my bedroom was turned into my workspace. Having to implement that in a working-from-home environment was all new for me and I was learning as I went along. I still don't know how we all managed to get through that, and that's just my whare.

Presently Whānau Ora Horouta are managing the COVID-19 vaccine rollout, re-strategising and moving forward. Ruby knows she is part of a much stronger and more resilient team after the challenges of 2020:

When we came away from the COVID and forestry response we felt a little deflated that our mahi wasn't really recognised. But it actually didn't matter because within our team we could see and acknowledge each other's strengths and we now implement that in everything we do. It's more important we know within ourselves just what we are capable of and how proficient we will continue to be in the future. It's a good feeling.

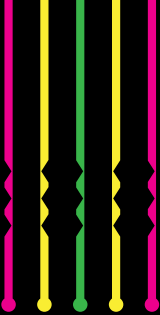
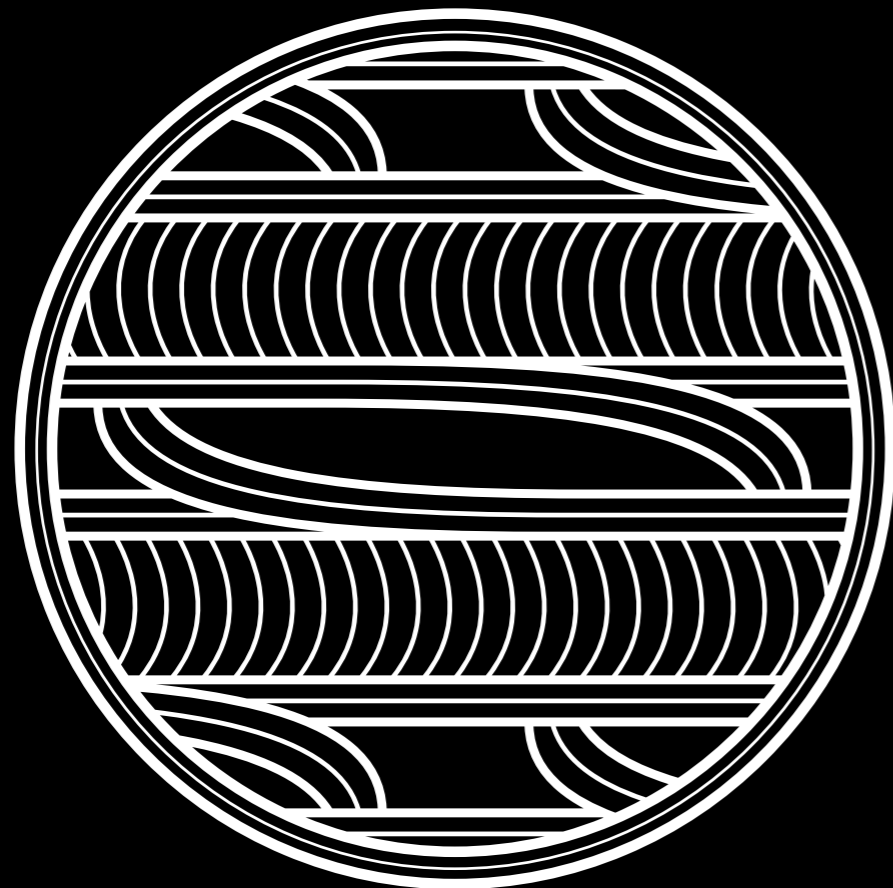


Horouta Whānau Ora Navigator, Ruby White with her whānau, Ikaroa-Rāwhiti.





MĀTĀTOA




The theme for this section is mātātoa which means ‘to be fearless’ and courageous in te reo Māori (Māori language). Accordingly, this section comprises stories of self-belief and determination, the importance of standing up for what you believe in, and having the willingness to take risks and try new things, even when there is no guarantee of success!

The first story reflects on the courageous journey of Tūwharetoa Health, a Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency partner located in the Lake Taupō district. Tūwharetoa Health is a kaupapa Māori (an approach grounded in Māori values and principles) organisation that provides services to their local community with a focus on hauora Māori (Māori health). In this narrative, the contributor talks about how here whakapapa (lineage) links back to Italy and how her Italian whānau (families), and the serious impacts it was having over there, inspired her to be mātātoa and proactively prepare her community for the eventuality of the pandemic in Aotearoa (New Zealand). Forming the foundations of the Tūwharetoa Health response was tikanga Māori (Māori customs and protocols) which meant they were able to tap into already established systems, networks, and processes that could be adapted for COVID-19. Accordingly, whānau and the community were, and remain, at the heart of everything that Tūwharetoa Health does, and that bold leadership and courage, and a willingness to do ‘whatever it takes’, were required to ensure the safety of whānau and the community they serve.

The second story covers the many successes of Raukura Hauora o Tainui in their response to COVID-19. From setting up distribution teams to deliver kai (food) and hygiene packs, to inventing ‘Roxanne’ – a device that enabled nurses to administer flu vaccinations without the necessary safety gear. The author goes on to say that the best thing to come out of COVID-19, both during and since the first case, was that it made people get over themselves, put their differences aside and work together for a common good.

The third story chronicles the heroic efforts of Christine Wu and her team at Te Whānau o Waipareira Trust to obtain personal protective equipment (PPE) during a time of global demand and competition for these products. Being one of the first challenges of the pandemic, according to Christine’s story this required some risk-taking and believing in your gut feelings, even when you don’t necessarily have all the information or evidence. Their success was also premised on the high levels of trust amongst the kaimahi (staff) and leadership which allowed Christine and her team to make decisions quickly and efficiently. In summary, Christine says that you can’t be afraid to take risks. But also, don’t underestimate the support of your team and leadership!

¹ The Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency is contracted by Te Puni Kōkiri (Ministry of Māori Development) to invest in initiatives and services for communities in the North Island. Commissioning Agencies work with their communities to determine the best ways to support their development.



A FRANTIC WARNING FROM ITALY: THE AROHA EVERYONE HAD FOR EACH OTHER

REGION: WAIARIKI
As told by Willow Salvador – May 2021

Ko Tongariro te Maunga
Ko Taupō te Moana
Ko Ngāti Tūwharetoa te iwi
Ko Te HeuHeu te Tangata

Tongariro is the sacred mountain
Taupō is the inland sea
Ngāti Tūwharetoa is the tribe
Te HeuHeu is the significant ancestor

Nā Te Ariki Tā Hepi Te Heuheu te moemoeā kia piki te hauora o ngā whānau katoa, e noho ana i te rohe whenua o Ngāti Tūwharetoa.

The dream of Ngāti Tūwharetoa Paramount Chief Sir Hepi Te Heuheu was to improve the health of all whom resided in the rohe (region) of Ngāti Tūwharetoa.

Ko Kakepuku te Maunga
Ko Puniu te Awa
Ko Ngāti Paretekawa te Hapū
Ko Mangatoatoa te Marae
Ko Ngāti Maniapoto te Iwi
Ko Willow Salvador tōku Ingoa
Ko au Te Tāhuhu Rangapū o Tūwharetoa Hauora

Kakepuku is my sacred mountain
Puniu is my river
Ngāti Paretekawa is my subtribe
Mangatoatoa is my marae
Ngāti Maniapoto is my tribe
Willow Salvador is my name
I am the CEO of Tūwharetoa Health

BACKGROUND

On my mother's side I'm Waikato Tainui, Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Paretekawa. However, I've known no other place but Tūrangi as my home. My mother's maiden name is Hemara, she was born in Taupō and she spent most of her childhood in Atiamuri. In 1973, when she was quite young, my mother came to Tūrangi to live with one of her older sisters, during the time of the Tongariro Hydro Power Project. This is where she met my father. He was one of the Italian tunnellers that came over from Italy to work for Codelfa-Cogefar, the Italian firm that won the contract here. So, a wife and five daughters later, he never did get to go back to live in Italy.

My father's dad died when he was six and his mother was quite sick throughout his childhood. So, to find a way to support his whānau (family), he decided to leave home, and come across the world to Tūrangi. When we go over to Fadelto Basso where he's from, which is not far from Venice, you can see the similarities, and why he was able to make Tūrangi his home away from home. The rest is nearly a 50-year history.

I started with Tūwharetoa Health in 2009, as the Contracts and Finance Administrator, in the middle of an organisational restructure. My background is accounting and management, and I was excited to be back in my hometown. After about a year, I realised it was my way to give back to the community that helped raise me and steadied my path growing up. During my time at Tūwharetoa Health, I have had a number of roles as my skills have grown and opportunities have opened up. In 2017 I was honoured and excited to be offered the role of CEO (Chief Executive Officer).

The rohe that we service starts from Atiamuri and Reporoa in the north, surrounds Lake Taupō, and reaches as far south as Tūrangi. Within this rohe there is a catchment of around 35,000 people. Since its inception in 1996, Tūwharetoa Health has been guided by the vision of former Ngāti Tūwharetoa Paramount Chief, Sir Hepi Te Heuheu. His vision was to create a health provider that could help to improve the health of all who reside in the rohe of Ngāti Tūwharetoa, to manaaki (show generosity and care) and tiaki (protect) our own people, and also to fulfil our obligations as haukāinga (home people) to manaaki all manuhiri (visitors). So for us, it has always been a focus to provide support to anybody and everybody who wants or needs it.

COVID-19

My personal experience of COVID-19 started much earlier than when the first signs of the virus hit Aotearoa (New Zealand). I have two sisters that live in Italy with their whānau (families) in a town called Viadana in the Lombardy region, in what was the epicentre of the Italian pandemic. The youngest of my four sisters was very anxious about it and, to be honest, I thought she was over-reacting. In my mind, we had seen the swine flu, the bird flu, all these other things that have not eventuated into pandemics in the past. At this time, I had no idea how things would escalate worldwide but, then as things were ramping up, the reality of it really sunk in.

People came because they knew us, and they trusted us. It was important to us to utilise our kaimahi who had the skills and the relationships with our community. The kaimahi that they've trusted for years, the kaimahi who they know are an important part of their community.

At Tūwharetoa Health, like the rest of Aotearoa, we didn't get advanced notice of the impact COVID-19 would have on all of us. But, from regular conversations with my sister, I personally had a strong sense that it was coming, and it was only a matter of time. I could feel it in my bones so, as an organisation, we started to get prepared right from the early indications that COVID-19 would arrive on our shores. One of my first thoughts was for my community of Tūrangi because in Tūrangi we don't have a lot of the support that bigger towns and cities have. We were all just trying to act as quickly and as smartly as we could, with the information we had at the time.

This was a challenging time for everyone but, more than anything, the strongest lesson that came from this experience is that when it really mattered nothing mattered. There was no, 'I don't want to do that.' There was no 'It's not my job.' There was no 'but I'm the this', so why am I out delivering hygiene packs?' Everybody just got in there and got it done. It was all hands to the pump. I was very proud of the way our kaimahi (staff), and our organisation responded during this time.

The transition into lockdown was a steep learning curve for the whole health sector. There were challenges that affected everyone, for instance, the relationship between providers, the District Health Board (DHB) and the Ministry of Health (MoH), needed to change. The old relationship of 'We'll tell you what to do' would not work, for providers, and for whānau. Instead of us waiting on DHB and MoH, we got on with the mahi (work) at hand. To their credit, the DHB and MoH soon shifted to the stance of 'Okay, you just let us know what you need us to do to support.' This enabled us to continue to focus more on the needs of our whānau and our community, to come up with local approaches that could react quickly and safely.

We identified that our local provider relationships also needed to change. For example, Tūwharetoa Health has a 50 percent shareholding in the general medical practice based in Tūrangi. We are co-located in the Tūrangi Community Health Centre but we run very independently of each other. We let them focus on GP (general practice) services. Initially, I think there was an expectation from the GP practice that COVID-19 testing would go through them. But, when the Government encouraged more testing to be done, people weren't comfortable going through the GP practice. There were multiple reasons why whānau felt this way, so we needed to do something to fill this gap.

When I approached Lakes DHB about starting pop-up swabbing stations there was a little bit of resistance from some of the GP practices both here and in Taupō because, in their opinion, that was their skill set. However, as a kaupapa Māori (an approach grounded in Māori values and principles) provider, our whānau were looking for support. We had an obligation to them, to be what they need us to be, so eventually we decided like it or not we're doing it. At our pop-up stations, we were still getting easily a hundred people through in a two-hour period. People came because they knew us, and they trusted us. It was important to us to utilise our kaimahi who had the skills and the relationships with our community. The kaimahi that they've trusted for years, the kaimahi who they know are an important part of their community.

After the lockdown, we were audited by Lakes DHB, and they wanted to know how we continued to provide our services.

We said, 'It's just like when we have a tangihanga (funeral gathering).' We don't get much notice, but we do know that everybody has their jobs to do and everybody gets in there and does what needs to be done. At times it can be hundreds of people that we need to accommodate and feed and we just do it. It's natural and this was no different. Our perspective was, 'Something is coming for our kaumātua (elderly men) and kuia (elderly women), we need to protect them and do whatever we can to keep COVID out.'

SUCCESS

Our tikanga (protocols) and our kawa (customs) guide us, and our values of whanaungatanga (relationships), manaakitanga (the process of showing respect, generosity and care for others) and kotahitanga (togetherness) drive us to excel. These concepts sat strongly behind the success of the Māori response to COVID-19. This approach has strengthened our relationship with our community, especially those who are not Māori. It is now very clear to our community that we are not just for Māori, we are inclusive, and we can support you no matter your ethnicity.

We have always had a vested interest in the health of our whānau and our community, because we are whānau and we are an important part of our community. When we deliver our services, we are always reflecting on the effectiveness and appropriateness of our service delivery. We always ask ourselves, 'Is this the way we would want our whānau to be treated?' and 'What could've been done better?' This regular cycle of reflection helps us to maintain our effectiveness and helps us to identify opportunities to improve the way we do things.

The relationships, old and new, that were utilised during lockdown highlighted the importance of collaboration and partnerships, to enable us all to support our community in the best and most appropriate ways. There were parts of our Taupō and Tūrangi communities that worked together for the first time during lockdown. Traditional lines were blurred. Community providers, Taupō District Council, Civil Defence, Ngāti Tūwharetoa Iwi, and local businesses, all contributed. Everybody had the willingness to do whatever needed to be done. This experience of working together has set a template for us moving forward and reaffirmed the need for us to be more collaborative with anyone who can contribute to the best possible outcome for whānau.

CONCLUSION

We don't feel anything we did was special. We just did what needed to be done. We believe that others would do the same if the roles were reversed. But, because of this, we can sometimes neglect to celebrate the work that we do. But, personally, I'm one that tells our kaimahi all the time, never mind about the whakataukī (proverb) of the kūmara (sweet potato) that never speaks of its own sweetness because what will happen is no one will eat kūmara anymore. We don't want that. We want people to hear about the mahi you're doing, we want to celebrate the successes and how well you're working with whānau, otherwise, whānau won't access it. Get rid of that whakamā (embarrassment) and start highlighting and celebrating those things.



ACTING ON GUT INSTINCT: LEADING A SUCCESSFUL RESPONSE FOR RAUKURA HAUORA O TAINUI

REGION: HAURAKI-WAIKATO
An interview with Terina Moke – April 2021

Raukura Hauora o Tainui (Raukura) supported Māori through COVID-19 in a successful response that was often led by the sheer gut instinct of their chief executive officer (CEO).

Raukura CEO, Terina Moke, is passionate about leading an organisation that delivers quality kaupapa Māori (an approach grounded in Māori values and principles) health and wellbeing services to people in both Waikato and Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland).

Her last role as the acting chief executive of the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners led to the rebuilding and refocusing of the organisation. Prior to that she was the CE (chief executive) of Te Ohu Rata o Aotearoa (Te ORA) – Māori Medical Practitioners Association. Suffice to say, Terina has the qualifications and knowledge of the health sector to lead this organisation.

When you are working for your people there’s much more at stake, it’s more of an obligation rather than this being a nine to five job. When you talk about that you have to reflect on the Māori health inequities that exist. To add to that, if COVID got into our communities, particularly our rural, kaumātua (elderly men) and rūruhi (elderly women) neighbourhoods in my view, that would have been devastating.

Raukura is a charitable trust based around the aspirations of Kīngi Tāwhiao, the moemoeā (vision) of Princess Te Puea and also the legacy of Te Arikini Te Atairangikaahu, which is around reclaiming the health and wellbeing of the Tainui people.

The geographical reach is Waikato, predominantly around Hamilton, Ngāruawāhia and Huntly, whilst extending to the northern tribal boundaries of Waikato and Counties Manukau District Health Board (DHB) region.

Raukura boasts 120-130 kaimahi (staff) for general practice (GP) clinics based in Waikato and an alcohol and drug treatment residential which is a kaupapa Māori treatment facility located in Manurewa. Alongside primary health GP services, Raukura are part of the Waikato Tainui Whānau Ora Collective, with three other iwi (tribal) providers: Te Hauora o Ngāti Hauā; Ngā Miro based at Tūrangawaewae Ngāruawāhia; and Waahi Whaanui based in Huntly. Mental health services are a strength, and Raukura is one of the largest mental health and addiction kaupapa Māori providers in the Counties Manukau DHB region.

When COVID-19 started making headlines in early 2020, Terina followed her instinct to start preparing early instead of waiting for direction from the Government.

My initial reaction was to make a call to action, [this was] a couple of weeks prior to the Government announcing we were going into a nationwide lockdown. We were just looking at it from the outside and feeling our way through and I am grateful we did. Had we jumped into action any later the results could have been very different. The Government pulled the lever very quickly adjusting our levels – we didn’t realise it was going to be that fast and thankfully our instincts were on the money.

A hui (meeting) was arranged at the iwi headquarters in Hopuhopu and she invited every provider and iwi leadership member to an open meeting about COVID-19.

We basically led a tono (claim/request/application) to say we think this is really serious, we think we have to mobilise now, we have a need to set up a coordinated incident management service, a CIMS. That’s a Pākehā (New Zealand European) construct but really it was to put something up there so our providers can respond to the needs of our people.



‘Roxanne’ enabled nurses to safely administer flu jabs in Waikato.

Terina and her team had been following the international evidence coming through the news and they were particularly interested in how parts of Italy were responding. One town would be testing everyone and another town would only test those presenting with symptoms – and both were getting different results.

We were looking at what was emerging outside and thinking that if this hits us it will be devastating, especially for our kaumātua (elders) and those with vulnerable health conditions and so we decided to ramp it up and lead the call to action. We were very fortunate with Waikato-Tainui who really stepped up and provided the korowai (wraparound support) for not only Raukura but every other iwi provider in Waikato-Tainui.

The geographical area was huge with dozens of providers being affected, but it was their priority to be prepared to support vulnerable and isolated whānau (families).

It was a good thing to be a part of. We have GP clinics and a pānui (notice) was sent out to shut these clinics and go virtual. We recommended they go virtual on the Monday, giving us 48 hours to turn our GP clinics into virtual stock – so it kind of forced the issue for, I think, the whole motu (country) really. And then with our call to action, the tribe picked it up and they provided the korowai. Korowai, meaning daily zoom meetings at 8:30am with a plan of attack, roles and responsibilities, who was doing what, totally organising it from the forefront.

Through this collaborative process GP clinics were able to become virtual almost instantly and subsequently the pieces started to fall together in what was going to be an organised response. The whole country was caught off guard, as it soon became apparent there was a shortage of PPE (personal protective equipment) and not enough flu vaccines.

There was also mixed messaging for our people, in fact for the whole of New Zealand, as everyone was told to stay home. Well, for a lot of people that translated as, don’t go to the doctor. That’s how it started and there were times we were here and planning until two in the morning. The Matamata cluster had just started to appear, that cluster from the South Island wedding started to spread as there were people coming home to Ngāti Maniapoto. It was becoming real very quickly.

One of her main priorities at that time was the safety and wellbeing of her staff.

For me as the CEO I need to ensure that the kaimahi were safe. Things like getting everybody to work from home that could work from home. For clinical staff we had to put safety measures in because if someone walked into the clinic who thought they had COVID, it would have been disastrous. We would have had to shut that whole clinic down, putting everyone in isolation for 14 days, and we couldn’t afford to take that risk. That’s why we shut them down straight away and triaged people through virtual means or on the phone.

Terina is also realistic about the alternative had she not acted on instinct and been supported by the tribe and affiliated partners.

We would have been caught on the hop, no doubt. When I look back on it, the international evidence, what was going on in Wuhan, Italy and parts of America, it was so compelling. In terms of the call we made, we kind of fluked it in a way and I’m glad we did.

Terina was grateful for the support they had in the early days prior to lockdown.

Whānau Ora¹ Commissioning Agency (WOCA) was the first agency to say we could use our resources and our funding to redeploy, to redistribute in any way we deemed necessary to assist our people and then they gave us extra resourcing. Plus their timing was excellent. The Crown, not so much. They came to the party, but not as quickly as WOCA and the Waikato-Tainui tribe.

Support and communication with whānau during that time was critical both within her own organisation and externally.

The messaging that was coming out at the time was really good. I think the fact that everyone was watching the 1:00pm live feeds with Jacinda [Ardern] and Ashley [Bloomfield] was good. I think there was fear, but from what I saw, our people were not stupid. Our people are smart and are very pragmatic about things and most importantly they want to keep their kaumātua, kuia (elderly women) and their vulnerable whānau members safe. So I think everybody actually got on that kaupapa (initiative) quickly and easily. I think it speaks to us as a people and particularly the providers that we’re a hell of a lot more agile, so we can turn on a dime in terms of responding.

Terina used to joke about that with Heremaia Samson, Waikato-Tainui Hapori Manager.

We’d start the 8:30am Zui (Zoom meeting) with Plan A, by lunchtime it would be Plan F and by 3:00pm it was Plan P. But that’s how we could roll and Waikato-Tainui was pretty special in the sense that they had the facilities to do the kai (food) packs. They had the ground crew and they had those relationships that really helped to churn out those kai packs.

Heremaia was also instrumental in the workings of a device nicknamed ‘Roxanne’ to ensure whānau could receive their flu vaccinations with as little fuss as possible.

As a response to the lack of PPE gear we looked overseas and Sarina Wawatai our Clinical Services Manager led this. We looked at the way countries were responding around PPE gear and Sarina saw something in South Korea.

That something was a large device that could enable nurses to issue flu vaccinations without the necessary safety gear.

We saw this contraption applied in South Korea so during Alert Level 4 we approached a builder who was an essential worker and he was able to recreate it. We nicknamed it ‘Roxanne’ and it allowed our nurses to go in without any PPE gear and put their hands through the gloves so they could easily administer flu jabs. Then we used it to do COVID testing. That was our direct response to having no PPE gear until more arrived.

For Terina, trusting her team and thinking outside the box meant Roxanne was a success.

It was a bit of a hit in terms of ‘What is it?’ So we have taken it around as another way to administer tests or jabs. That’s a visual example of being innovative in our response to COVID. For me, I was struck by continuous agility and innovation in terms of how we operated in Tāmaki [Makaurau, Auckland], we set up distribution teams in both rohe (region) and they were responding to communities.

¹ The Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency is contracted by Te Puni Kōkiri (Ministry of Māori Development) to invest in initiatives and services for communities in the North Island. Commissioning Agencies work with their communities to determine the best ways to support their development.

Providers were very agile with extensive networks meaning kai and hygiene packs could be gathered and delivered at speed and with ease.

We were struck by the generosity of the general public. We had farmers in Pukekohe giving us fresh produce, we had fish and thanks to our people we had the resources to deliver these kai packs, even to the most remote whānau.

COVID-19 has completely changed the way Raukura provides services.

It forced our hand. We know from international evidence COVID will exacerbate existing health inequities for Māori, we know this. That is what we are now starting to see, increased poverty, unemployment, housing issues, all of that is now amplified on this side of COVID. Also, the mental health needs and support of our whānau has dramatically increased, and now we have also

switched to the phase of vaccinating our people against COVID. As long as we have informed, concise vaccine details for Māori we'll be okay.

Terina says the best thing to come out of COVID-19, both during and since the first case, was it made people get over themselves.

This kind of event forces people to focus on the kaupapa (purpose) and back each other. In that respect it is brilliant and that has continued to this day. The funding agencies aren't used to that, now we want to do things collectively rather than paddle our own waka (canoe) competing against one another, no matter how big or small we are. That is a great thing to come out of COVID because everyone wins that way. We can also take pride in the fact that we did lead from the front because we were agile and we were instinctive.

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Raukura Hauora O Tainui frontline kaimahi getting ready for the day.

THE DESPERATE RACE FOR PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT FROM CHINA: IT WAS LIKE WAR

REGION: TĀMAKI MAKAUURAU
As told by Christine Wu – April 2021

Ko Huang te maunga,
Ko Changjiang tōku awa,
Nō Haina ahau
Ko Shanghai te iwi,
Ko Wu tōku whānau,
Ko Christine tōku ingoa

*The mountain is Huangshan
My river is Changjiang
I'm from China
The tribe is Shanghai
My family is Wu
My name is Christine*

I'm Christine Wu, I'm the chief financial officer (CFO) for Te Whānau o Waipareira Trust (Waipareira) and the Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency' (WOCA). I've been a kaimahi (staff member) at Waipareira for more than 15 years and CFO for over a decade. I'm originally from mainland China, from the city of Shanghai. My father was a marine and my mother was a housewife. But I was actually raised by my grandparents. In Shanghai I worked for Shanghai General Motors, which was the first joint venture between the USA and China at the time.

I was encouraged by my Grandpa to follow my man to New Zealand because he believed there would be a war between Japan and China sooner or later, and he also wanted me to 'fly without boundaries.' I have been in New Zealand for 20 years. It took me a while to settle in, coming from a very busy city to a quiet environment. I've resided in West Auckland all that time and can happily call myself a 'Westie' now.

I've been at Waipareira since 2005. I'm part of the furniture now – it feels like I've been here forever. At first, it was honestly just a job, but I have come to feel a part of its culture now. The reason I stayed is because of the organisation's high energy CEO (chief executive officer), John Tamihere, and the wonderful kaimahi (staff). I am accepted as part of the whānau (family). Every year there is something new and challenging. Working here has been part of my personal journey, from the mainstream commercial world to a community based NGO (Non-Governmental Organisation). For vulnerable individuals and communities, an organisation like Waipareira is of essential importance.

COVID-19 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

I heard about COVID-19 before it became a big story in New Zealand. I'm from China so it was something I was aware of through friends and family.

When the first lockdown happened, New Zealand didn't have much in the way of PPE for people at the frontline of the virus and what they did have, in my opinion, offered inadequate protection.

We knew we weren't necessarily at the front of the queue to receive any of this but we needed to somehow get ourselves to the front as we had a vulnerable community to protect. So we decided to do it ourselves, otherwise, we'd have to wait in line and we were worried that we were going to be too late if we waited.

We had to come up with a plan very quickly because we were really concerned. That's how I came to do procurement, as well as my job as CFO. That was an unexpected role for me. At that time, a mask was better than money because money couldn't buy one. There was just nowhere we were able to secure any.

There were challenges securing masks in New Zealand because there were such limited stocks. The country lacked the raw materials to make them, although they have them now. We weren't able to get the masks we wanted because the volume we were looking for just wasn't here, so I tried to find a link between New Zealand and China, not through the Government but as an organisation. For us to secure an overseas supplier, the volume had to be large enough because otherwise they were not interested. At the same time, we were also competing with other countries for that supply chain, not with people but with countries. That's what we were up against.

I worked with a member in the Information Technology (IT) team, who is also from China, to try and find out what PPE would be best for the role we were playing as an organisation. Because it was new to me as well, we basically started by looking at social media. All the information we got was either from social media, the internet, or those sorts of things. My colleague and I worked odd hours because of the time difference with China. He actually played a very important role because his family has connections to medical suppliers in China. As well as general medical masks, we looked for N95 equivalent medical grade masks and fully sealed gowns. The full suite of protection from top to bottom. Sanitiser too, but there was just nowhere to get it because China stopped producing the raw material. Their production line basically stopped and the shipments stopped as well.

¹ The Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency is contracted by Te Puni Kōkiri (Ministry of Māori Development) to invest in initiatives and services for communities in the North Island. Commissioning Agencies work with their communities to determine the best ways to support their development.



At that time, New Zealand's PPE was very different from overseas PPE. I even took a picture to the Waipareira executive members and said, 'How can they say this is adequate PPE for New Zealand? It's not enough.' It was so poor, especially for the people at the frontline facing the virus directly. If you compare, the overseas ones were the full set from top to bottom, but New Zealand's PPE was just very casual in comparison, in my opinion. That's the difference.

We eventually found some of the 'golden ones' overseas - the N95s, the full sets - because nothing was here. The Ministry of Health (MoH) was not releasing anything to us because we are a social service provider, we're not clinical.

Although I got the green light from our CEO to secure the PPE from China, we just couldn't get any. It was impossible to import. Transportation was a huge challenge. Normally, you're talking about overseas logistics from China to here. From the factory to here, you're normally talking about 10 working days. But during that period, it was like, 'We know it's on the plane but they're stopped by Customs. And we know it's in Singapore.' We were basically following the flights through the middle of the night because of the different time zones. All the time, we were competing with other countries. Masks were just like gold and to make it even harder we were trying to secure N95 masks, basically medical grade PPE. It was just an impossible situation. At any moment, we risked our stock being taken by the Government, any government, during their transportation here.

Can I be honest? At that time, our money could have been wasted as well. There was no guarantee. There was a possibility our money could have gone down the drain because of the situation we were in. The Waipareira Board approved these expenditures because we needed mandates since there was a possibility that whatever we purchased would be a waste.

The other thing I find in New Zealand compared to back home is that the honesty there just 'sucks', it's terrible. The funny thing is when we were in the process of making payment some suppliers would even say, 'Okay, Christine can you pay in Bitcoins?' I said, 'I'm not paying Bitcoins. I'm not a drug dealer. What do you mean? I'm not the black market.' Because at that moment masks were like gold to suppliers.

I saw the suppliers, they gave me pictures as well. They paid in cash, a suitcase of cash, just outside the factory, otherwise the factory wouldn't release the goods. Because of the competition between countries, suppliers had to take cash to the factories. That's the only way the factories would release the goods. Wiring the money internationally wasn't enough. I'm sounding like a gangster now. When I think back it was just too funny but then it was a reality. The only way to really understand it is if you think of it like a war situation. At that time, it was like war.

For me, the first time we received the full sets of PPE, we were over the moon because it was like 'mission impossible' for us. Before that, my colleague and I couldn't sleep because the PPE hadn't arrived in New Zealand. We were dealing with the logistics company directly, we were pressing them. It was like, 'Where is it? You promised us.' Then after the first shipment finally arrived at the Whānau Centre, we were like, 'At least, we have something.'

It was a huge effort to get the amount of stock that we did so quickly. The first shipment took about three weeks to arrive. China introduced restrictions after that. We ordered about 100,000 medical masks during the time we were building up our stock of PPE. At one point, we were probably importing almost 50 percent of the PPE coming into New Zealand.

We did this without District Health Board (DHB) support. We even had to deal with the issue that our PPE was not

recommended by them. The reason the DHB did this was because they didn't have enough stock. But from our point of view, their PPE was not adequate.

There was a stage where community organisations were approaching us for PPE as well. Sometimes I'm a bit selfish and I was like, 'No, no we're not giving it up because I need to protect our kaimahi first. I have to protect our whānau (families) first.'

We didn't seek any support from within New Zealand or the DHB to get these supplies. Our clinical team did request some supplies from the DHB, however. The funny thing is that you're talking about a clinic. Our whānau, we have 200 staff, give or take. You're talking about the Whānau Ora service which is for more than 1,000. Guess what they gave us? One box of gloves and two sanitisers. I was like, 'It's never going to be enough.'

The DHB was aware that we didn't have a CBAC (Community Based Assessment Centre) like a community worker. They were saying, 'When it's lockdown you can't visit whānau so that's the reason you don't require PPE.' So, basically, the PPE had been prioritised for whoever was at the frontline. But the only thing is that for our CEO it was the community that he was worried about. The community had a very strong need for the support of the whānau worker and the Kaiārahi (Whānau Ora Navigator) as well, but at the same time, you put those workers at risk.

So that's the reason we bought the PPE and were asked to make a very quick call. Honestly, we didn't know how long the pandemic would last. We never expected it would be this long.

Sourcing the PPE was the main challenge we experienced in wave one. After that, when the second lockdown happened, we were more relaxed because China was back online for manufacturing and the shipments had started going again and we had a baseline of stock. So, even with the second and third lockdown, we could monitor the stock to see if it was enough. Before that, we had nothing. That was what I was worried about.

CONCLUSION

We were procuring PPE for the community at a vulnerable time. People all over the world were competing to get what we needed. We knew we were taking some risks because we didn't know what COVID-19 would look like. But they were risks we had to take in the circumstances.

I think we need to believe in our gut feelings, even when we don't necessarily have all the information or evidence. Many of us have been working for the organisation for a long time. There is trust among the people and leadership. That's what allowed us to come through this together. The nature of work has changed permanently. We needed to mobilise a whole workforce within a week and we did that; we had to mobilise our frontline workers and we achieved that too.

Although it was mainly my colleague and I involved in securing the PPE, we had an engine room behind us supporting us. My team kept the money flowing. Okay, we were in lockdown, but the money can't stop. It's crucial to keeping the organisation going. During that time, we had 10 times the transactions coming through. At the same time, the MoH wasn't paying us on time. They were at least three months behind. The Waipareira Board established a reserve over a period of time for a rainy day and this was that rainy day. Now, we need to increase our reserve for another rainy day.

Today, we have more than enough PPE to carry us through if there was a lockdown tomorrow. While we're not a logistics company, we have a stock management system that allows us to check our stock all the time.



Pearl Maeva (Director, Kōrure Whānau) wears the 'golden' PPE secured from China under trying conditions.

APANUI WORLD: HOW APANUI ESTABLISHED A SUPERMARKET WITHIN A WEEK

REGION: WAIARIKI
As told by Liisa Wharepapa – May 2021

In the early days of the pandemic, Te Rūnanga o Te Whānau (Te Rūnanga) health services needed to find a way to keep their whānau (families) at home. They collectively decided to establish a local, more accessible supermarket which they aptly called *Apanui World*¹. This non-profit operation was run by a handful of volunteers led by **Liisa Wharepapa** who shares her story.

Ko Maungaroa te Maunga
Ko Kereu te Awa
Ko Kaipera te Toka
Ko Oraka te punawai
Ko Te Ikiwa o Rehua Te Wharekai
Ko Kaiaio Te Whare Tipuna
Ko Maungaroa Te Marae
Ko Te Whānau-a-Kaiaio te Hapū
Ko Te Whānau-a-Apanui te iwi
Ko Mataatua te waka

The mountain is Maungaroa
The river is Kereu
The rock is Kaipera
The spring is Oraka
The dining house is Te Ikiwa o Rehua
The ancestral house is Kaiaio
The meeting place is Maungaroa
The subtribe is Te Whānau-a-Kaiaio
The tribe is Te Whānau-a-Apanui
The canoe is Mataatua

INTRODUCTION

My name’s Liisa Wharepapa, born and bred in Te Whānau-a-Apanui.

I did schooling here in Aotearoa (New Zealand), then eight years in Brisbane. So, three years in the hospitality industry and then five in the food industry at a food processing plant. I moved home to Aotearoa in 2015 and I’ve been working at Te Kaha Hotel ever since. Hospitality is what I know. It took me to move home to realise what I am good at as well. When I started here at the hotel, it was under receivership. Te Rūnanga took over and I stayed on to do the transition with them.

I’ve been managing here for the past three years and I’m just so thankful to have the mahi (work) at home. It has been really good to be able to work for someone that cares. Starting under the receivers you understood they were kind of lumped with it, so when the iwi (tribe) took over it gave us a purpose to want to make it work for the future of our children and our community.

When COVID-19 came around it was a great honour to be able to give back to the community. Working in a bar, the community doesn’t really benefit too much from it. So being able to do Apanui World was such a great honour and it was great to be able to work alongside the iwi (home people) to make things happen for us.

MAKING THE DECISION

When we went into Level 4 lockdown, the hotel closed and all our staff went home, so I was here in this building on my own. My cousin had to come in and stay with me to help with security, because we have a bar complex, restaurant, shop, plus 25 rooms for accommodation. The first couple of days were quiet. In the meantime the iwi had set up a response team. A network of ohu² (communal working group) like the police, medical services, the kura (school) and business/industry. Te Rūnanga was working with these ohu to pretty much guide us through this process.

Before we went into lockdown the idea for a supermarket was put forward to me and I think we were all a little bit like, ‘Ahhh, that’s a bit extreme ... we’re not going to get to that point.’ I still had it in the back of my mind that, alright, if we have to do

this, this is what we have to do, but at the same time, I thought everyone was being a little bit dramatic. But then the idea kept getting pushed to me and I realised the importance of it – I thought okay, this really has to happen.

One problem our people were having at that time was that there were restrictions on bulk buying items. Usually when we go and do our shopping once a week, once a fortnight, we bulk buy. There were restrictions on daily essentials like bread and our whānau were just not able to go back the next day and get other items.

One week after the lockdown came into effect, Apanui (tribe of Te Whānau-a-Apanui) started to set up borders and introduce shopping permits. So if you needed to get through the borders to do your shopping at the nearest supermarket, you needed to go to your hapū (subtribe) to get a shopping permit, but people

were abusing those rights. I think that was all part and parcel of the iwi response team asking how do we stop them from going to town? And the biggest reason was the shopping. If they were able to get their groceries locally there was no need for anyone to leave the Community Safe Zone unless it was for medical purposes. So that’s the big picture on why Apanui World was established – so we could stop our whānau from leaving the iwi, getting all the way there and then finding no stock!

This was when Jack Parata from Te Rūnanga business/industry ohu came together with other ohu kaimahi (staff) including Rikirangi Gage and Dr Kiri Tamihere-Waititi. They came up with the idea that something needed to happen in terms of a supermarket, but they didn’t have any background in this area. That’s when they came to me and asked if we could make it happen, and I said, ‘Yes, we can.’ I wanted to be able to help relieve any pressure that they had.

We had to come up with a plan to save our whānau from having to go to town to get what they needed. I said we needed to create a relationship with Ōpōtiki New World supermarket (New World). Kiri had a meeting with the New World and I think on Friday she came back to me and said, ‘It’s all good.’ They pretty much said to me, ‘When do you want to start?’ I said, ‘Let’s start on Monday. Let’s not wait, let’s just get it done.’ So Kiri pretty much just did the handover with me and said, ‘Good luck.’

BUILDING APANUI WORLD

I went to a workmate of mine and said that I needed help with the planning side of things, that it was going to be trial and error, but the best way was to just start. So she came and had a meeting with me.

I think the advantage of me being able to do this is that we have a little dairy in the hotel shop, so I know what our people want. I know costing is a huge thing. We had to discuss things like whether or not it would be a non-profit and what the mark-up would be. It was decided there would be no mark-up – we would sell at cost price.

Then we asked, ‘What stock do we get? Is it just going to be the basics or is it going to be a full-on supermarket?’ We also had to find a programme to allow whānau to order online. Kiri had a bit of knowledge in the (Information Technology) IT department so she set up an online order form while I organised a shopping list with New World supermarket.

My colleague and I sat down and went through all the items in the supermarket. We chose what we needed, not just what we wanted. We started with a base which was a wide variety of items. We had to take into consideration babies, animals, toiletry, sanitary items, meat and staples – we had to sort all that out. After we covered all the basics we sent our list to New World to ask if this was possible and they agreed to do it. I sent the list to Kiri and she put it in an online form which whānau could access.

We had to put the pānui (news) out as well. We’ve got an iwi whānau (community) page on Facebook and there was also a COVID-19 response Facebook page that they set up. Now when it comes to pakeke (elders) that are not on Facebook, that’s when the hapū groups came in. Each hapū had their own groups and they were looking after their pakeke so they were communicating with them. On top of that, pānui were going into mailboxes as well, so we were putting shopping lists into their mailboxes, along with the phone numbers so they could call up for orders. Everyone knew the pub phone number so we

kept that as the Apanui World contact number to keep things simple.

Once my shopping list was confirmed and they sent me back the receipt, I sent Kiri the shopping list and the cost, she entered the data and as soon as that data was entered, we went live. We were live for 30 minutes before our first online order came through.

In terms of timing the orders and deliveries I said what whānau are going to do is order online in time with their pay days. Tuesday is pension day, so we had to cater for them. At that time we still had the kiwifruit industry and their pay days were Thursday, so we had to cater for them, too. So I said I think two days a week suffices for our community. The beginning of the week would cover our pensioners, our solo parents, our beneficiaries, all those categories. The end of the week would be working whānau. Statutory holidays didn’t come into play, we still had to cater regardless. We just continued with our planning and kept it consistent.

We also had to look into transporting our groceries. Te Rūnanga have a crayfish business and had two big transport trucks that we could use. One of our groundskeepers had a Heavy Transport (HT) licence so we utilised him to drive and collect our stores, but then it got a bit too much for one person. My partner also had a HT licence and he was at home at that stage with my family. I just said to him, you know, it was all volunteer work and I really need your help. So he left our children to be with the grandparents to come and help me. That was an extra support.

Then we had to consider storage. We’ve got a big lock-up garage in the hotel and there’s power points all throughout so we were able to take freezers into the garage. We had a big chiller for cold storage at the back too. So we were able to hold our frozen goods in the garage without having to run into the hotel. I wanted to keep it completely separate from the hotel.

We also had to take into consideration the no-contact pick-up. New World already had their procedures in place so that was an easy transition. Our drivers pretty much drove in and parked up, New World would open up the truck, load in our stock, close it up and off they went. With their facilities and forklifts it made that whole process easy for us.

While Apanui World was getting set up we still had to cater for the community. Te Kaha Holiday Park (also owned by Te Rūnanga) was still operating and selling items from their shop. So I said to them we’ve got stuff at the hotel that you can take to sell because there’s no point in the goods sitting there when people need them. So we transported our stock from the hotel to the holiday park for them to sell.

During this time I was also doing the planning and the administration, but I needed people to bounce off me and get my vibes. To be honest I was a little bit overwhelmed, so I sent an email out to the staff and I said I would really like some help if anyone was available. Taking into consideration, you know, they are all freaking out at home. What was cool was despite that, people still put their hands up to help. So I think I ended up with about four or five volunteers. When they came in we had a meeting and I said to be honest I don’t have a plan, but we are going to make one as we go. So we worked it out.

People were doing it because it was such a cool thing to do for Te Whānau-a-Apanui. They were so excited about it. When we organised all of this in three days, we couldn’t believe it was really happening. Well, we couldn’t wait any longer. Our whānau had to eat.

¹ A pun, referencing the New World chain of supermarkets prevalent in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

² Each ohu represented areas of local services and organisations across health, iwi/Hapu, Whānau Ora, kura, Kohanga Reo, Police, Local Council, Government and business/industry.

RUNNING APANUI WORLD

We probably had a full team of eight including the two transporters. We didn't want too many people involved as well. We found that eight was a comfortable number.

When our first order came in we unloaded our stock, put it all away and we kind of went, 'Okay, we will do one order first.' So we packed it and the process worked. We were getting the feel for it and we could see our vision becoming a reality. We could see how this could work and it was giving us that confidence boost.

We did the next order and the next ... we got halfway through and could see we were running out of stock. We had to make a decision - whose order gets first priority? The bonus about doing Apanui World is you know everybody, so you know that uncle down the road doesn't need six loaves of bread because he only lives on his own. So he will get one loaf of bread and we will tell him, 'That's enough bread for you uncle, because a whānau in Whangaparāoa needs the bread.' So that's how we worked it out. We prioritised the big whānau and the pakeke over the ones that didn't really need it.

Whānau were so used to bulk-buying that we had to reassure them that we weren't going anywhere. We would be here again at the end of the week. We also had to take into consideration that the whānau who came from Whangaparāoa to Te Kaha had travelled a long way and we wanted to make sure we could give them as much as we could. The whānau in Te Kaha unfortunately would miss out, only because when the next order came in it was easier for us to get stock to Te Kaha. It got to the point where we would tell our whānau, 'Sorry, we couldn't get this this week,' and they were like, 'That's alright we didn't really need it.'

If we had to adjust the order - if they didn't get this or that - we had to manually change the shopping list total and make sure they were paying the right amount. We took cash and EFTPOS on pick-up or delivery.

In the first week it was still trial and error. Kiri had put a pānui (notification) out with every order, so when they came in to pick up their groceries they knew the process. We tried to give them time slots, so that when they got here they would sit in their vehicles until they were instructed to come in. But everyone kind of came at the same time, so it was a little bit overwhelming. Our whānau were so understanding and I think they just enjoyed sitting in the carpark being out of their houses, no one was in a rush to go anywhere. Everyone was sitting in their cars catching up with everyone through their windows. I think it was that little bit of calm you get with that, you know. People were catching up with people they hadn't seen in years.

It was a one-in, one-out process. They would come in, pay for their stock, get back in their car and then they would reverse to the garage, pop their boot and in went their groceries. We would give them the packing list as well as their shopping list so they could go home and check it off themselves. If we missed something they would ring us and we would add it to their next order or we would drop it off.

We had sanitisers, we kept the two-metre distance between us and the customer, we had gloves and masks so they had all those safety measures. In terms of packing, everyone had their own work stations. We were never working on the same pack.

One night we invited our local doctor Rachel Thomson to come down and have a catch-up with us. She had a look at our processes and answered any questions we had. We needed reminding that we were still in a pandemic because we were getting complacent. The gloves were ripping so you would throw them away. Yes, it gets hōhā (annoying), but we were still mindful when we were working to keep our two-metre distance.

It was lovely for the doctor to come down and have a kōrero (discussion) with us. She told us about how you can reuse the boxes but just let them sit for a bit, you know. Let the germs fade away and it will be all good to reuse. So we asked whānau to bring their boxes back. We would hold them in the storeroom for a week and then we would use them again.

We also worked alongside the hapū and the kōhanga (Māori early learning centre) doing bulk orders for their whānau, but instead of giving the packs out in bulk we would pack them into individual parcels for them. Each hapū had a group that were looking after their pakeke. Pakeke didn't have to come down, so they were given shopping lists and we gave them the option to ring us, because they don't have computers. So they would ring the hotel and we would put their orders in for them. We found that a lot better because we were able to say no, we don't have this or that. Then they would have somebody else come and collect their groceries so they wouldn't have to come in.

CATERING FOR THE COMMUNITY

I received an email from the Whānau Ora³ crew at Te Rūnanga about Civil Defence packs. Civil Defence basics compared to Apanui World were on a smaller scale. They had rice, pasta, flour, baked beans, spaghetti, milk, margarine and noodles. So, I just said to the head office, 'Right, tell me what you want and I will order it with Apanui World, get it on the same truck and we will bring it in and hold it in the hotel.'

In the bar area of the hotel there's a lot of space, so when the Civil Defence packs came in, we separated them from Apanui World stock. When we had spare time, we made up packs for Civil Defence. I informed Whānau Ora that I would pack them, but that's as far as it would go. Whānau Ora workers would come down to pick-up the packs and they would distribute them to whoever needed them, so I would just monitor the stock when it got low and topped it up.

The bonus was there were whānau who were doing shopping through Apanui World and we knew they were struggling so we threw a couple of Civil Defence packs in their Apanui World order and off they went.

There was a shortage of flour, yeast and other baking products. New World was so accommodating. They sent 20 kilo bags so we could pack them into one kilo bags or sell them as 20 kilo bags, but not all whānau could afford 20 kilo bags so we bagged up one kilo bags of flour. New World also sent us bakery yeast in big packets and we pre-packaged them into 50 gram or 100 gram bags, just so it was affordable. We had to take that into consideration. We know what our people want and we know how much they can afford. You know, they don't have a lot of money - we couldn't get the expensive brands and expect everyone to buy them. We had to take into consideration the brands of the product, the cost of the product, the size of the product.

I think because we have a little dairy at the hotel, we know what our people want. When I was working in the shop people would come in and go, 'We don't make that, can you get us this?' To be honest our people are really quite fussy! They don't like budget tomato sauce - it has to be Watties. We only bought Watties tomato sauce for Apanui World and it flew out the door. They also don't like the Value Cornflakes. It has to be Pam's or Sanitarium. It was quite funny. They don't mind it being the Value brand sometimes, but we also know the stock that doesn't move in our shop.

With Apanui World we needed to be able to let our whānau have a say. When Kiri set up the online form I asked for an option for them to be able to tell us what they wanted so she put a section on the form so everyone could write their suggestions. We had to work out which suggestions we would use. One lady sent us her whole shopping list! We compiled everyone's list, wrote down all the suggestions and chose what the majority wanted. We could see the pattern of what people were asking for.

When we wrote our lists we had pretty much the basics, but then everyone was asking for flavourings, gravies and mixes and stuff to make stews, you know, because they've got meat. They also wanted more veggies, fruit and baking items, so we incorporated all of that as well.

We had so many odd requests as well, like tyre tube patches. It was hilarious. But it was for the kiwifruit workers for their gumboots. We did have some good laughs, you know, seeing all of the requests, but we did try to cater for everyone.

For example, we had māmā (mothers) messaging us so we put it out there for any māmā who needed baby formula to make contact with me and we would get specific brands. So that was probably the only item on the list that we would make sure it

was the specific brand, because our babies are so fussy, we had to make sure it was the right one. We had nappies, we had wipes, we had all of that. I think overall everyone got what they needed.

Another huge thing that I noticed through Apanui World was the animals. When I did my first shopping list I said, 'Let's just get cat food and dog rolls. You know, that's enough.' I didn't realise how much our whānau really cared for their animals. It was really quite heart-warming. We would buy a huge variety of animal food like chicken pellets and Tux dog biscuits for the hunters. And animals are fussy - some would only eat rabbits, some were allergic to certain things. They were worse than humans! But we catered for them and we had to, they were part of our iwi as well. So that was quite a touching process watching the animals get spoiled.

WINDING DOWN WITH THE ALERT LEVELS

We did monitor the alert level system but we didn't follow them in terms of Apanui World. We kept it going once things relaxed because there were still whānau that weren't comfortable going into town. So we still wanted to have that option there. In saying that, when we dropped back to Level 3 the hotel still couldn't open anyway, so we kept it going and we just monitored the demand.

In the last couple of weeks, it died down a bit, so our orders got smaller and we were able to move the last of the stock. I didn't want to be left with all this stock in the end because I didn't have a return agreement with New World. I was actually surprised by how much stock I did go through, I think I may have like five packets of Weet-Bix left! It wasn't a lot of stock I had to transfer over to the hotel, probably a shopping trolley full, so that was really, really good.

Anything is possible if we all work together as a whānau. We can make it happen.

³ Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.



CONCLUSION

The saddest thing about Apanui World wrapping up is that because we work at the hotel, there are a lot of people that we don't see anymore. Through Apanui World we created those relationships with our pakeke. You know, we would ring them up for a weekly catch-up. It's quite sad because I probably won't hear from them again. Still, to this day, I need to go and have a cup of tea with most of them, because we never got to meet each other face to face. It was always over the phone.

It was nice to have work, it was nice to be able to work for the iwi, for our people and to give back to our people. After they would get the shopping, they'd ring us up and say, 'Thank you very much for our groceries,' and it was so sweet. We would have an uncle who, every time he would get his shopping, would ring us to thank us. Every time he rang us, we would go, 'Oh no, what did we forget?' As there were times we would forget items in the shopping. But because everyone knows everyone it was like, 'Oh could you drop auntie's butter off, we forgot to give her her butter.' So on their way home they would drop auntie's butter off in her mailbox and she'd walk down to her mailbox and pick-up her butter.

I think we ran the supermarket for six or seven weeks and it was two orders a week, so I think in total we ended up making about 16 orders. Each order was pretty consistent with the other. So when we sorted through our lists and got our stock in we had to unload. We didn't have a forklift onsite, we had to unload by hand. It was quite draining after week seven.

When Auckland went into lockdown earlier this year, they said 'Liisa, we need to get ready for Apanui World,' and I said, 'No we don't, whānau have enough kai. I've had enough now!' But it's funny that we are ready. We've had meetings with New World and they're ready to support us as well if need be. So we're ready to go, ready to do bigger and better - if we need to, we can just start it up tomorrow.

My biggest takeaway from this is that anything is possible. If you put your mind to it you can achieve it - as a whānau, as a hapū and as an iwi. They had a vision and we made it work. I think the love for our iwi and for our whānau is why we do what we do - to see the appreciation on the faces of our whānau. It got to the point where they were bringing in kai (food) for us. They would come and pay for their groceries and you'd turn around and there'd be hotcakes and soup and bread. They were looking after us just as much as we were looking after them. It was being able to help our whānau in a way that we know best. Anything is possible if we all work together as a whānau. We can make it happen.

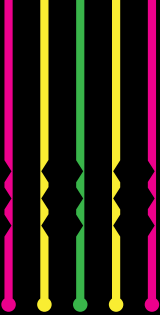


Te Whānau-a-Apanui established 'Apanui World' their DIY answer to the kai needs of local whānau.





KAUMĀTUA/RANGATAHI



Kaumātua (elders) and rangatahi (youth) both played important roles in the COVID-19 response in Aotearoa (New Zealand). As kaumātua were considered to be at higher risk of contracting the virus, many rangatahi stepped up to support their whānau (families) and communities.

Accordingly, this section explores the experiences of kaumātua and rangatahi during the pandemic and their unique contribution to the COVID-19 response. For kaumātua, the pandemic was a time of anxiety and isolation. Many kaumātua felt cut off from their whānau and communities and were worried about contracting the virus. However, kaumātua also spoke about how the pandemic gave them time to reflect on what was important to them, and connect with their whānau and communities in new ways. For rangatahi, the pandemic was a time of challenge and opportunity. Many rangatahi stepped up to support their kaumātua and communities during the pandemic. Rangatahi also spoke about how the pandemic has changed their outlook on life and made them appreciate the things that they normally take for granted.

The first story shares the many innovations developed by Tūwharetoa ki Kawerau Hauora to support and protect kaumātua during the pandemic. This included a digital literacy programme that sought to upskill kaumātua in the use of technology. The programme was successful in reducing isolation and loneliness among kaumātua and also equipped them with the skills to manage should there be a resurgence of COVID-19 in the community. While the programme requires more resourcing to run successfully, the benefits outweigh the costs, as the programme has had a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of kaumātua within the community.



In the second story, Rauawaawa Kaumātua Charitable Trust (Trust) shares their kaupapa (initiative) of supporting kaumātua during the COVID-19 pandemic. The kaupapa of the Trust is one of supporting kaumātua to stay connected and engaged within their community, and this has only been amplified during COVID-19. By utilising the talents within their community and networks, the Trust was able to provide much-needed support in the form of wellness packs, masks, and heat packs. For example, Trust member Mary-Anne sewed over 200 masks for kaumātua to use. This kaupapa-driven approach also means that the Trust is always looking for ways to improve and update its services to best support kaumātua. Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Rangimahora Reddy says that while she may have the title, there is definitely a shared leadership model in place at the Trust, with kaumātua always having the final say.

The third story shares the experiences of rangatahi who were part of the Whānau Ora¹ COVID-19 response team in Waikato. The team delivered medication and hygiene packs to kaumātua around the region. This group of rangatahi proved themselves as reliable and effective workers, gaining the trust of their community in the process. The media coverage they received was an added bonus, raising the profile of rangatahi as positive contributors to society. This story also provides an excellent example of the positive impact rangatahi can have in their communities.

The fourth story comes from Te Tai Tokerau (Northland) and shares the story of how 18 year old rangatahi Waimate Wihongi utilised his app and website development skills for something that would support his community during COVID-19 by making it easier for kaimahi (staff) to connect with whānau and provide them with the services they need. Waimate is a self-taught app and website developer. He started coding when he was just 13 years old and has never looked back. He is passionate about using his skills to help those around him and when he saw how COVID-19 was impacting his community, he decided to put his skills to good use.

The fifth and final story in this section shares the experiences of kaimahi based at Te Kaha O Te Rangatahi – a specialist rangatahi service based in South Auckland. COVID-19 has been both a time of challenges, growth, service and connection for Te Kaha O Te Rangatahi and the community. Through their work, they have been able to help their community in a variety of ways, from delivering kai (food) parcels to helping those who have lost their jobs. Despite the challenges that they have faced, they have found fulfillment in their work!

¹ Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.



INCREASING KAUMĀTUA DIGITAL LITERACY IN KAWERAU

REGION: WAIARIKI
As told by Bree Solomon – May 2021

Ko Bree Solomon tōku ingoa. He uri tenei nō Te Arawa, Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Waikato-Tainui, Ngā Puhi hoki. He kaiwhakahaere rauemi ōku mahi mō Tūwharetoa ki Kawerau Hauora. He whakapapa o te Hauora nei. Ko Pūtauaki te maunga, Ko Te Takanga i o Apa te wai, Ko Te Aotahi te tangata, Mai i te riu o Kawerau ngā hapū, Ko Hāhuru te tupuna whare, Ngāti Tūwharetoa mai Kawerau ki te tai te iwi.

My name is Bree Solomon. A descendent from Te Arawa, Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Waikato-Tainui, Ngā Puhi. My role is Operations Manager for Tūwharetoa ki Kawerau Health. He whakapapa o te Hauora nei. The Mountain is Pūtauaki, the water is Te Takanga i o Apa, the ancestor is Te Aotahi, the subtribes are Mai i te riu o Kawerau (from the valley of Kawerau), the ancestral house is Hāhuru, the tribe is Ngāti Tūwharetoa mai Kawerau ki te tai.

I’m Bree Solomon, General Manager for Tūwharetoa ki Kawerau Hauora (Tūwharetoa). Kawerau is an amazing community. What is important to highlight is that in order to really understand the community, and to have a perspective of the community, you need to be a part of the community. Quite often the media gives this perception of Kawerau in a negative light. Like every other community, we all have challenges, but it’s how we manage the challenges and how we support our whānau (families) through those challenges that matter.

I have an absolute passion for the kaupapa (purpose) that is Whānau Ora¹. It’s been great to see the transformation and the developments that we’ve seen over time in the Whānau Ora space, so we’re really privileged to be holding that mahi (work) here.

We provide a breadth of services across family violence, addictions, mental health and social services. Whānau Ora is a core part of the mahi that we do in the community, particularly when it comes to the COVID-19 situation. Like many other organisations and whānau, actually everybody in general, no one was prepared for it. We’re just grateful that through Whānau Ora we were able to support our community at a time that was a complete struggle. In that period, of course, we saw job loss, the struggle and financial strain was really difficult for the community, but it wasn’t just that – it was the psycho-social impacts of COVID-19 that also had an impact on whānau.

WHEN THE PANDEMIC HIT

We were completely unprepared. I know that the whole country was unprepared. It was an opportunity for us to focus on our systems and look at our pandemic planning process in such a situation. Were our pandemic plans actually fit for purpose considering the landscape of COVID-19 and what was in front of us? We realised they weren’t. Not only were we needing to review our systems and put processes in place internally, but we needed to look at how those systems impact the whānau that we’re actually serving. How does it impact our hapū (subtribe), iwi (tribe), our wider community, our whānau? How does that impact us if there was going to be a spread of the virus? What could we do as an organisation to contain it at our level?

During that period we were in consultation with our DHB (District Health Board) because we needed to be guided by what the Ministry [of Health] was directing. We needed to consult and strengthen the partnerships that we had within the community – with council, Neighbourhood Watch, Civil Defence – and to know what our iwi was doing in that space. It was a situation that we knew we could not do alone, that we needed to rely on everyone else, so that we could collectively work together. It was a tragic situation, but out of that we

formed so many great partnerships and relationships. It wasn’t just locally, it was regionally, it was nationally – so if we had tried to do it on our own – we would have absolutely failed. So we reviewed our entire pandemic plan.

During that period we mobilised the Whānau Ora hygiene packs and we were able to mobilise support with kai (food), veggie and fruit packs to our most vulnerable whānau. We targeted our koroua (elderly men) and our kuia (elderly women), our pēpi (babies) our tamariki (children), whānau who had dependents, those who had existing significant health issues, because it was about maintaining their wellbeing and their health. We mobilised our Whānau Ora team and mental health team during that period because of the psycho-social impacts of COVID-19 – because we saw an increase in issues including family violence during that period. We had a number of people out of work and so the rates of family violence, mental health issues and crisis situations escalated.

What was important was ensuring that no one was left without – and no one was left alone. We identified koroua and kuia who lived alone, and so during that period when we were doing deliveries, we mobilised two of our Kaiārahi (Whānau Ora Navigator) to support our koroua and kuia who had no whānau in the community to help them with grocery shopping. A lot of

our koroua and kuia had existing health conditions – who wants to see our kaumātua (elders) waiting in the supermarket lines, lining up for hours? No one.

At the time we had, I think, 1,041 whānau registered with our services – so as a whole entire hauora whānau (health providing community), we made sure to call every single person registered within our service to see what additional support they needed at that time. Because we’ve got really good partnerships within the community we were able to talk with a lot of other agencies around who they could identify as being the most vulnerable and so that’s where that collective partnership really came in handy.

Neighbourhood Support is amazing. The staff there know what’s moving in the community. It’s not just about watching out for whānau homes and burglaries, it’s about identifying any vulnerabilities – those who are struggling – and feeding them back into the services.

These partnerships were so valuable. We had a local company whose business was on hold due to the Level 4 lockdown at that time. A lot of his usual customers were elderly and knowing that they were part of a vulnerable group he called us and said, ‘I have a number of customers who are elderly and need support.’ He had contacted them all and got their consent to share their details. He said he couldn’t do much at that time – he didn’t have the resources – but went above and beyond to see if he could source support for these elderly people.

We are an iwi provider, but we’re also a community provider and so it wasn’t just, ‘Okay we’ve got to provide services for Māori.’ We had to serve the community. So not only were our whānau Māori (Māori families) served, but we also supported our non-Māori whānau, particularly our elderly during that period.

Collectives got together to share information in a situation where we really needed to pull together for the best interests of our community. We mobilised kai packages to the community as well. It was actually during that period that myself and our chief executive officer were out there delivering and taking packages to whānau.

My biggest takeaway from this is that anything is possible. If you put your mind to it you can achieve it – as a whānau, as a hapū and as an iwi. They had a vision and we made it work. I think the love for our iwi and for our whānau is why we do what we do – to see the appreciation on the faces of our whānau. It got to the point where they were bringing in kai (food) for us. They would come and pay for their groceries and you’d turn around and there’d be hotcakes and soup and bread. They were looking after us just as much as we were looking after them. It was being able to help our whānau in a way that we know best. Anything is possible if we all work together as a whānau. We can make it happen.

IDENTIFYING NEEDS WITH KAUMĀTUA

It was during the delivery drop-offs that we identified the number of our kaumātua (elderly men) and kuia either living alone, or because of the lockdown period were not able to leave to see their whānau, or due to the travel ban, were not able to come in to Kawerau to see their whānau. You had to have a clearance to leave Kawerau to go to Whakatāne, or anywhere, so many of our koroua and kuia were isolated.

Also during that period, many of those elderly either had mobile phones, but didn’t know how to use them, or they didn’t have a mobile phone or a [landline] phone and so were completely isolated from their friends, their whānau, any kind of network.



Frontline Kaimahi finish their pop-up COVID-19 Testing for the day – Tūwharetoa Ki Kawerau.

¹ Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.



CREATING AN EMERGENCY HOTLINE

During the Level 3 and 4 [alert level] period we created an 0800 ‘free to call’ number. We’re not a crisis service but we wanted to create an emergency response line so we could assess if the needs were moderate to high risk, then respond quickly to mobilise support locally if needed. From there we could immediately call upon secondary services, crisis mental health, or police, if we needed to.

During the Level 4 lockdown period, we received a lot of calls through that phone line with the majority of our calls from kaumātua and kuia. And so it was mamae (painful) during that period because that line was manned by myself and one other colleague and we found it was mainly our kuia who were ringing up. There were a lot who were saying, ‘Well, I’m okay, I’ve just got no one to talk to.’ There were many contributing factors that we found during that period that identified that our kaumātua were the most vulnerable. Once we were back and operational we supported them by connecting them back into our koroua/kuia Early Intervention Service, where every Wednesday they had socialisation programmes and ongoing support.

MEETING THE NEED WITH AWHI WHĀNAU

During that period there was the opportunity to innovate and deliver a programme. We asked ourselves, ‘Where was our greatest need?’ and it was our kaumātua being isolated, so we developed a digital programme. The purpose of the programme was for koroua and kuia to be able to connect with their whānau should anything ever happen, so they would have the means, the knowledge, the skills and the devices to do so.

As a result of COVID-19 the bills didn’t get paid by koroua and kuia because they were so used to physically going into the bank. So when you asked them, ‘You know how to do internet banking, are you registered for internet banking?’ They were like, ‘What is that?’

They also had no idea how to do online shopping so we wanted to equip them with the resources and the knowledge to be able to manage, to participate in the community, share what they’d learned with their whānau, use [Facebook] Messenger to be able to video call whānau ... and so out of that rolled Awhi Whānau, which is our digital programme for koroua and kuia.

It was a 12-week programme and the content was around the basics of digital technology. It was the ‘how to’s’ of everything digital: How to create a Facebook page, how to open Messenger, how to set yourself up on a video call, how to Skype, how to set up an email and use email. It was very detailed. Also, during that period, they were taught how to set up online banking. We made sure that when they did that, there were some security measures around them registering, that the information wasn’t shared with any of our facilitators, so that they were able to do that with privacy measures, as well as how to order groceries online.

We had 12 kaumātua who started on the pilot programme. All 12 completed the 12-weeks, for four hours each week. You’re never too old to learn another skill. Every single one of them graduated at the end. The awesome thing about the initiative was that the rōpū (group) created their own social network among themselves and so they’re able to connect with each other. Post-wānanga (post-programme) they’re still in communication with each other.

We’ve had a lot of our nans being able to video call their whānau in Australia, all their mokopuna (grandchildren), and so the outcomes have been amazing. One of our nans discovered and was taught how to use YouTube and so she goes to YouTube and watches educational videos of interest. That was about supporting the hinengaro (minds) of our koroua/kuia, with access to continuous learning as well. This nan also discovered 70s music on YouTube and we have some great footage of her with her headphones on in the classroom, watching her 70s music video. She’s got headphones on and she’s sitting there and she’s doing her kanikani (dance), and it was just beautiful to see. All of our kaumātua and kuia came out of that space feeling so appreciative, knowing that they would never be isolated, because they will always be able to connect.

At the end of the programme we were able to equip everyone with a mobile phone that they could take away with them. It’s one thing to teach the skills, but if they don’t have the resources to continue, then that makes it really hard.

The first pilot happened when we were operational again, I believe that was early August 2020. At the time I think one of the things that delayed us having to do that was, as the levels dropped we were still trying to mobilise support in the community and at the same time transition our kaimahi (staff) back into their respective areas. Then we had to have social distancing protocols in place – hand washing, hygiene – and so we needed to put some energy and focus into the set-up so that our kaimahi could return and continue the mahi with our whānau. So we transitioned our kaimahi and then we started the programme. That’s probably been the most significant positive for us, post-COVID-19, just knowing that our community is aware that this programme exists, so we’ve got people that will ring in and say, ‘Oh, so when’s the next programme, because my nan wants to do it.’ The ideal would be to have the resourcing to be able to equip every kuia and koroua in our community with this.

We are currently in the second programme right now. We are three weeks into it. It’s been by word of mouth, our koroua and kuia have talked to their other friends and the interest has grown significantly. We’ve got a waitlist of koroua and kuia wanting to be upskilled. Obviously it takes resourcing for us to do that successfully, but it was more so about the bigger outcomes, we wanted to make sure that we were aligning the needs of our community. The most identifiable, presenting issue was the vulnerability and isolation of our kaumātua. Particularly during that period when you weren’t able to go into the medical centres they had to call you and you had to triage over the phone. Some of our nans didn’t even have a phone. But just having the resources, the knowledge, the skills to be able to stay connected – that’s what it was centred around. Strengthening whānau relationships, encouraging and increasing engagement with their tamariki and mokopuna online. More importantly, reducing isolation and feelings of loneliness. That was huge, because there’s so much research around how isolation and loneliness can cause or contribute to physical health issues.

We are confident that we met those outcomes. How do we know? Because our koroua/kuia have told us. We have seen the outcomes, we’ve heard the outcomes from their children and their mokopuna as well. What has been beautiful is that they have seen our world change and transform over time and what is important to us is that they don’t feel left behind, because technology is the driver of all things today. The programme gives the means to bring them along with us and utilise our kaimahi, our younger ones, our facilitators, to be a part of the awhi (help) and support in the programmes as well.

We are confident that our whānau who came through the programme are better equipped to manage and have the resources to support themselves. There was so much learning from that space that we now are in a position, should there ever be a resurgence of COVID-19, that we are ready. We have got responses and response mechanisms in place to deal with it, should it come around, because we’ve learnt from the first time.

We’re committed in this space to ensuring that our whānau, our community, are able to access all the resources that they can possibly get. That we can advocate, in whatever space that we need to advocate, to ensure that our whānau, and especially our whānau Māori, are supported. That they are absolutely supported during their struggles. It makes me quite emotional, because it’s such an amazing community, with amazing people, and amazing whānau.



Tūwharetoa ki Kawerau supported their kaumātua in many ways, including Kaumatua Care Packages containing essential hygiene products.

HOW RAUAWAAWA KAUMĀTUA CHARITABLE TRUST SUPPORTED THEIR COMMUNITY THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

REGION: HAURAKI-WAIKATO
An interview with Rangimahora Reddy, Mary-Anne Tainui and Royce Richards – April 2021

Rauawaawa refers to the sides of a waka (canoe) and is explained by kaumātua (elders) as the highest sides that kept tohunga (priests) and ariki (high chiefs) safe. In regards to the Trust (Rauawaawa Kaumātua Charitable Trust), it is also used to mean navigating the waka to ultimately enhance people’s health and wellbeing. The waka, the canoe, all the kaumātua and kaimahi (workers) united and moving forward together through the challenges of COVID-19.

The Trust was established in 1997 by a group of kaumātua that identified a need for culturally focused health, social and community-based activities and services for 55 year olds and over.

The operation is unique as it is kaumātua governed, which makes sense as they have over 600 members across Kirikiriroa (Hamilton) who benefit from the support around health, education, information and socialisation.

Socialisation is important to avoid kaumātua feeling lonely, something which can and does affect mental health. The goal is always to improve the wellbeing and quality of life of all the members. Currently, the Trust has around 670 kaumātua on their books, 85 percent of which are Māori. To qualify, kaumātua need to be 55 years or older, not necessarily of Māori descent and within its geographical boundaries. With some agencies, kaumātua are considered to be 65 plus, but at the Trust they believe that the ten-year age gap sees too many people falling through the cracks with nowhere to go.

The Trust is guided by values of whakawhanaungatanga (establishing relationships), manaakitanga (care and generosity), wairuatanga (spirituality), tino rangatiratanga (sovereignty), and aroha (love) – principles that were on full display when COVID-19 hit in March 2020.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Rangimahora Reddy has been with the Trust since 2010 and the passion for her mahi (work) is evident through the way she works alongside her kaimahi (staff) and kaumātua rather than leading from behind a desk.

RANGIMAHORA: My office has an open-door policy and often we sit at the round table having a kōrero (conversation) over a cuppa which is really productive. It never feels like work coming here. I am lucky to have such a great team and we work together with our kaumātua and it creates such a great environment. And collectively we, they are whānau (family) – we are all like one big whānau trying to contribute to something far bigger than ourselves.

In March 2020 the standard of service provided by the Trust was elevated to a whole other level in response to COVID-19.

RANGIMAHORA: We had been keeping an eye on Facebook to see what was happening and what others like the Rangitāne iwi (the tribe of Rangitāne) did, and we found some beautiful role models who were already implementing some things. I checked with our finance manager to see if we had the budget to start building some hygiene packs, as well as stockpiling necessities like toilet paper for our kaumātua. Luckily, we did that. We also got laminated signs made to put on the front doors of our registered elders indicating if they were vulnerable.

All the staff rallied to ensure regular communication with kaumātua was a priority regardless of how remote the whānau (families) were. If technology was a barrier that was swiftly handled by the team, and the experience was later used to work alongside Te Ahurei Rangatahi (Outstanding Youth programme) so that devices, Wi-Fi, classes and updated information could be provided. Food and hygiene supplies were regularly distributed, arrangements were made to attend flu vaccination centres, doctors’ appointments, as well as to ensure prescriptions were fulfilled and delivered.

The entire team got together as a distribution network to pack and distribute these kai (food) boxes and local suppliers were generous with their goods.

RANGIMAHORA: We went to Gilmours [local shop], and the local iwi (tribe) had just done a big shop. That’s great for the iwi but we really needed to take care of the kaumātua. So, they went in the back room, and said, ‘We could give you this as this is a back order and more is coming so they won’t miss that.’

Other kaimahi also had established relationships with local suppliers and supermarkets so a lot of food and supplies were donated. Collectively, with their small team, they put together around 1,800 packs for kaumātua – which included a lot of fresh fruit and vegetables. This was in addition to over 750 Whānau Ora¹ packs.

RANGIMAHORA: I think our biggest challenge was communicating to everyone right across the board. Our Facebook page was always really active and we kept updating it to keep everyone connected. That’s basically what our kaumātua identified to us, they wanted to stay connected, they wanted information and they wanted to be entertained. They were missing that interaction with one another and that’s how online ‘Kumba’ came about.

Kumba is kaumātua Zumba, which the staff decided they would create by developing routines to music kaumātua would enjoy. They practiced and then started to film this on their phones and regularly updated it on Facebook. It was well received and gained media coverage that put the Trust on the radar as an organisation that takes care of whānau with whānau.

Royce Richards, a registered kaumātua and Kotahitanga committee member, has been involved for three and a half years and loves it. He organises the weekly raffles and enjoys all the facilities available to kaumātua.

ROYCE: Until I got involved through friends I had no idea all of this was here and I am so grateful. I’m fit and healthy for a man turning 75 in November. I love all the music and waiata (song) here and it is helping with my pronunciation of te reo (Māori language) and learning the language which I enjoy. I go to the gym regularly and I have always felt really welcome here.

Royce flats with his late partner’s brother who is in a wheelchair and they were amazed at the amount of accessibility they had to food, hygiene packs and necessities to get them both through the lockdown period.

ROYCE: We survived really well – I was genuinely surprised at what was available to us and for us. We were well looked after and I think we were really lucky. COVID was fairly easy thanks to everything Rauawaawa [the Trust] did for us.

Food, medical supplies, even toilet paper and toothpaste were delivered straight to their door. Te Kōhao Health took care of any pharmaceuticals and prescriptions that were required which made their lives comfortable and stress-free.

ROYCE: Being Pākehā (New Zealand European), it is lovely being involved regardless of your ethnicity.

Post-COVID-19 the Trust has been managing anxiety that some kaumātua have while also running the programmes to give that sense of normality. Rangimahora and her kaimahi ensure masks, sanitisers etc are still readily available.

RANGIMAHORA: There is still a sense of kia tūpato (be careful). Even though it feels like we’re out of it, we still have to be acting as though we still have it right next door. Because it is still there until we completely get rid of it.

The Trust found creative ways to not only benefit kaumātua, but also increase their revenue. One example is their cookie cutters shaped in Māori designs like kete (baskets) and pāua (abalone) shells. Why cookie cutters? Baking is a great activity for those with dementia. The process of having these designed, made and tested was a collaborative effort led by a huge team, including a rōpū (group) of kaumātua that came up with the designs.

RANGIMAHORA: We involved our kaimahi and kaumātua who wanted the shape of the cookie cutters to be relevant to kai – hence pāua and kete. Then we took our idea to Gallagher’s who we have a good relationship with. Mike Williams, who is Ngāi Tahu, really liked the idea so he had them made. We then tested them out with our team and had them re-made so they were easy to use, not too sharp but could cut through cleanly.



Sales of the Māori-themed cookie cutters skyrocketed after featuring on TV’s ‘Seven Sharp’.

¹ Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.



The final product was signed off by our cooks first, then by the trustees and they were then manufactured, and since the first shipment they have been consistently selling through their online marketplace. They have also featured on the television show, Seven Sharp, which escalated sales rapidly.

All the proceeds from the cookie cutters and several other kaumātua-friendly goods goes straight into the organisation’s dementia and age-friendly facility upgrade.

The only service they are finding difficult to fulfill is teaching te reo to kaumātua as there is a shortage of qualified te reo teachers.

MARY-ANNE & JIM TAINUI

For one kaumātua at the Trust it was her skills as a dressmaker that made a huge difference to not only herself, but dozens of whānau right around Aotearoa (New Zealand) during and post COVID-19.

Mary-Anne Tainui (Ngāti Korihi/Ngāti Te Ata) and her husband Jim (Ngāti Maniapoto/Tūhoe) will be celebrating their Golden Wedding Anniversary this year. Together they have been very active in the Trust for decades.

They were in their mid-50s when family introduced them to the Trust and despite being on crutches it wasn’t long before Jim was strumming the guitar at the request of members, and they haven’t stopped since that day.

MARY-ANNE: It was good for us. We socialised a lot, Jim and I – we used to dance when we were members of a Working men’s Club. Jim was more involved than me in the start and now I am the Chair for the Kotahitanga committee, and we organise our programmes. Jim is on our committee for the Trust. We really love it.

Every Friday, kaumātua get together for their socialisation programme. It starts with a karakia (prayer) and as chairperson Mary-Anne opens the day by greeting everyone.

The programme for the day can include singing waiata with the backing of any instruments kaumātua can play.

MARY-ANNE: Then we do our exercises which include low impact movements, plus strength and balance. We also do some line dancing – that’s what we do just on a Friday. We have all this done by 11:45am, then we draw our raffles before sitting down together for lunch.

After lunch is the popular sing-along which can go for a few hours because the kaumātua love it.

MARY-ANNE: As a committee we decide what we are going to do for the year. We do Kaumātua Idol, we go to the movies, organise art days that we love. One lady is a cake decorator and another makes jigsaw puzzles.

Other activities include Kaumātua Olympics which has now gone nationwide and includes those physically able as well as those who are in wheelchairs, supported by walking sticks or who have suffered a stroke. Everyone can be involved either as a participant or a spectator.

Every year the Kotahitanga committee organises an annual dance with everyone dressing up for the occasion that has a different theme every year.

MARY-ANNE: It’s so successful! It really makes a difference that we are making the decisions together on what we can do – like one year we did a mystery tour. We like to keep the activities varied.

Mary-Anne and Jim agree that without this organisation many kaumātua would suffer from loneliness as not all of them are close to whānau and many are living alone.

The Trust has many activities throughout the week for all kaumātua, including flax weaving, korowai (cloak) making, kapa haka (Māori performing arts), ukulele guitar tutorials, plus nutrition and weight loss. Tutors are kaumātua themselves as well as rangatahi (youth) who teach the technology class to keep everyone up-skilled with smartphones, Wi-Fi, various websites and computers.

As COVID-19 became more prevalent in Aotearoa, Mary-Anne and Jim were on the road to see their sister in South Auckland when their daughter called to say they had been identified as an age group that were high risk. ‘We were almost at my sister’s when she told us so we turned around, went home and stayed there.’

Mary-Anne is a talented seamstress who had been making and donating wheat packs for a Trust fundraiser. Once COVID-19 came along she was contacted by the Trust’s CEO Rangimahora who asked if she would be able to make face masks as demand was exceeding supply.

MARY-ANNE: I had never made these before so I Googled ‘face mask patterns’ and chose the one that was the simplest and easiest to adjust for our kaumātua who have different face shapes.

Unsure of how they would be received, Rangimahora suggested an amount to make in the first batch then Mary-Anne found some fabrics with Māori designs and got to work.

MARY-ANNE: It was a big job, I got my sister to help me after I worked out how much material we needed and away we went. They were very popular and went so quickly we started running out of elastic for the masks.

Mary-Anne could make one mask in 10 minutes, in total around 400 masks were made. At the same time, winter arrived so Mary-Anne wanted to make more heat packs but her sewing machine was in the garage.

MARY-ANNE: I said to Rangimahora that it was very cold out there so she arranged for her son and his friend to bring it into the dining room for me and then I had everything I needed. My sewing machine is right there, lots of colourful fabric, the cutting board was in the lounge, the iron was in the lounge and Jim just had to work his way around it all.

Mary-Anne worked with her CEO to put Wellness Packs together with a mask, a heat pack, Vicks VapoRub, honey, throat lozenges and anything else that would make kaumātua comfortable through the cold months. The packs, masks and heat packs are still being sold online and from the office and the orders are consistent thanks to Mary-Anne’s sewing skills and the support of her husband and CEO.

MARY-ANNE: I loved doing it, making those masks and I’m glad people liked them and it could keep them safe. It is a privilege to be a part of the Trust giving to the kaumātua and you can see they enjoy learning and socialising. Plus, it keeps Jim and I busy and collectively we help each other and keep each other busy. We all work together to really make a difference.

Since the pandemic began, over 200 more kaumātua have registered with the Trust which is looking to update and renovate so everyone is comfortably accommodated for, something Rangimahora is looking forward to.

RANGIMAHORA: Everyone here works really hard, and we love working with our kaumātua, for kaumātua. That is the only way. Even though my title says ‘CEO’ – here, we are all whānau. COVID strengthened us as an organisation and it makes me proud, it really does.

Rangimahora has a lot of plans for the future and she is excited about what they can and will offer kaumātua and refuses to limit registrations.

RANGIMAHORA: Our contracts do have milestones and they do have numbers on there, but we see those as our minimums and not our maximums. One of the things that you will find is they will talk about how in their late 70s and 80s a lot of their friends

have passed and how lonely that is for them. Our whānau have to make a living and they have to be in those spaces, and so what happens to our koroua (elderly men) and kuia (elderly women) when they have to be there and the loneliness that comes with that. They need a space they can go to – it doesn’t have to be Rauawaawa [the Trust], any place that provides a space for kaumātua to come together where they are not crammed into one person’s whare (house). That is an enabler for them to be connected and stay connected.

While kaimahi at the Trust credit Rangimahora for their success, she refuses to see it that way.

RANGIMAHORA: There is definitely a shared leadership model. While I may have the title, I certainly don’t have the final say. The final say belongs to our kaumātua.

The Trust continues to paddle their waka together and now they are even more in unison than ever.



Mary-Anne and Jim Tainui with some of the masks they made during lockdown.



RANGATAHI MAKE POSITIVE HEADLINES DURING THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

REGION: HAURAKI-WAIKATO
An interview with Nadine Hapuku, Georgia Barnett, Koia Tēpana, Kewene Cave, Jovita Williams and Cora Lambert – April 2021

Unfortunately when you hear about Māori youth it’s not always positive, particularly in the media. However, when COVID-19 arrived in Waikato a group of rangatahi (youth) changed that narrative thanks to their uncompromising work ethic with Te Kōhao Health to help the elderly and vulnerable.

For 25 years Te Kōhao Health has been a marae-based (culturally-centred) provider of health, social, employment, Whānau Ora¹, education and justice services to a predominantly Māori client base. In total 80 percent of their clients are Māori.

Based in Hamilton, Te Kōhao Health is the lead provider for the Te Ngira Whānau Ora Collective. Three of the partners are based in Hamilton, with the others in Thames, Tokoroa, Taumarunui, [Ngāti] Maniapoto and Raukawa.

Nadine Hapuku is the senior administrator at Te Kōhao who is proud of their targeted response to COVID-19, the bulk of which was made up of local rangatahi.

NADINE: The ones who we decided could be ready right now were shoulder tapped to lead the way from the front. And we are talking about kaimahi (staff) who did not have any dependents or health issues and were fit and available to be there from the start. They and I got the privilege of being in the warehouse as the hygiene box packers for four months, it was a massive and successful time.

Georgia Barnett is normally a chef and when lockdown at Level 4 closed everything she found herself leading a team of rangatahi Māori (young Māori) deployed to organise thousands of essential hygiene and kai (food) packs from a massive warehouse. *‘I just fell into the role which was nice and together we became a pretty solid workforce. That meant when the big shipments came in, we broke them down, organised them to be shipped off to partners.’*

The group worked tirelessly over four months assembling 3,500 packs every week for distribution around Waikato. Work like this could feel repetitive but Georgia said they soon realised what it was that kept them going and going.

GEORGIA: There was no motivation until we saw the end result of it. For us we were just packing all of these kai and hygiene packs and people were coming to pick them up and that’s all we’d see of it. Once the videos started coming and seeing whānau (families) receiving these packs and their reactions that was where the rewards came in.

Georgia felt comfortable being at the helm of a young team and every day they arrived on time, ready to go and they did not stop. They kept each other going with banter, Tik-Tok videos and the realisation of how crucial their mahi (work) was.

Co-worker Koia Tēpana believes being good friends was instrumental in how much they achieved.

KOIA: Altogether there were about 12 of us who took turns to help out over the four months. It was so cool to see that we were able to do so many packs! I got mean brownie points from my Nan when I went home.

COVID-19 changed everyone’s landscape dramatically, especially Kewene Cave who had been getting ready to go to Europe.

KEWENE: I had plans to go overseas a month after it actually hit. I was a little bit bummed out I couldn’t go but it was good to be here and help out whānau who were vulnerable, especially our kaumātua (elders). They weren’t able to get out and we were packing essentials that would get to them. It kept me sane because I was living alone at the time, just in my own bubble of one. It gave me a real sense of purpose.

This was also the case for Jovita Williams who didn’t realise how much of a strain it would be just being in a bubble of two, something she normally enjoyed.

JOVITA: I stayed at home for one day and then asked to come in and help with the boxes ‘cause I couldn’t handle being at home with my partner! But I loved doing the boxes. It was the reward of being able to help the vulnerable. And also, to be there and play our part on behalf of all the kaimahi, many of them couldn’t be there because they were vulnerable themselves. We were also processing Whānau Direct² applications, grants and financial assistance, like our normal desk jobs as well ... Being there was so good and it was great that we were recognised for our mahi by the media as normally rangatahi get a bad rap.

Nadine acknowledges this and says this group of rangatahi are changing the landscape.

NADINE: Physically, they were the ones who could keep up for the duration of the day, the weeks, the months in that warehouse ... To give the rangatahi the freedom to do this the way they wanted to do it, that was the most important decision we made. We trusted them and they delivered, in fact they over-delivered. Regular social media posts helped cure any boredom and those updates attracted the attention of the media which surprised Georgia. ‘We didn’t expect that and didn’t do it for that. It was good to see that they are acknowledging rangatahi for doing the mahi and interviewing us so we could get our point of view across.’

Cora Lambert was a temporary contractor helping with Whānau Ora Haumanu – and she redeployed to deliver medication and hygiene packs to whānau around Waikato.

CORA: All day, every day for me over two months I delivered medication to whānau. It was really cool for me because a lot of the whānau kaumātua (elderly family members) who lived alone and were not able to be visited by family. It was so good to be able to be that person for them especially when the hygiene packs arrived. It was a really positive surprise for them during a really difficult time. Again, a lot of our kaumātua didn’t have transport, were not able to get in as public transport was not working. It was a real godsend for us to be in the community with them. A lot of the whānau were so pleased to see us and wanted us to come in and have a cup of tea with them, obviously we couldn’t because we had to keep that distance between us and them. It was a really cool introduction into Whānau Ora actually because even though we had to social distance, we were still able to make sure they were okay, we were still able to offer them any other services that we could provide them within a safe area.

Cora covered a large distance of Hamilton and enjoyed being able to get out.

CORA: In the beginning because we had to wear masks, they were a bit scared with this stranger arriving at their door wearing a mask and gloves. Over the weeks they got used to it and it was almost as though they would wait for me. I would miss a day and they would ask me where I was, that happened all the time. I was on the same route all the time. I got used to my whānau I was delivering to as I was covering one side of Hamilton and another kaimahi was doing the other.

Once people knew she was carrying medicines and prescriptions for them, she was regularly welcomed. It didn’t take long for Cora to realise the importance of the mahi she was doing.

CORA: Initially I was all about getting the medication to the whānau but then after a couple of weeks I realised it was more than that so I stayed to have a kōrero (talk) with them. They appreciated having a quick kōrero to break their routine. To be a frontline essential worker at such a tough time was a real honour.

For Georgia it was a privilege to perform this vital mahi alongside other rangatahi. *‘It’s so great to see the positive impact we rangatahi can have without someone standing over us. And if we have to respond again, we’ll be ready. No question.’*

Being there was so good and it was great that we were recognised for our mahi by the media as normally rangatahi get a bad rap.

¹ Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.
² Whānau Direct assists whānau to access financial resources when it matters most to whānau, with the intention of making a positive difference for whānau.



RANGATAHI DEVELOPS INNOVATIVE SOFTWARE FOR NGĀTI HINE HEALTH

REGION: TE TAI TOKERAU
An interview with Waimate Wihongi and Jonette Chapman – May 2021

Whānau (families) will no longer feel isolated during a COVID-19 lockdown again thanks to the natural IT (Information Technology) ability of a Far North rangatahi (youth).

Waimate Wihongi (Ngā Puhī) is an 18-year-old computer whizz who dreamed of developing software when he was a kid. Now, Waimate is completely changing the way whānau can access invaluable services, providing something useful now and invaluable during another COVID-19 lockdown for the Ngāti Hine Health Trust (NHHT). His software is changing the way whānau interact with Kaiārahi (Whānau Ora' Navigator) and the way collectives do their reporting.

Relationship Manager Jonette Chapman proudly recalls the day she bumped into Waimate, a day she considers to be a very fortunate one.

***JONETTE:** We were at a Careers Day at Bay of Islands College and we started chatting after I asked him whether he was interested in a career with health and social services. He wasn't and then I asked what he wanted to do and he said he made games and software. I was so curious I checked with him if he had done any workplace experience like the Gateways programme and I was so surprised that he was sent to The Warehouse to pack shelves. Not because that's not good mahi (work), but because I could sense he was very talented. I asked if he wanted to work for us, he was interested and I asked him to send me his CV.*

Jonette received it the next day and four months later she had earmarked a position for him to develop the SharePoint, to create a website and app that would be beneficial to their collective and whānau. This job was new and they had to research the internet to find the correct language and titles they required so a role could be presented to Waimate.

***JONETTE:** We needed to remember that this was a cadetship as we were unsure what his abilities were. The job description was very thorough and may have been suited for someone a bit older with some experience in this field. He came in and along with our Data Analyst and Digital Strategy Lead, Dwan Cherrington, we presented what we wanted him to do and he was very shy but said he could do it. We had nothing to go on, and I mean up until this time we had been paying people to do this for us, and they still haven't done it yet. Well, Waimate goes off and within that first week, he had developed the app!! That was the first app.*

It was at this point Jonette and the rest of the staff realised Waimate was not only able to take direction, but he was exceeding their expectations in a short amount of time.

***JONETTE:** So then we started setting up SharePoint, gave Waimate the information and he starts putting it together and we gave him a work plan to guide him.*

SharePoint is a Microsoft system used to create websites and it can also be used to securely store, organise, share and access information from any device.

***JONETTE:** He didn't know some of it so he went online and taught himself. But he still did it. Within the first three weeks Waimate set up the bones of Sharepoint, sorted the app to the point that it only needed a bit of fine-tuning, he was so good! So then one of the bosses goes, 'I want him to take this thing that's in my head, and do a picture of it.' Despite our tight deadlines we had with our new digital strategy we did give it to him. And sure enough, he does it! So while he's not a designer, he is the bones and the mechanics of the programming. It took him half an hour to take what the boss wrote on a whiteboard and turn it into what we wanted. So we invested in him.*

Since that time Waimate has completed some advanced training with Power BI and it was a facilitator from there who told the Collective's Data Analyst and Digital Strategy Lead, 'That fullah - he's a genius'.

After the first month, NHHT offered him a permanent job which he accepted.

***JONETTE:** We are so excited and we want to invest in him. He has only been with us since February this year but he is making such a difference. If we had him during COVID, whānau would have been able to go online, complete a self-reflection and identified what they need, and either we show them the services in their area, or connect them directly with a navigator. So instead of them being in their homes, unsure of what was going on, not knowing what to do, they can click on this app, indicate how they are and then we can call them directly.*

This sense of empowerment would help whānau stay connected, get what they need and have a faster, more accurate response from a local Kaiārahi. This app has been on their minds for years but they have not found anyone who could take that idea and turn it into reality.

***JONETTE:** We based it on the Te Pou Matakana Mataora assessment tool. Our idea was that if we had this website and this app whānau could come in and almost use it like a shopping cart experience. 'I want this, put it in my basket, I need this, put it in.' Or 'I might need help with health' and put it on your shopping cart. And then all the services close to them that they connect with pop up, or you can choose to connect with a navigator directly. It gives whānau the ability to look out for themselves, or reach out for support.*

Jonette is so impressed at the natural ability Waimate has to write code, design software and create these systems that are changing the way NHHT functions. Even their on-site Whānau Tahī⁴ Systems Administrator is excited at the progress this rangatahi is making. They talk the same language and that reinforces to Jonette that not only does Waimate know what he is doing, but he has a huge future in front of him. She's just hoping that no one discovers and poaches him from her team. On the other hand, Waimate is a very humble person who is close to his dad and still a little shocked he gets to be employed doing what he loves.

Waimate is the youngest of six children who grew up just outside of Kaikohe. He is quietly spoken and seems taken aback at the attention he is receiving about his mahi.

When Waimate was a kid he used to play a lot of games, one of his first was a game called Spyro on Playstation 2. This experience ignited his passion for not only gaming but how the games were made. He moved to Australia with his father when he was 11 and taught himself programming by watching YouTube videos and tutorials. 'I kept watching these videos and it took me a couple of years but I really wanted to write my own programmes and make my own games.' Once Waimate understood what was involved he was surprised at how easy it was. 'You write text which tells the computer some instructions on what to do and then, you have a game. It felt good the first time I made a game and it actually worked on the computer.'

Other small projects followed and Waimate started to really understand the background workings of the most basic game and he started to increase his knowledge and abilities. At this stage his father thought it was just a hobby and never really took it seriously. Waimate himself was pretty serious about it once he overcame the first hurdle which was starting out.

***WAIMATE:** Once you learn one programming language it's practically the same throughout. It's almost like a generic template and then you can build from that and over time you get faster and what you build can be a little more complex.*

By the time Waimate returned to New Zealand he was capable of building and releasing his own game to the public. This was an encouraging indication of his growth and knowledge in computer programming. The game was called Area 51 Dash and to win you needed to dodge as many things as possible to gain points. Waimate was proud. 'The game was infinite -it's pretty easy to make it like that. More fun to play and around 100 people downloaded it which made me feel good'.

Waimate was attending school full-time but there was no course or subject that would complement his passion for writing software programmes and developing games. Then at that Speed-Meet Careers day at Northland High School he met Jonette and that conversation turned into an invitation for a job.

***WAIMATE:** The app I made enables whānau to set up their own profile, track their progress and not only see the available services but select which ones are beneficial for them.*

This is a game changer for whānau as it gives them control of their profiles, plus keeps them connected to Whānau Ora. Their Kaiārahi can see all of this information and respond accordingly, recommending any services they deem applicable to that whānau. Should COVID-19 restrict communities again, it will be an immediate form of communication for whānau to access who and what they need, an invaluable tool Jonette and her team have been wanting for a long time.

***JONETTE:** One big thing during COVID was people feeling isolated and helpless. Waimate has made an app that is easily accessible for everyone and it gives them the power to easily reach out to us to get what they need. There is no limit to how many people can have the app. It also shows you where you sit in each domain, what your strengths are, what you are good at and also gives you inspiring messages. The idea is to always show the growth of whānau to keep them motivated.*

In comparison, the existing system means whānau fill out paperwork which is passed to kaimahi (staff) who manually input and update their information.

If there is another lockdown, this phone app will be comforting for whānau no matter where they are, it will keep them connected and updated.

***WAIMATE:** The website I made is also very easy to navigate. One feature is our map which will show your location and as you run your mouse over it, the available services close to you with their contact details will pop-up.*

There is also a massive change for back office staff who spend a lot of their mahi writing reports. Waimate has developed a programme that efficiently and accurately collates all of their data meaning they no longer have to do it manually. He also ensured he had the right software to link their system straight to Whānau Tahī in Auckland, so everything talks to each other. Jonette is still staggered at his talent.

***JONETTE:** He's a genius. He has changed accessibility to us from our whānau, no matter where they are. And let's face it, up here people are everywhere and very remote. For our kaimahi it has basically simplified a large part of their mahi so they can now spend more time with our organisation ensuring we are really there when whānau need us, whenever they need us.*

Waimate is humble about the significant changes he has made to the Collective's kaimahi and whānau, changes that could eventually be adopted right throughout Whānau Ora in Aotearoa (New Zealand).

Whether Waimate ends up in an Auckland 'Silicon Valley' or creates one of his own in the Far North, he's happy right now in Whangārei watching his creation work.

***WAIMATE:** It is pretty cool I guess. There is so much more that I can and want to do. I'm glad I made an app and website that is right there for whānau, especially if we do go into lockdown again. I'm a bit surprised by all the attention. Best part is my dad can see this is more than just a hobby and now, so do I.*

¹ Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.
² A digital platform created and owned by a leading Māori health IT company, Whānau Tahī Ltd. The Whānau Tahī platform provides solutions for healthcare case management. Originally developed to support Whānau Ora, the Whānau Tahī platform is now used not only by Whānau Ora providers but also by the Ministry of Health, including the National E-Prescription Database, the Socrates (NASC) system, and others both local and abroad. For more information see: <https://www.whanautahi.com/> company.

ENGAGING YOUTH, SOUTH AUCKLAND STYLES

REGION: TĀMAKI MAKAUURAU
As told by Te Kaha O Te Rangatahi Kaimahi (Staff) – May 2021

Te Ao Kapa – CEO Te Aupōuri, Ngāti Wai, Te Aitanga-a-Hauiti, Ngāti Porou	Atarleah Tuheke – Kaiārahi (Health and Wellbeing Lead) Ngāti Maniapoto
Te One Matthews – Kaiārahi (Sexual Health Lead) Ngāti Maniapoto, Waikato	Te Mania Koia – Kaiārahi (Smoking Cessation Lead) Te Aupōuri, Ngāti Wai, Te Aitanga-a-Hauiti, Ngāti Porou
Paris Daley – Kaiārahi Ngāti Wai, Ngāti Porou	Debi Kapa – Operations Manager Ngāti Wai, Te Aitanga-a-Hauiti, Ngāti Porou
Nicole Teava – Data Analyst Ngāti Whātua, Te Uri o Hau	

INTRODUCTION

Te Kaha O Te Rangatahi Indigenous Youth Hub (Te Kaha) is a Māori, non-profit organisation based in the heart of Manurewa, South Auckland. Known locally as a rōpū (group) of lively and engaging kaimahi visible at community events such as hip hop dance competitions and Polyfest, they’ve also become known more recently as home to one of the youngest Māori CEOs in Aotearoa (New Zealand).

Te Ao Kapa was promoted to the position of CEO in March 2021, after having worked her way up for the past 12 years in almost every role within the organisation. In a recent interview with Te Ao Kapa attributed her success partly to being brought up within te ao Māori (the Māori world). ‘Having gone through kura (school), rūmaki reo (Māori-language immersion) schooling, I was always in a place of safety.’

One of the first items on her agenda as CEO was to hold mirimiri (massage) and rongoā (healing) Māori sessions for all staff at Te Kaha. As we’ll learn in the following conversation, this was a needed move that not only signalled a new style of leadership from Te Ao, but also acknowledged an exhausting period of work by Te Kaha in navigating the pandemic during 2020.

The following conversation contains excerpts from a hui (meeting) held during a sunny afternoon in May 2021 with Te Ao and a handful of her kaimahi. We convened at their office, a welcoming space situated above a large dairy and laundromat on Jellicoe Road. We discussed the struggles, the need for self-care in order to be able to better service their whānau (families), and the role that whakawhanaungatanga (establishing relationships and connections with others) played in their community.

WHEN COVID-19 HIT

TE AO: Prior to COVID (COVID-19) hitting, our organisation obviously was a youth hub. We provided services around anything to do with rangatahi (youth), whether it be wellness, health, education, employment and all of those great things that rangatahi need and want. We aim to support them in the best way that we can.

TE ONE: We were in transition, having gone through a restructure in the organisation. So for us we were on a high. The energy was high in the office. There was excitement. Everyone was keen on getting into our new structure and moving in a different way then, woo-bam! Tae mai (arrived) COVID.

TE AO: COVID hit us and obviously nobody in this whole entire world had gone through a pandemic like this one, so we had to adapt completely – and because predominantly our mahi (work) is within the health sector, it was quite difficult for us to adapt. Everything had to be essential. We found that our whānau that we work for, with, or support, struggled massively.

TE ONE: The first week was quite intense because we were in a place of the unknown. Not only were we unsure, our management was also unsure. Did that stop them from getting something put in place? No, it didn’t. In a day or two we were already packed up and working from home. Management was able to put in processes and do what they could at the time to keep us safe.

TE AO: All of our systems had to change. We had to adapt the way that we were working. Personally I was struggling, trying to figure out what that looks like, and then I noticed the team was struggling because our deadlines were a lot shorter. We had to deliver our services within a certain timeframe with no appropriate system to be able to do that. Not only was there a lot of pressure put on myself as a part of the management team of the organisation, the pressure was also put on our team, our kaimahi, filtering down to our whānau. So that was some of the hapa (challenges) that we had to get over.

SELF CARE A NECESSITY FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE

TE AO: Obviously, if we’re struggling with full-time jobs working from home, working from a bubble, we’ve never done that before, then how was it for our whānau and the ones that we’re supporting? It was a mental game for us to figure out how we’re going to support ourselves but then also support whānau at the same time. At that point, rangatahi weren’t at school or work or able to function in their usual spaces. So we saw our rangatahi struggle mentally in that space too; ā-hinengaro (mentally), ā-wairua (spiritually).

TE ONE: Let’s just say me and working from home did not work. Personally I believe it was because of the disconnection from people. I’m a person that might like staying home on the weekend, but during the week I’m seeing my workmates. During the first lockdown it was like, there they are on my screen – 7.5 hours of working and talking to myself in my own four walls. It became a struggle because not only were we trying to focus on our whānau and on us as an organisation, but we then had to tend to our own personal lives.

We saw multiple whānau coming together, not necessarily living together but realising shit, we actually need to come together to support each other. The day of lockdown my sister moved into my house. I think it was good and bad. Then I had her two little boys yelling outside my room every morning while I was trying to work which I wasn’t used to. But also imagine if I didn’t have a family there? By the second lockdown my nephews had a bit of a routine. When they heard my car get home they’d open the side gate, open my sliding door and they stayed away because they knew I was going for a shower. Then I could engage with my whānau.

We had to adjust our way of living in order to be able to work from home. So things like sleeping in your room so you don’t work in your room. Leave your room. Making sure you’re still having a shower even though you’re at home. It’s still important to shower before you go to work! It helped to maintain a routine. It became a way to return to some kind of a norm because unfortunately we weren’t going back to the norms that we knew.

For me, lockdown was hard trying to juggle work and my own personal problems. I think I created my own mental health problems. I ‘mental-healthied’ myself [laughs]. We would check in for team briefings on Zoom. I was not ok! TE AO: Sometimes we were having Zooms at 11:00pm, midnight. There were a lot of lines being crossed. Those things were unhealthy. Some of our kaimahi have whānau. We were very intrusive into our kaimahi personal space and personal time.

TE ONE: We were removing our personal selves in order to be able to service our community. I think that’s what made it harder for us to look after ourselves and our wellbeing. We were too invested in everyone else’s. I was calling whānau members every day. You become like an outlet for people. And then the tables turned when I got hit by one of the parents with...

‘How are you, Te One?’ ‘OH, IT’S HARD!’

Because you spoke with some of them so regularly it became a genuine conversation between whānau and Kaiārahi (Whānau Ora Navigator).

We learned a lot as an organisation. We were important. We were valued enough that we weren’t put at risk. So we were cared for well and we did come first. It wasn’t an outcome or a goal that came first, we came first. (Te One Matthews)

TE AO: The flipside to that though is the team adapted really well regardless of what they were going through. They knew that there was a greater purpose in all of it, because I realise we are very whānau-orientated. So to be around other people was like a need for everybody.

Even though we needed to keep our distance, we were still able to work together because we had the opportunity of distributing the hygiene packs. Whānau Ora had shipped in a lot of those products. Then we figured out a way that we could get groceries and kai (food) and all of those things for our whānau. We kinda got excited that we could do this for our community, for our whānau.

We would support our whānau through that prior to COVID but it wasn’t an essential thing, it wasn’t a must that our whānau needed. To be able to supply those necessities to our whānau was a massive highlight for me to see.

We learned a lot as an organisation. We were important. We were valued enough that we weren’t put at risk. So we were cared for well and we did come first. It wasn’t an outcome or a goal that came first, we came first. (Te One Matthews)

¹ Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.



LIVED EXPERIENCE OF RANGATAHI

Prior to COVID our rangatahi had certain goals and jobs that they wanted to aim for. Their goals were based on a pre-COVID world ... things like becoming a flightie [air steward] or travelling. Then COVID hit. Now everyone’s like oh, I’d like to become a doctor or a nurse! Their goals and aspirations had shifted. (Te Ao Kapa)

TE AO: At that time too, this was our first time having rangatahi interns. It was for us to try and figure out how we were going to work with them, so that was a lot of pressure on them because they were straight out of high school. You know, when you do an internship it is meant to be an opportunity for them to learn about the organisation – not to learn about an organisation that’s going through a pandemic.

Our rangatahi interns obviously struggled. There were a lot of ups and downs and helping them figure out where they’re at, and they coped with all of that. Paris was our first rangatahi intern in 2019. Then we had the opportunity to have three new rangatahi interns last year. Paris left the organisation for a few months and then came back on board after the first lockdown ended.

PARIS: I was working alongside the Community-Based Assessment Centre (CBAC) at Manurewa Marae (communal meeting place) to help our whānau and our community. It was kind of stressful and anxiety had hit as well. You were unsure if someone was to have COVID but I felt like I was doing something greater for my community in pushing out key messages, helping rangatahi come in and get tested and letting them know that it was alright to do so. The pandemic in the early days for me was a challenge. It was a struggle. Knowing that this massive pandemic has happened and you don’t know what’s gonna happen so all of these emotions and feelings in your mind were just getting locked up in there. And then I wasn’t able to express it or be able to tell people what I was feeling during that time. I left the organisation for a few months. Personally, I was very sick. I had a heart problem which was hard to tackle because it was hard to get help from doctors as well. It was also hard because I didn’t want my family to worry about me when they should be worried about keeping our whole family safe. I didn’t want them to make me the main priority within our household. I wanted all of us to be a priority.

I was on my own path of self-discovery and trying to heal myself while also wanting to help the rangatahi but not knowing that I needed to help myself before I put my feet into those shoes to help others as well.

Coming back into this space at Te Kaha and seeing how the rangatahi interns had tackled these challenges was very amazing. Because the messages they had put out during the pandemic were from rangatahi voices supporting the rangatahi out there that were struggling with their mental health during lockdown. It was also very good to see how the rangatahi interns created a platform for other rangatahi influencers and voices from different communities. This was also a massive engagement which helped the rangatahi out there in the community to see a better future or pathway for them during the pandemic.

NEW METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT

During lockdown we were allowed to drop off Nicotine Replacement Therapies (NRTs) like patches and gum for whānau on our smoking cessation programme. We’d call whānau to let them know we’d drop the NRTs in their mailbox. Some didn’t want to answer the phone because they knew who I was. Others thought it was a bit easier than meeting face to face. The only way we were able to monitor whānau nicotine level was through a Carbon Monoxide monitor or CO Monitor, and we were unable to do that mahi during lockdown. That was hard because lots of our whānau relied on that just to see their progress with quitting smoking. Lots of other whānau just think it’s a breathalyser! (Te Mania Koia, Smoking Cessation Lead)

TE ONE: We already had communication with our whānau clients before COVID. It was just about revisiting that. I sent out a mass text to all my whānau ahead of the lockdown announcement – after that I called everyone.

The fact that we were calling and sending messages was big to the whānau. If they weren’t replying we would call them every day. Lots of it was through phone calls. But if our whānau don’t want to talk to us, they don’t want to talk to us, and that’s kei te pai (okay). What we had to understand was, actually, we’ve tried to call this person every single day for the past five weeks. I don’t think they want to talk. I think they’re done. Some loved conversation. We had whānau who didn’t get support but who just appreciated receiving my phone calls. And that’s all my check in was, just a catch up phone call with them.

Face-to-face engagement during lockdown was through delivering food or hygiene packs. I had a whānau member run at me and hug me. But that’s the nature of the connection or whanaungatanga (relationships) we have with our whānau. They’re our whānau. On paper they’re our client. But when you ask Kaiārahi here where they’re going if they’re going out for mahi, they say, ‘Oh, we have a whānau hui (family meeting).’

We were able to support people with things like power, water and internet for kids to be able to continue school; devices for rangatahi to be able to attend their kura Zoom. Those things were very beneficial for our whānau.

TE AO: A lot of people were whakamā (embarrassed) to receive help.

TE ONE: You go, ‘We’re here to help’ and they’re like, ‘Oh, thank you,’ but they’re not actually gonna answer it.

Instead, we say, ‘Kia ora (Hello), has your power bill been paid this month or are you behind?’ Then we find that, yes, they are behind from last month because of the lockdown. They’re not sure about money so actually, they stopped paying their power bill. They’re not forthcoming with it. It was purely whakamā because anyone who gets a hand out they’re useless, you must be poor, you must be lazy, can’t work. Yes, we’re in a pandemic but there was still a stigma around accessing support. For us it was about ...

‘Is your power bill overdue?’
‘Yes.’
‘Ok, how much is it?’

So even the kōrero (conversation) changed because pre-COVID we weren’t going, ‘Whānau do you want a device because we got you!’ [laughs]. Before it was, ‘How can we manage that, how are we going to work towards that?’

NICOLE: We got a lot of feedback about lifting that burden off them or that stress. Massive, massive feedback.

TE ONE: Yeah, when you read through lots of it, it was around reducing stress amongst the household, alleviating financial pressures in different spaces.

TE AO: I think the most fulfilling thing for me in terms of engagement was actually going and delivering kai parcels because you were dropping off things that you took for granted, like real simple things from home. Toilet paper, laundry detergent, cleaning products for households that you would just pick up without thinking. But when they received them it was a huge thing for them. We were still delivering kai packages during Easter so we were giving out Easter eggs. Real simple things. Bringing a little joy into the household was massive.

TE ONE: Anything to kind of mana (empower)-enhance, eh. Yes, we’re in a pandemic, yes you might not have much but look, you got Easter eggs for the kids!

TE AO: Even the kai packs that we were giving ... the meat or food we were getting was from restaurants because obviously restaurants were closed, so it was like the best of the best. It was so funny we were like, ‘Oh my goodness I’ve never seen one of these before!’ Not that simple, but you know what I mean, it was something that Kaiārahi would only get in an expensive restaurant.

TE ONE: That was the cool thing, the people that came together to provide stuff like New World [supermarket]. New World Manurewa provided, or are still providing, lots of kai for the Manurewa Marae foodbank. When you saw the products they donated it wasn’t the kind of stuff that no one ever eats. Some of it you may question, but at the same time there were things like tea bags, there was bread, there was flour, there was the most expensive honey. If there were things like that it was the most expensive ones. We thought we had too much of this. Like proper Weet-Bix, not like ‘Weety-Bix’ [laughs]. So that was real special in terms of what we could provide for our whānau. It’s the way that our team engages. I’m just going to put it out there and say that our team’s amazing at engaging.

TE AO: We also changed our courses to run digitally, online. Auahi Kore (quit smoking initiative), Sexual Health, Māmā and Pēpi (mother and baby service) were all done via Zoom. Our Māmā and Pēpi space was huge because during a pandemic they can’t stop being pregnant. So our team again adapted and changed the way that they would deliver it and they managed to do the lesson online which was amazing actually.

TE ONE: It was so cool, we had parents who stayed by their rangatahi and were surprised – some of them were like, peeking in the camera.

TE AO: Then we had our Sexual Health classes still running. We had the boys giggling in them and they had their headphones on trying to hide. Obviously totally different from kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face) or having it in a space where you can literally wānanga (discuss) together. But we didn’t want to not do it, these services were still wanted and needed.

FLIPPING THE ORGANISATIONAL SCRIPT

TE AO: We were working to a contract, so we were contracted out by different organisations, funders, contractors: Counties Manukau DHB, Whānau Ora, Ministry of Health, Te Puni Kōkiri (Ministry of Māori Development) and a few others in a minor sense – but those are our major ones in terms of being funded to have full-time employees. A lot of our kaimahi were working like that and creating programmes that would fit to the contract so we could deliver those things.

Throughout the pandemic we were creating all these new process maps and systems. From there it just evolved into a space where we knew this is our new norm, we’re going to work like this. If this is our new norm we’ve got to adapt the whole organisation and change it from working in silos and just doing whatever we could do to meet a contract. So we flipped the script completely and restructured the whole organisation. We are now able to function as a whole, as a hub. We make the contracts fit us as a community and as a team so that we can function. As managers we took away as many barriers as we could so that Kaiārahi could just do their mahi. There were massive blocks that were in our way.

We’ve figured out a way to be able to function like that and it’s changed the culture within our organisation completely. Kaiārahi can now just work with the rangatahi without thinking about how whānau will fit the contract. They don’t have to turn whānau in need away and say, ‘No I can’t work with them,’ if they don’t fit the system.

All our kaimahi are now Kaiārahi. The biggest thing for what I wanted to have within the organisation is that any kaimahi is the right one for rangatahi who come through our doors, regardless of what they’re coming in with or what they need support with. That was the best way that we could do it.

NICOLE: I was overseeing a lot of the data, reporting and templating during the early days of the pandemic ... There were a lot of late nights developing new systems. My whole purpose behind staying up doing that mahi was to make sure that it was easier for the team because we don’t know anything about what’s going on and the Government can change things from day to day. Also, knowing that our whānau that we work with were going through all of this but our kaimahi were going through it as well. I didn’t want the processes that we put in place to be another challenge to deal with.



The first week or so it was very up and down. But I think the processes we created helped (at least I hope) to take the burden of reporting off kaimahi. The point of all the changes we made was that we were still meeting our contract obligations with our funders but it wasn't a stress or a priority that the kaimahi had to worry about ... At the end of the day, we're there to meet whānau needs. Our whānau don't need to know the background stuff and our kaimahi just need to be empowered to do what they need to do best and that's why they're in that role.

TE AO: That's a space that us in the back office and management can take care of because we don't work directly with the whānau. Our kaimahi do, so let's let them worry about that and we worry about making sure that our contracts, funders are met in a way that we know is over-fulfilling.

We had to change our mindset so that we could best assist our kaimahi. The biggest thing is how would we see our whānau as a number? If you're trying to look after yourself and you see yourself as a person why can't you see whānau as a person? It was just making sure everything was streamlined.

STAFF PERSPECTIVES

ATARLEAH: Last year I came to the organisation during COVID. Initially I was a receptionist, then I moved to CBAC. We were there for six weeks. Being down there was a little nerve wracking because you didn't know what was coming in or if you're going to be in close contact. It was about protecting yourself so I didn't take it home to my whānau, but it was also a sense of helping the community.

Pre-COVID I was a flight attendant. That in itself was a struggle because I didn't know when it was going to end. I didn't know if there was going to be a job for me to go back to. I'm very grateful for the opportunity that Te Kaha gave me here.

After we finished at CBAC we came back here and I got put into a Taurikura Health and Wellbeing programme which helped me change my mindset because I had to change my profession from customer service to a rangatahi-orientated one which was good, but I just had to adapt within myself. That was my personal story.

It was good we had a successful six-week programme. COVID hit again so then we were out delivering all the kai parcels to our whānau helping them when they needed it. I also got an opportunity to help some of my flight attendant friends who were no longer working, so I helped them get the support that they needed because they weren't working at all.

I think the highlight for me was being in this organisation was more fulfilling. You feel that you can help people and I feel a lot more valued here and not just a number or part of a business as such.

NICOLE: I had to work from home because my parents were in the at-risk category. I actually was very blessed that I got to stay at home and make sure that I was keeping them safe. One of my struggles was keeping dad home because he was adamant that he was going to go up north. So I was lucky that I got to stay at home to make sure that he stayed home.

TE MANIA: I had to leave CBAC because I was about to get my whāngai (foster) baby. To keep him and myself safe I left the COVID zone two weeks prior to when he arrived. Even though he was through Oranga Tamariki (Ministry for Children) I was able to be there when he was born. I was in the room next door, then we got our baby five minutes after he was born. He was born in Hamilton. We got a clearance to go down there even though the lockdown opened up two days before he was born. He is our pride and joy. He is the office baby too!

DEBI: Te Kaha kaimahi were fortunate enough to become essential workers and that took us to another level in supporting our community and Manurewa Marae. For us, we got involved with the CBAC and Manurewa Marae was able to set up a pop-up testing station. This was a challenge in the sense of how does it work, would the whānau come to a pop-up which was at Manurewa Marae, where do we get whānau that are willing to work frontline and a team of Māori and Pacific Islanders that are willing to put their whole themselves in front of a whānau to test them? I think that was one of the main experiences just seeing how people were willing to give up their time and energy to give to whānau.

Testing back then was frightening. As we got on the beautiful team of Māori and Pacific Island women pulled together to make it happen. I love working in the community and I love to try and make things easier for the community.

We still worry about numbers and reporting to our funders. But we leave the mahi to kaimahi.

- Te Ao Kapa



By rangatahi for rangatahi, Te Ao Kapa (front row, centre) was named as the youngest tumuaki to take charge of Te Kaha O Te Rangatahi.



WHANAUNGATANGA IN WHIRINAKI LED BY FATHER OF SEVEN

REGION: TE TAI TOKERAU
An interview with Dwayne Rawiri and Mary Korewha – May 2021

Ko Te Ramaroa te maunga
Ko Tuwhatero te wairere
Ko Whirinaki te awa
Ko Matai Aranui, Moria, me
Pā Te Aroha ngā marae
Ko Te Hikutu te hapū
Ko Ngā Puhi te iwi
Ko Tamaho Rawiri te tupuna
Ko Hokianga-nui-a-Kupe te Moana Ko
Ngātokimatawhaorua te waka.
Ko Dwayne Rawiri ahau,
E mihi ana kia koutou katoa.

The mountain is Te Ramaroa
The waterfall is Tuwhatero
The river is Whirinaki
The meeting places are Matai Aranui, Moria, and
Pā Te Aroha
The subtribe is Te Hikutu
The tribe is Ngā Puhi
The ancestor is Tamaho Rawiri
The sea is Hokianga-nui-a-Kupe,
The canoe is Ngātokimatawhaorua.
I am Dwayne Rawiri,
I acknowledge you all with this greeting.

Dwayne Rawiri believes in manaakitanga (hospitality) which he displayed during COVID-19 when he hosted 40 plus whānau (families) at his home in the Far North, as well as discovering the tokotoko (support) he was always looking for in the form of a special Whānau Ora¹ Kaiarāhi (Navigator).

Dwayne, Ngā Puhi, is born and bred in Whirinaki. His journey over the years has been supported by his community and also one Kaiarāhi from the Hokianga Whānau Ora, Mary Korewha, who was especially supportive during COVID-19.

This support has come in many forms, including items donated to assist Dwayne when, alongside one of his cousins, he chose to build his own whare (house) from scratch to settle his growing family.

DWAYNE: *I remember it [Whirinaki] was a great place to grow up, a bit daunting knowing all the people that could keep tabs on you. You couldn't do anything because everyone knew everyone. As a kid you felt pretty safe. I grew up with a loving mother and father with two siblings and we were brought up being loved. Yeah, I had no dramas there.*

Dwayne appreciates that as kids he and his siblings were enveloped in aroha (love) and manaakitanga (showing respect, generosity and care for others), something that still exists in Whirinaki today. Now his children are able to have that experience by being part of this local network for guidance and support.

DWAYNE: *I have seven children aged 11, 9, 8, 6, 5, 2 and my 1 year old. Raising my kids in Hokianga is my easiest and most preferred way of raising my children, it's safe. We do have some negative things to look out for as any community, like violence, but as they say aye, a light will outshine a shadow. It will pretty much dissipate a shadow. That there is a very key factor in our community remaining positive and remaining whānau-orientated.*

COVID-19

Dwayne always has the welcome mat out and in early 2020 many of his extended whānau had gathered in Whirinaki for a reunion. Dwayne lives in the whare he built himself and whilst it was comfortable for him, his partner and their seven children, with the family visiting it was at capacity. Tents were scattered around Dwayne's land and with the warm temperatures whānau were content to congregate outside to play with the kids, kōrero (talk) for hours and share kai (food) for a few days before packing up to head home.

Then the COVID-19 lockdown hit and Dwayne immediately invited everyone to stay. A generous decision that led to over forty family members suddenly living together. With one bathroom and one shower to share, whānau were happy to utilise the creek that ran along the back of the property.

Resources and supplies were not stretching far enough at times, but fortunately Whānau Ora regularly delivered kai and hygiene packs. Mary remembers packing the food parcels at her marae (communal meeting place) and over two months delivering to the hapū (subtribe), and Dwayne's whare was among them.

MARY: *Dwayne always has people staying, that's just who he is. His manaaki (generosity and care for others) probably exceeds what he is capable of. During COVID of course he opened his whare and he probably had three lots of families stay with him as well as his own. I remember seeing them all.*

Their whenua (land) is quite large so there were tents and tarpaulins up and it was like a marae in itself. The hapū at Te Hikutu, they're pretty tough buggers out that way and they actually managed really, really well. Anyone under five years old you had the shower, while the older ones used the creek – and I remember it was still pretty warm, plus the creek was freshwater.

With dozens of people living with Dwayne through lockdown there was plenty of help to manage the day-to-day requirements, with Mary able to provide extra support when needed.

MARY: *A lot of them were Dwayne's cousins so they would've been familiar with his manaaki and how things were done. Everyone pitched in, if you'd seen it you would have seen what they made, outside [table] leaners because it was too small to hang out inside. Remember they had thirty-plus whānau living there and at one point it was too much for the stove, it blew up. So then all the kai was cooked outside on BBQ burners and open fires until Dwayne mentioned it was becoming an issue, as you can imagine. So we made a Whānau Direct² application and organised a brand new stove with a gas oven and hobs to arrive a week later. We also sorted extra clothing for the tamariki (children).*

That wraparound service facilitated by Mary was another reason Dwayne holds her in the highest regard. She is someone familiar as he has known her since he was young and playing for local sports teams.

DWAYNE: *For me, Mary Korewha is my tokotoko, just enough support around me to make me stronger and able to cope with COVID, my life and have confidence in the decisions I make for my whānau.*

Dwayne's hospitality was welcomed by his whānau during lockdown, but it was simultaneously breaking down his own relationship with his partner, which Mary tried to assist with.

DWAYNE: *It created a lot of tension between the two of them as they were already a little shaky before COVID impacted. This was not a turning point but part of the impact that was detrimental to their relationship, which ultimately broke down.*

Dwayne credits Mary for becoming a key factor in their wellbeing.

DWAYNE: *My relationship was breaking down and we were unable to work it out ourselves. We just weren't equipped for it and so my partner went to seek help from Mary. It was inevitable that I had to be there and when I arrived I was unsure [about the relationship] because I had been through all those programmes, counselling and rehabilitation. Once the COVID-19 lockdown was over, the extended whānau packed up their gear and headed home. With his relationship breaking down, the other consistent person in his life with his children was Mary.*

DWAYNE: *Mary worked alongside us without putting the job down. She actually doesn't put the job down at night-time or before she starts work. She is happy to check if you are okay, to make sure you have certain things you need in order to achieve. That's what we need around relationship breakdowns and struggling with life in general, someone in*

Hokianga to stay strong and kick your butt back on track. Also to facilitate what is around you and make sure it's positive.

Dwayne acknowledges Mary is a key factor in the health and prosperity of both him and his whānau. While Dwayne has experienced the services of other agencies, Mary was the first one he trusted.

DWAYNE: *She really changed the whole ballgame. These types of services we used to have to go out of town to access were now available to us locally. We were comfortable in our whare, comfortable in our town.*

As a father Dwayne is on a journey to be a good parent to his children, while ensuring he is still doing it his own way. One tāne (man) he met that also had a positive influence was Mary's husband, Mike. Mary says it's her own experience that allows her not only to be empathetic but also highly attuned to what people go through.

DWAYNE: *I have had my own challenges in my marriage. Fortunately my husband found a better path for himself and it is through that we have strengthened our relationship and, for me, my own mana (authority and prestige). Our people don't even have to be at rock bottom, any little thing can seem overwhelming and I want to be there to support, encourage, even just to sit next to them in silence. It's about being there.*

Dwayne not only admires their relationship but also the wairua (spirit) they have together and independently.

DWAYNE: *Mary and her husband Mike have really given me a sense of clarity within my own morals, that's what they have really done that has changed me. Normally I don't have anyone to bounce off to confirm that what I am doing is right and is working. She and Mike are proof of how to overcome these negative moments and choices. I appreciated that.*

Dwayne pauses to think about what his life and his journey would look like had he not met Mary.

DWAYNE: *Had we not met Mary our children would be in another home, we parents would have been on a completely different journey with different people, it would not have been good. And most importantly, I know our children would not have the happiness they have today. They understand where they are now and they are slowly making that map bigger.*

Mary has been with Hokianga Health for nine years and she is passionate about her position and focused on positive results.

MARY: *I feel privileged to be part of some whānau lives. It is so rewarding to work alongside them and guide them to better wellbeing and increased confidence despite the circumstances they came from. That is the most rewarding thing, walking beside whānau and watching them grow.*

Coming into Hokianga Health she was employed as the social worker and this role enhanced and strengthened the Whānau Ora outcomes. The mantra they go by makes up the acronym CHESS – Culturally connected, Healthy whānau, Economically secure whānau, Safe whānau and Self-managing whānau.

MARY: *It's not about me, it's really not. I love being able to fully engage with whānau openly and honestly and come up with a plan to execute together. To move them towards a better future is the ultimate satisfaction – that whānau allows me to walk alongside them. To be able to sit with them, eat with them, cry with them and laugh with them, which in turn is both good for their soul and mine. That's what this all means to me.*

¹ Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.

² Whānau Direct assists whānau to access financial resources when it matters most to whānau, with the intention of making a positive difference for whānau.



Dwayne is grateful to be one of those whānau with his seven children and his ex-partner, as she is still a large part of their lives. Mary facilitates everyone involved and her door is always open.

DWAYNE: Mary has brought the strength from my elders back to me so I can say the words I truly mean. For me sometimes you run out of love around you. You can have plenty of care and trust, but Mary truly loves what she does which gives me that sense of confidence in her that she truly loves my children. She truly loves to see achievements, practical goal-setting and achieving and you taking opportunities that better your life.

Dwayne says Mary is a kaitiaki (guardian) because her mahi (work), her time and her karakia (prayer) are gifts to him and his whānau.

DWAYNE: That's how she's made up and what she's made up of. She allows you to feel that support and then backs off as you make your decisions. It's preserving that aroha within our people, our marae, our hospitals, wherever you need it Mary provides it.

Dwayne looks back at the COVID-19 lockdown and is glad that he and all his whānau survived, somewhat isolated at his whare but not alone.

DWAYNE: COVID was a real struggle at times and it would have been worse without Mary to tautoko (support) us, often without us asking. Mary and her husband Mike were nonstop and readily available. One of my boys has a cleft palate so needs medicine. Mary arranged that plus she anticipated our need for clothing, curtains and helped us understand what was going on and what we could and couldn't do.

Dwayne knows that when he feels the love around him is running out he can reach out to his friend Mary and, along with her husband, she will arrive at Dwayne's whare for a kai, a laugh and good conversation.

DWAYNE: Mary has allowed me the chance to have my tamariki in this beautiful place to be raised by myself, by my people, with my own style and timing. I can be home, out of all the other systems I choose not to be in, and doing my own mahi with my own people, my own iwi (tribe) and my children. Mary has

helped us be together and be able to hug each other. I will always support Mary's mahi and what she does, every little bit is made with love. A lot of us do need that support, that confidence in confidentiality when you kōrero with someone, so I walk away feeling dusted off and ready to continue to walk my journey in a fresh state for my tamariki.

Despite Dwayne and his partner separating, they share custody of their children whilst embedding themselves in the support of their local community.

DWAYNE: I have my safety plans and my navigation in my mind, I know where I want to go. I set the task, get to the end and have faith that I can do it in my way with my whānau without overcooking it. Mary showed me that. Sometimes Dwayne measures his life through the faces of his tamariki. Most of the time, like right now, they are smiling and laughing. He is honest about the challenge of navigating his way through life as a single father, living in his hometown, and getting through the break-up with his ex-partner.

DWAYNE: Trying to make life work with my ex partner and seven children I'm going to need that walking stick. I'm going to need that professional service and not go to my own whānau and pour tears all over their floor. I'm going to need that confidence in confidentiality that Mary gives me. I know our kōrero and the things we share in those rooms stay there. I can fully elaborate and feel comfortable to do that no matter how long I need.

Mary and Mike have become like whānau to Dwayne and his children. Mary calls and visits him outside of her normal working hours and will occasionally take his children to the park. Dwayne uses this pocket of time to reset and acknowledge how far this new direction over the past few years has brought him.

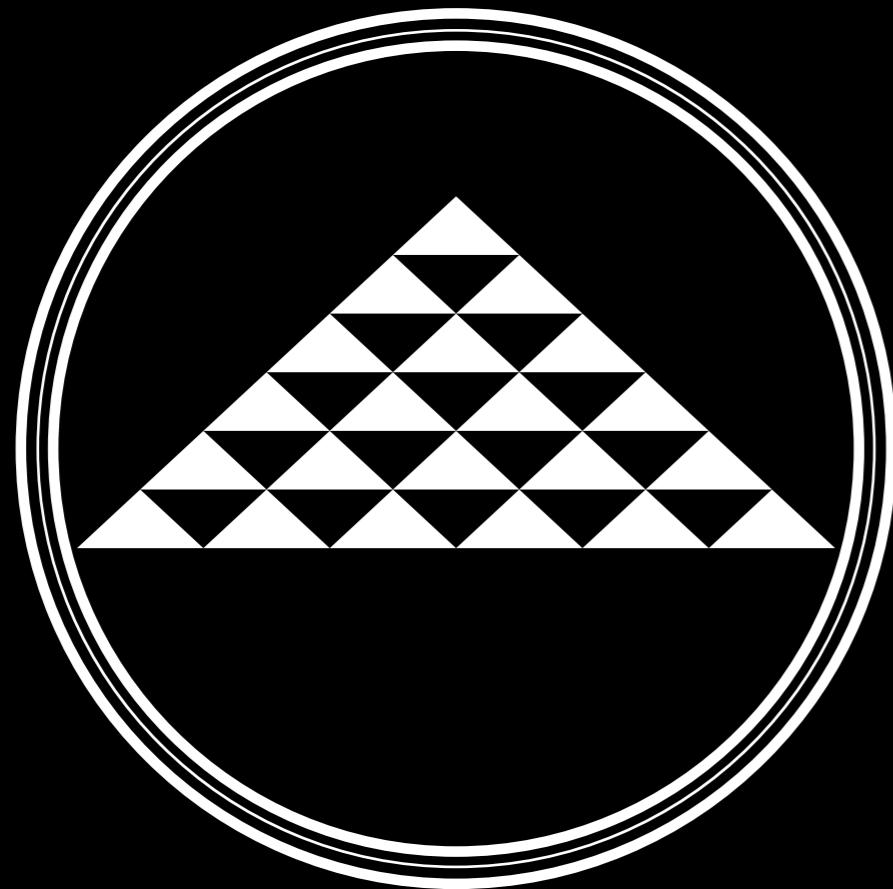
DWAYNE: We lose a lot of people over time and through the places we've been. It's people like Mary who help me get through that. I know the gift I have - Mary heard me say it one day and she confirmed that my path looks something like this. Meaning, I am doing my apprenticeship in my journey, I'm benefitting from it and I know I still have a long way to go. As long as my tokotoko is near me, I'm going to be okay. Everything is going to be okay.



Hokianga father of seven Dwayne Rawiri with two of his tamariki.



WAIRUATANGA



Within the context of Whānau Ora¹, wairuatanga is often translated as ‘spiritual wellbeing’. Wairuatanga can also mean many things to different people. For some, it is a way of life that includes caring for the whenua (land), connecting with whānau (family), and respecting all living things. For others, it has helped them realise the importance of maintaining a strong connection to te ao Māori (the Māori world) through language, culture, and spirituality. At its core, wairuatanga is about finding that inner peace and sense of wellbeing that comes from living your life in harmony with yourself and others.

Accordingly, the following story shares the experiences of Maria Hoko, Pou Herenga (Cultural Advisor) at Tūwharetoa Health, and the vital role of wairuatanga in Tūwharetoa Health’s COVID-19 response. For Maria, COVID-19 reminded her and her community of the importance of wairuatanga to Māori, particularly in times of adversity, and the simple values of whenua, maunga (mountain), aroha (love and compassion), and whānau. In many ways, Maria believed that COVID-19 brought out the best in her community and reinforced the importance of whānau and working together, as well as a deeper appreciation of the role of wairuatanga in connecting and supporting whānau.

¹ Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.

A TIME FOR PAPATŪĀNUKU TO HEAL: THE WAIRUA HAS EVERYTHING TO DO WITH THE KĀINGA, THE HOME, THE WHENUA, THE LAND

REGION: WAIARIKI
As told by Maria Hoko – May 2021

Ko Tongariro te maunga
Ko Taupō te moana
Ko Ngāti Tūwharetoa te iwi
Ko Te HeuHeu te tangata

The mountain is Tongariro
The sea is Taupō
The tribe is Ngāti Tūwharetoa
The ancestor is Te HeuHeu

BACKGROUND

Mai te pūtake o Tongariro (from the base of Tongariro). I am tūturu (original) Ngāti Tūwharetoa, both my parents are from here. Through my dad, I’m from Ngāti Tūrumakina. Waihi is my home and my marae (communal meeting place). My mum is from the next bay, Pūkawa, Ngāti Manunui, Pūkawa Marae. My mum’s also buried there.

I’ve been working with Tūwharetoa Health for 11 years now in various roles. Before that, I was working in the prison as a facilitator for a Māori therapeutic programme.

Doing service is something that’s been part of my family for generations. That is, of course, our base, our foundation is the marae. We really had no choice about that, all the whānau (family) ended up doing various mahi (work) for the hapū (subtribe). Typically, as a ringawera (kitchen worker), that’s my background. I don’t mind, it’s a wealthy background.

I remember a kaumātua (elder) from Tūhoe described us as very polite people. I never ever viewed ourselves as that. It was more about having a father and a mother who used to say to us, ‘Go to the wharekai (dining hall) and do what you have to do.’ It wasn’t about, ‘What about so and so who’s not here?’ My mum would say, ‘Well, you’re here and there’s mahi to do, that’s all you need to know.’ I guess all my life, even here at work, I have applied that. While there’s work to do, there’s something that needs to happen.

It’s no coincidence that I am here working for Tūwharetoa Health and that the focus is the health and wellbeing of everyone who resides within the traditional boundaries of Ngāti Tūwharetoa. In actual fact, that was the vision of our previous Ariki (Paramount Chief), Tā (Sir) Hepi Te HeuHeu back in 1995, ‘96. He set the vision at that time and I’m really happy to say that his vision is still on the ground. It’s been expressed by the various kaimahi (staff) right through to the current times. There are many services here with Tūwharetoa Health and Whānau Ora¹ happens to be our navigational service.

I was the Whānau Ora Navigator (Kaiārahi) for four years. We call that role Tiwhana, that’s the arc of the rainbow. It connects the practitioner, the navigator, to the whānau. That’s the tohu (symbol) behind the name. In February of 2021, I got a new role; I’m now the Pou Herenga (Cultural Advisor) but it’s really around keeping our staff safe within the environment of our tikanga (protocols).

COVID-19

The COVID-19 lockdown announcement was like a double shock. The shock of this news but also the concern for our whānau who lived in the cities, especially Auckland. Number one was to get my niece back, my sister’s daughter. Get her back with her partner, our mokopuna (grandchildren), so they could be a part of our bubble. So they came home and others from the village also did the same thing. [There were] whānau who needed to be home, especially our kids and our moko (grandchildren), so it was, ‘Come home and ride it through together as whānau.’

I don’t know if people know Waihi but it’s a pā (Māori settlement) about 10 kilometres out of Tūrangi, right on the lakeshore of Taupō. In terms of bubbles, we were actually living in a bubble anyway, away from town and all of the town activity, so that wasn’t too much to manage mentally.

Aunty would still go for her walk during lockdown. She’s standing on the road and we’re on the balcony, we’re having our coffee, our kōrero (chats). And then, away she goes. For us nanas in the villages we felt it was okay, because we put the whole village in the bubble.

Now, coming to work, that was very apocalyptic. There was this stillness. But, at the same time, I recognised that it was just Papatūānuku (earth mother) having that time to heal – she needs to. That knowledge kicked in. We were going into our autumn. Autumn here is beautiful, so that was all part of it. It got rid of the anxieties, the worries, I guess, because I do know that when you come into something with high thinking that’s what you see. You see the beauty rather than the stress of everything, or the anxiety of everything.

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Photo by Bryn Parish on Unsplash



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There were about six of us who decided to come to the office every work day. The others chose to work at home. But I only came here because the internet at home is hopeless and I knew I'd be full on as soon as I walked through the office doors. Being COVID-19 time, we only had a little part of this building to walk through because all our nurses and doctors were there doing the swabbing. We didn't want the contamination to cross, so we had these little spaces. We had our own boardroom for our kai (food) room and that sort of thing.

What did that time look like? Food vouchers from the local New World supermarket: Get them out to all these whānau who are ringing needing help. Help with kai – that was our main one, especially for our solo mums with x-amount of tamariki (children), mokopuna.

What I picked up as the first week went along is that a lot of our whānau here are used to survival. It's like they took this just as another thing to go through. There was no panic, the only anxiety they had was whether they could reach Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ). Those who are in survival mode, they're dependent on WINZ, they're dependent on the foodbank. They were always put in this telephone queue with WINZ and they had to wait for about an hour, or sometimes they would never ever get through. Once that failed, thank goodness, they would ring Tūwharetoa Health, a Kaiārahi (Whānau Ora Navigator). 'Whaea (Miss) can you help with kai?' 'Yip, just give us your address.' It was a mailbox drop-off, no contact. That was it. 'Thank you, Whaea,' from the door. 'All good, call me if you need any more help.' When it came to the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) side, it actually put pressure on the [Whānau Ora] Navigator because there were two of us here and there were two in Taupō. So both ends of the lake were going flat out, just with kai alone.

If we didn't have a solution for whānau, they would go to an iwi (tribal) provider, which was good. Thank goodness they were all on board. That was one of the best things that I've ever seen in action. Everyone just got down together, everyone just did what they had to do. All labels were gone. You had a Tūwharetoa Health chief executive officer who was dropping off hygiene boxes with a son who's writing down each whānau name. Things like that made it easier to get through those unprecedented times.

With kaumātua (elders), there was a Whānau Ora Kaiārahi with kai for them. Food was really number one. Number two was firewood because March when the lockdown was that's our autumn. It's like our winter, it starts really early here. There was anxiety, there was worry, even fear. One kuia (elder woman), she actually still works for us, her fear was that she would die and no one would know. It wasn't until after everything finished that she articulated that. It was like, 'Oh, my God.' I'd imagine that this kuia was articulating an emotional feeling that all these other kaumātua must have been going through as well. She lives here in town. Back home in Waihi it was different. Here in town, and probably even with kaumātua who lived out towards the mountain, there was this anxiety.

WAIKUA (SPIRITUAL REALM)

I will always go back home because the wairua has got everything to do with the kāinga, the home, the whenua, the land. Since we were kids, you would open your eyes and see some of the most spectacular sunrises. The sound of the lake, the sound of the trees, even our native birds singing. It calms. As a practitioner in health, I've had a self-care plan for years and that's part and parcel of my process before I come to work. I've been meditating for over 26 years. These are the additional things, like opening up the curtains and there it is, everything is out there.

I know everyone at home is of the same mind here in Tūrangi. It was about being together as whānau. Quite a few whānau moved in together, they had whānau bubbles, and that's how they got through it. To me that's the wairua in action, the wairua that's within our own whānau. We'll be able to get through all of this together.

The great thing too is it was easy for those of us from Waihi because we lived in the pā settlements. Here in town we've got a lot of hunters. Those whānau, they'd go out hunting. It would just add to the spirit, keeping the spirits raised. There was no such thing as running out of kai and, of course, when they got their hunt they'd just divvy it up, and take it to other whānau who they knew needed kai. That's a practical way the wairua (spirit) was lifted.

I think whānau did everything they could just to keep in a really good frame of mind, and I would say that was reflected in the way we behaved really well at our New World supermarket. There were long queues but people were letting the kaumātua go in before them. That just reflected to me how everyone was in a really helpful and supportive frame of mind. Telling jokes and asking, 'How are you getting along in your bubble?' The typical humanity that's Tūrangi, that's home. That's the way the wairua was reflected for me.

SUCCESS

I think our response was successful because we understand what it is to belong. We understand what it is to struggle. I mean I've been on a dole queue. We understand because we know what it is to forever be in challenge mode, whether that was with the Crown, or with our own family members. But there is always that sense of belonging, that base that's nurtured in things like aroha (love), manaaki (generosity and care) and whakawhanaungatanga (process of establishing relationships) and things. They're heightened when we get into these sorts of times where we need to survive. We need to not lose anyone through this virus. We can't afford to lose anyone. I think that's what it is, that strong sense of belonging and family.

A TIME OF CHANGE

I know I have changed as a result of this experience. It took this virus, this little thing that you can't see, to just about disseminate across the whole planet. I think that every now and again Mother Nature, Papatūānuku, reminds us that family is what you need and if you want to change, according to this experience, here's your opportunity.

I don't take this planet for granted anymore, honestly. Our kids are the same. You know, be appreciative. Even if you see a sun, mihi atu (give acknowledgement). Gratitude goes a long way in these times that we have. Wairua laws go a long way.

Here at work there's a gentleness. That's the only way I can put it. Everything we tend to say to each other, there's a moment of reflection and then acknowledgement and then mahi. We karakia (recite a prayer) every morning. We tell everyone, we share with everyone, what we've got lined up for the day. Those are the changes. It's like there's more reflection, more time to think, because we've all been through this time and we've all come to realise, 'Oh yeah, it is about family.' That's the best way I can explain it.

CONCLUSION

One of our quarterly reports asked, 'What was one of the memories that as a Kaiārahi you had working through COVID-19?' I wrote down being a team player with the other five million or so. That's the thing, we're great team players. It's part of our life, we do it at the marae, we work as one. Being part of a team, five million. I mean are we ever going to be like that again? Hopefully, not under the same circumstances.

I reckon that was the other thing that brought us through as Māori, we're actually team players. With the Prime Minister promoting that slogan, 'team of five million'. I used to think, boy she's good, because it was appealing to a lot of us Māori practitioners. At heart, we are team players, we're not individuals. That's unheard of. We just express it as whānau, being one as whānau. So, koinā (there you have it).

There is always that sense of belonging, that base that's nurtured in things like aroha (love), manaaki (generosity and care) and whakawhanaungatanga (process of establishing relationships) and things. They're heightened when we get into these sorts of times where we need to survive. We need to not lose anyone through this virus. We can't afford to lose anyone. I think that's what it is, that strong sense of belonging and family.



‘THEY ARE MAGIC PEOPLE TO ME’: THE WHĀNAU ORA DIPLOMA: STUDYING DURING COVID-19

REGION: TĀMAKI MAKĀURAU
Author: Donna Morrison – June 2021

Ko Te Arawa te waka
Ko Ngongotahā te maunga
Ko Rotorua-nui-a-Kahumatamomoe te roto
Ko Te Arawa te Iwi
Ko Ngāti Whakaue, ko Ngāti Rangiwewehi ōku hapū
Ko Te Papaōuru, ko Tarimano ōku marae
E mihi atu nei!

*The canoe is Te Arawa
The mountain is Ngongotahā
The lake is Rotorua-nui-a-Kahumatamomoe
The tribe is Te Arawa
My subtribes are Ngāti Whakaue, Ngāti Rangiwewehi ōku hapū
Our meeting places are Te Papaōuru and Tarimano
Greetings!*

E KETEKETE TE KĀKĀ, E KOEKOE TE TŪI, E KŪKŪ TE KERERŪ IT TAKES ALL THE BIRDS (VOICES) TO CREATE THE SYMPHONY OF THE FOREST.

In Aotearoa (New Zealand), the COVID-19 pandemic afforded Whānau Ora¹ – as a brand, and as an army – the role of change agent central to facilitating positive wellbeing outcomes for our most vulnerable whānau (families). Whānau Ora leadership critically ‘conscientised’ themselves about the needs, preferences and aspirations of the vulnerable to achieve meaningful, widespread and sustainable change.

The general public throughout the land emptied the streets, retreated to home turf, adhered to ‘stay at home’ orders, and fastidiously watched 1:00pm television briefings from Prime Minister Ardern and then-Director General of Health, Dr. Ashley Bloomfield. These were unprecedented times where the pandemic abounded: Unseen, unwelcome, unwanted.

Whānau Ora initiated momentum towards change in accepting responsibility for responding to vulnerable whānau and subsequently ‘getting-out’ from under the influence of constant Government review. The pandemic called for a rewrite of our history, particularly because Whānau Ora was previously distracted by always ‘being on the back foot’, ‘responding’, ‘engaging’, ‘accounting’, ‘following’, ‘explaining’, and ‘bombarded’ with expensive compliance requirements. Whānau Ora had been part of a stringent and neverending regime of evaluation and review.

WHAKAMANAHIA TE WHĀNAU, KIA TAURIKURA! EMPOWERING WHĀNAU TO PROSPERITY

Central to the Whānau Ora rollout was the army of Kaiārahi (Whānau Ora Navigators) or ‘essential workers’ who tirelessly supported our most susceptible communities amid the angst of Level 4 lockdown realities. The new COVID-19 paradigm had Whānau Ora utilising existing cultural infrastructures in identifying and leveraging the strengths of te ao Māori (the Māori worldview) and the assets of te hāpori whānui (wider community); a positive approach as opposed to operating from a deficit model.

But wait there’s more! 52 of these kaiārahi – essential workers – were also full-time enrolled learners on the New Zealand Diploma in Whānau Ora (Level 5).

Were Kaiārahi run off their feet? Yes!
Was it hard for Kaiārahi to leave their homes each day to work with vulnerable whānau? Yes!
Was it difficult for Kaiārahi to engage vulnerable whānau through virtual means to assess needs? Yes!
Did Kaiārahi feel that full-time study was burdensome? Yes!
Were Kaiārahi overwhelmed and did they want to put their studies on hold? Yes!
Did they give up? No! No! No!

Flexibility was the name of the game. The way forward was in negotiating virtual engagement options with our Kaiārahi learners.

¹ Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.



Whānau Ora Diploma, Class of 2020 graduates in Tāmaki Makaurau.

Zoom meetings upon Zoom meetings followed for both mahi and Diploma training. Timings accommodated individuals, groups, late nights, early mornings, lunch breaks and tea breaks that often changed week to week in accordance with COVID-19 response. Was it near-nigh impossible to sustain delivery expectations? Yes! But, the proverb of, ‘Where there’s a will, there’s a way,’ led the way to accomplish academic expectations, regardless of obstacles.

The COVID-19 response as Kaiārahi coloured assessment contributions as learners. The richness of Zoom kōrero whakawhiti (conversations) revealed amazing, creative, and innovative ways we could care for and nurture our whānau during lockdown. Voices of experience and new observations were liberally shared by Kaiārahi to the four winds of Whānau Ora through social media postings. This inspired the collective Kaiārahi network through celebratory posts and photos of ‘ringa raupā’ (essential workers) sweat-equity.

Content-rich repositories of COVID-19 experiences captured through oral, written and pictorial submissions achieved two-fold purposes:

- › academic compliance; and
- › indigenous people relationship management in times of crisis.

Important questions Kaiārahi asked of themselves included, ‘Why am I doing this?’, ‘For whom do I work?’ and, ‘What is my truth?’ Some Kaiārahi faced challenges that would bring them to reflect on their shared values and beliefs in their delivery to the vulnerable.

KŌKIRITIA I ROTO I TE KOTAHITANGA
WE PROGRESSIVELY ACT IN UNITY

Upline managers were a critical success factor for Kaiārahi learners in this mix. Each organisation resourced Kaiārahi adequately with the right tools and remained responsive to the evolving needs that COVID-19 presented. Wi-Fi connectivity, management endorsement and accommodation to meet virtually and in-person were very much valued and appreciated by Kaiārahi learners. It would be fair to suggest that these small things reaped huge dividends for Kaiārahi who felt heard, valued and supported for an academic journey within the COVID-19 crisis.

Maintaining effective learning contexts for all Kaiārahi learners in virtual settings required attention to task orientation and task focus being carefully balanced with the necessary care and support. This reciprocity in relationship-building was the common thread of outcomes achieved in the ‘new normal’ of COVID-19 delivery, filling the gap with a range of diverse workplace choices available to Kaiārahi learners.

The interface between teacher and student re-created and re-shaped relationship engagement that ensured and assured development of an ‘authentic voice’. Whānau Ora exclusively controlled this engagement space and cultural awareness within the inclusive relationship space accommodated the unique needs of iwi (tribe), rohe (region), and urban whanaungatanga (relationship) dynamics.

Forty-eight of 52 Kaiārahi learners defied the odds and graduated with the New Zealand Diploma in Whānau Ora (Level 5). Kaiārahi success was highly dependent on the capability of supporting Whānau Ora partner organisations providing sustained support throughout the duration of the year-long odyssey. The unique experiences of 2020 brought about by COVID-19 highlighted the integrity and adaptability of the Whānau Ora Diploma programme. It was a paradigm that demonstrated responsiveness of kaiako (tutors) and the strength of kaupapa (policy) within an environment that sees Māori succeeding as Māori.

They are MAGIC, MAGIC people to me! They’re MAGIC people to me! Hold your heads up high, let your voices fly, be proud to be Māori!

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Whānau Ora Diploma, Class of 2020 graduates in Tāmaki Makaurau.





KOTAHITANGA



Kotahitanga means unity. In the context of COVID-19, this was about partners and communities working together as one to get through this pandemic and emerge stronger on the other side.

The story of the Kotahitanga Collective (Collective) is a reminder of the power of kotahitanga and how it can be used to support whānau (families) in times of need and crisis. Furthermore, kotahitanga is an important value that has guided the work of the Collective from the beginning, and one that is at the heart of everything they do. The COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging for many, but groups like the Collective were able to step up to serve their communities within Tāmaki Makaurau – the largest city with the largest population of Māori in Aotearoa, New Zealand. The sharing of resources, passions, talents, and expertise were employed across the Collective to ensure the needs of whānau were addressed. This way of working also ensured that any service or support gaps within individual providers were quickly filled. The vaccination clinic at Manurewa Marae provides a great example of how Collective members came together to boost kaimahi (staff) numbers in order to meet the demand for vaccinations in South Auckland. The Collective continues to support whānau as they move into the next phase of the COVID-19 response and beyond. As communities begin to heal and rebuild, the power of kotahitanga will be more important than ever.



The second story provides an account of how the COVID-19 Testing Centre (CTC) rōpū (group) at Te Whānau o Waipareira (Waipareira) in West Auckland were able to respond over 68 weeks of lockdown, testing and alert levels. The pandemic highlighted for the rōpū the importance of:

- › the value of working together as a team and supporting each other in times of difficulty.
- › the value of forming positive relationships with those you work with, and taking care to reassure and allay their fears.
- › the importance of sharing kai (food) and maintaining a sense of unity within a team.
- › the value of acknowledging and appreciating the support of others.
- › the importance of tenacity, commitment, and sacrifice in times of difficulty.
- › the importance of showing respect, integrity, and fairness in all dealings and,
- › the importance of giving life to the Whānau Ora¹ approach in everything you do.

The COVID-19 pandemic also served to highlight the immense value that the CTC rōpū brings to the community. The team members are truly committed to working in harm's way to preserve the safety of others and have sacrificed countless extra hours and weekends with their own whānau to do so. They have also excelled in expressing and demonstrating their inner worth by the myriad of ways in which they have given life to the Whānau Ora approach. COVID-19 has been a difficult time for everyone, but it is clear that the CTC rōpū at Waipareira are making a positive difference in their community and are an excellent example of how the Whānau Ora approach can be put into action.

The next story shares the COVID-19 response provided by Ngāti Rangī who worked with other iwi (tribes) and mainstream organisations and agencies to provide a coordinated, joined-up response for their community. The contributors believed that key to their success was their ability to pivot to whānau needs and to work together without barriers. COVID-19 has been a catalyst for change and has opened up opportunities for Māori to work together in new ways. The biggest lesson from this experience is that there are no more excuses for operating in silos and that working together is the way forward.

¹ Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.



‘WE’RE LIKE COUSINS, TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE’

REGION: TĀMAKI MAKĀURAU
As told by the Kotahitanga Collective – April–May 2021

The Kotahitanga Collective (Collective) of five Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) Whānau Ora¹ providers asked to tell a single story about their manaaki (respect, generosity and care for others) of upwards of 60,000 or more whānau (families) across South Auckland during COVID-19.

It is a rich story that speaks to the great lengths Māori have gone to ensure whānau are kept safe and well.

We spoke with Tony Kake of Papakura Marae and Te Puea Winiata of Turuki Health Care (Turuki), Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of two of the Collective’s lead providers. We also sat with Maria Clarke of Huakina Development Trust (Huakina) and Takutai Moana Natasha Kemp of Manurewa Marae to hear of their rōpū (collective) contributions as subcontractors.

Te Kaha O Te Rangatahi (Te Kaha), another of the lead providers, share their story in a separate rangatahi (youth) focused article for the journal (see p. 56).

The Collective story begins with background about the formation of the Collective and discusses their response to the challenge of COVID-19.

The article wraps up with each of the providers sharing details of their organisation’s particular contribution to the collective response.

BACKGROUND

Tony Kake (Papakura Marae): The Collective came together as a collective of Papakura Marae, Turuki, Huakina and Te Kaha. Originally, there were the four of us, even before this concept of Whānau Ora started to be talked about around 2010. We knew each other well, we had good long-term relationships and trusted people. We had in common servicing Māori communities. Some of us had clinics but all of us had services. We were going through the same issues. We wanted to capture that South Auckland voice.

Te Puea Winiata (Turuki): We were in the first tranche of eight collectives and we had four providers at that stage. There was a lot of disruption and I always think that it was the era of unholy alliances where people had to kind of be ‘smashed together’ to get their RFP (Request For Proposal) over the line. It was such a turbulent time and the pressures were great for us.

Takutai Kemp (Manurewa Marae): As we went through our Whānau Ora journey, Huakina actually exited. It was just the three providers, Te Kaha, Papakura Marae and Turuki for the most part, right up until 2020. Huakina has come back into the Collective space now.

Maria Clarke (Huakina): Huakina was involved in the establishment of Kotahitanga as a Whānau Ora collective. The innovative concept of Whānau Ora was supported by the Government but with minimal financial funding. Although Huakina did not continue the journey with the Collective, the relationships remained strong. As individual providers we collaborated in other applications for funding. We are able to do this because we are guided by values such as tika (truth), pono (honesty) and aroha (love).

Takutai: I was CEO at Te Kaha during the lockdowns and only resigned from the role late March 2021. I was co-sharing, doing both Manurewa Marae and Te Kaha as CEO. When I came over full-time to the marae, I asked to bring the back office with me and so the marae (communal meeting place) has become the back office for Kotahitanga.

The Collective has a big reach. Huakina are based in Pukekohe and go out as far as Franklin, but with their connective providers, they reach right out to Port Waikato and Tāhuna Marae. Then we come all the way up to Papakura, Manurewa, Manukau and Māngere. Te Kaha have regional contracts as well so they go across Auckland, same with Turuki. They cross over two District Health Boards (DHBs).

The collective really is huge because the providers have got primary health care clinics. We might service at least 60,000 to 80,000 across the collective. We have that kind of reach. If I just think about food packs that we’ve done in the last 12 months, we’ve done over 5,000 kai (food) packs just at Manurewa Marae. Papakura Marae is just as big and they serve as many whānau. That’s just in kai. We did, I think, 7,500 hygiene packs as a collective. Another 3,200 are going out in the next week or two.

Tony: We’ve been hustling together for the last decade. I mean hustling too because we go into battles together. We argue together, we put in joint RFPs together. Funders holding the purse strings wanted to deal with coalitions to get better reach and scale. We could pretty much dominate from Franklin, Tuakau, Pukekohe, coast to coast, right up to Onehunga. We do things together, it’s not about growing our empire.



Papakura Marae kaimahi working together to provide kai and positive vibes at a whānau community event.

COVID-19

Tony: If you look back over time and all the crises, marae have always stepped up. Māori have always stepped up in a crisis because it’s our underpinning values of manaakitanga (generosity and care) and kotahitanga (togetherness). We understand that it’s the right thing to do.

The message from the Prime Minister (Jacinda Ardern) and from Director-General of Health (Ashley Bloomfield) was to lock up, keep yourself safe. But we, as Māori providers, ran to the fire. Some people went and locked themselves away in their nice little cubby holes in their homes and followed the rules. We followed the rules but we ran into the fire. We considered ourselves essential services and we had something to offer.

Takutai: Whānau Ora providers used to meet once a year in Tāmaki Makaurau but when we went into lockdown the Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency² (WOCA) leadership pulled us all together as Māori providers, as experts in our communities. It became almost daily Zoom meetings. Sometimes just us in Auckland but also the wider collective of Whānau Ora providers across the North Island.

Te Puea: We were really strong as a collective during COVID. A lot of the time, we managed independently because we were overwhelmed with work in our locality, but we would Zoom regularly. We would often see each other on other Zooms, whether it was the DHB, WOCA or some local whānau Civil Defence or whatever. We’d probably see each other four times a day.

Maria: Māori providers mobilised quickly because our relationships were tight. We were always talking – as individual providers we had planned, but together our unity meant we could cover our rohe (area) with whānau support. The Kotahitanga Collective did exactly what it was established for – it brought everyone together to coordinate manaakitanga for whānau.

² The Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency is contracted by Te Puni Kōkiri (Ministry of Māori Development) to invest in initiatives and services for communities in the North Island. Commissioning Agencies work with their communities to determine the best ways to support their development.
³ Wai 2575. For more information, see <https://waitangitribunal.govt.nz/inquiries/kaupapa-inquiries/health-services-and-outcomes-inquiry/>
⁴ The interim Māori Health Authority was established in September 2021 as a result of a shift in Government policy towards honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi and raising health outcomes for Māori. At the time of publication of this journal, the Māori Health Authority is set to be legally formalised as an autonomous legal entity from 1 July 2022. For more information see <https://www.futureofhealth.govt.nz/maori-health-authority/>



SUCCESS

Tony: It doesn’t surprise me that some of the agencies were impressed or amazed at the excellence of the Māori response and that it’s created an opportunity for providers now. But it’s slightly different in the context that we don’t do it for them. We do it because they hold the money, they hold the control. We do it for the whānau and we need to turn that around. We need to be more in control. We would like to be the purse holder but right now that’s part of the whole inequality and inequity which the (Government) budget is slowly starting to redress. It’s a good budget for Māori but it could go further. In Te Tai Tokerau region less than one percent of the health budget goes to Māori providers, yet we represent on an equality perspective 15 percent of the population. So there’s still heaps more to do, but at least the door’s open. Papakura Marae, Turuki and Raukura Hauora, were part of the Wai 1315 Treaty of Waitangi claim, which turned into Wai 2575³. It started the whole Māori Health Authority⁴ kōrero (discussion) around the health inequities. We started that kōrero.

Maria: Māori providers have always had to be creative and innovative because of the lack of funding. There is no dollar value for manaakitanga and the privilege of people trusting you through their hardest times. We know our communities and use our services and connections to provide consistent support for whānau. COVID tested many New Zealanders, with agencies finally realising that Māori providers support whānau in the most difficult times because we live by our values.

The Prime Minister identified that when she supported Whānau Ora because we got support to people quickly. Many people saw the strength of Māori around the country during COVID, not so much the individual provider, but what Māori can actually do when they are resourced. The Māori response has been successful because we intrinsically manaaki. Manaaki tāngata (caring for people) – manaaki whakapapa (caring for lineage – past, present and future) providing caring support, advocacy or guidance for a tangata (person) means you are not only supporting that person, you are supporting the aspirations their tūpuna (ancestors) had for them and the moemoeā (dreams) that tangata has for their mokopuna (grandchildren).

Te Puea: I do think the Māori response has been a success. For us, it’s been that we’re not alone. Sometimes we have courageous conversations within the Whānau Ora collective Kotahitanga. But at the end of the day, we’re all on the same kaupapa (agenda). Those courageous conversations have helped us grow and develop, and we think enough of each other to work through those.

FUTURE

Tony: My aspiration is that Kotahitanga will be recognised not as a ‘provider’. There’s a perspective of the funder and the provider and there’s a subservient kind of relationship. That’s the power stuff. Ideally, I’d like a relationship with the Treasury rather than all the 10 or 20 different Government departments we’ve got to work with just to survive. It’s hōhā (exasperating), it’s not efficient. It’s really about our mana motuhake (self-determination) ultimately. I don’t think the future is in provider development. It’s how do we grow the capacity of our whānau so that they become the service providers of the future?

Whānau intrinsically understand what to do. If you went to a tangihanga (funeral gathering) tomorrow, I’d guarantee you would know what to do. Intrinsically, the whānau have just got their act together, with people on the phone, getting kai, going out for a dive to collect kaimoana (seafood) or whatever. They understand what to do. That’s ultimately what we strive for here. How can that whānau there provide that support? That’s real community development, real community cohesion. Whānau Ora is actually ‘Whānau Ora’, not ‘Provider Ora’.

I see the Collective as part of our whānau, as part of our Papakura Marae whānau. We are like cousins. Together, we can make a real difference in terms of supporting our whānau. I’ve got heaps of admiration for those others, especially Turuki and Manurewa Marae, Te Kaha, Huakina. It’s that respect for each other that makes us pretty tight. I admire and have heaps of gratitude for what they do.

Papakura Marae

Papakura Marae was a quiet hum of activity the day we arrived to kōrero with **Tony Kake**, CEO of the busy South Auckland marae. It was threatening to rain this late May 2021 afternoon but none of the marae whānau seemed too fazed. A kind wahine (woman) pointed the way to Tony’s office as we walked past cardboard boxes of kai lined up outside the wharekai (dining hall). Wandering along the path, another of the marae whānau (family or local member affiliated with the communal meeting place) stopped to check we were finding our way okay. Inside the marae boardroom, it was a short wait before Tony walked through the door, a warm smile across his face.

Ko Tony Kake tōku ingoa, No Ngāti Hau ki Ngā Puhī, me Ngāti Whawhakia, Ngāti Mahuta, Waikato, Tainui. (My name is Tony Kake, I'm from Ngāti Hau with Ngā Puhī and Ngāti Whawhakia, Ngāti Mahuta, Waikato and Tainui.)

Tony: When we went into lockdown, we were able to mobilise as a marae. We were one of the many southern raiti (beacons of light) out this way, a southern outreach for the council and emergency response.

We had already started thinking about how we could still effectively service our community before the lockdown happened. It forced us to really look at the fundamentals of what whānau needed, things like kai, medication and to know that they were safe. They needed to know someone was keeping an eye on them, especially our kaumātua (elders – men) and kuia (elders – women) with the isolation factor. This was a key part of our whole focus around COVID-19. It was an opportunity for us to support our communities faster and more effectively.

Ninety-nine percent of the time our catchment area is Papakura and Takānini. During COVID-19, we also included Manurewa, until Manurewa Marae got set up as a foodbank distribution centre. We hooked them up with our contacts at the Auckland City Mission. We were taking a lot of their clients before then. It’s all about sharing and improving access for whānau – those who have got no money to buy kai and hardly any money to get into a car and get the kai.

We were able to get out into the communities and distribute kai door to door. We were delivering kai to Manurewa, up Papakura, Takānini, a little bit out to Franklin and Puke (Pukekohe). Food parcels were huge because one group of the economy was affected, no longer working, and the Government subsidy only went so far. We wanted to make sure that our whānau were okay. Kai was a way we could check on them and ensure they had their basics. Along with kai, we did over 8,000 hygiene packs over the first lockdown.

We were able to deploy people in bubbles and keep the contact tracking to a high level. No one came in and out of this place without us knowing. We deployed teams and you stayed in those teams. It just took a bit of coordination and faith. People who were social workers one day were medicine delivery people the next day.

The doctors were doing virtual consults – a good 50 to 80 percent of them they could deal with over the phone. They would deploy some medication out to those whānau and one of our deliverers would deliver it.

I was getting people housed that were in homeless situations. We formed a multi-disciplinary community action team (MDCAT) here at Papakura, which coordinated people on the ground making decisions. We call it MDCAT. My record was three hours to get a house for a whānau. Before that, it would take weeks, sometimes months. During COVID-19, you’d typically get it done in around 24 to 48 hours. I was dealing with the decision-makers at a lot of the Government departments

on behalf of whānau. I think the message from the top, from Jacinda Ardern to make stuff happen, combined with our service from the bottom seemed to make it happen. Here’s the key learning out of that whole thing: Move the decision-making as close to the whānau as possible. Never mind all those different layers of bureaucracy.

There’s heaps of real champions from this experience. We got a lot of support from our local Countdown (supermarket) and New World (supermarket). That ‘fulla’ (man) from New World (supermarket), his bakery team were making 12 packs of cupcakes for us, 100 or so a day, to give out because he knew what we were doing. He told his cooks to do extra batches and he’d just come and deliver it to us. It was awesome. The Sikh community here in Papakura, they got us access to a whole lot of veggies and all sorts. Everyone just found that love for each other.

We’re a marae and predominantly the clientele that we were work with are Māori but we’re not exclusively Māori. The name of our whare tūpuna (ancestral house) is Te Ngira, from Potatau Te Wherowhero Matutaera. ‘Kotahi te kōhao o te ngira e kuhuna ai te miro mā, te miro pango, te miro where.’ Through the eye of the needle the white, the black and the red strands must pass.

We practise that every day. We don’t care whether you’re red, black or white, we’re here to help you. It’s on our whare tūpuna, it’s part of our history here.

Although our population we serve is predominantly Māori, our second highest is Tongan and that’s because my receptionist up at the clinic is Tongan. There’s no complicated science behind it. They see a Māori organisation, they’ll warm to it. My staff are skilled in that engagement, kanohi (in person) Māori and also our Pacific staff. It’s beautiful when you can speak many languages and hear the languages.

Our whakaaro (thinking), our support to our whānau, is that we want to be a centre of excellence. ‘Kia pokapū te panekiretanga hei pou mō te whānau’. To be a centre of excellence for whānau. Manaaki whānau i ngā wā katoa, supporting families all of the time. So right through COVID-19, our values and our mission statement were key to how we operated. To be a centre of excellence for whānau, even in a time of crisis and pandemic. To be excellent in what we do. Not average and not poor, excellent.

One of our kaupapa (themes) here is ‘ka whiti te rā’, the sun will shine. We remove the clouds so that whānau can have more sunny days. It’s an important kaupapa (purpose) for us. We have faith and belief in our whānau that they are part of the solution, not the problem. Whānau, they love their kids, they know their aspirations. Ultimately, what we’re striving for is to make sure they’ve got the information, the support and tools to make that happen.



Turuki Health Care

Te Puea Winiata is the CEO of Turuki which provides whānau-based health, wellness and social services in South Auckland. She is from Tauranga Moana and has whakapapa (lineage) to Ngāti Ranginui and Ngāi Te Rangi iwi (tribe).

We met Te Puea at the Turuki offices in Manukau City where kaimahi (staff) were smiling and enjoying their afternoon. Every now and again a burst of laughter would sing out through the open plan office brightening an otherwise overcast Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) day.

After a quick spin around the offices, a few smiles, waves and harirū (handshakes), we sat down to begin our kōrero. We were joined by **Renee Muru-Barnard**, primary care manager for Turuki, and **Cam Swainson-Whaanga**, their digital innovator. Renee has whakapapa to Te Rarawa, Te Aupōuri and Ngāti Kuri in Northland and Cam’s Whaanga name comes from Wairoa, Hawke’s Bay.

Te Puea Winiata (CEO): In some ways, I think there was a foresight that this was not going to go well (for Māori, unless Māori showed leadership). The (WOCA) leadership was amazing. They listened to the issues in our areas and pushed them over the line to get stuff done. They provided a connectedness and a powerful lobbying voice which gave us a sense that we were not alone.

We were getting an inkling, even before the (Alert Level 4) lockdown, that they needed to do something. At that stage, it was hygiene packs. We knew that we were going to have difficulty sourcing them in bulk. We could shop in bulk in Remuera at New World (supermarket) and come out with trolley loads if we wanted. But over here in South Auckland, they wouldn’t let us get more than two items of everything. That’s the kind of postcode health or support system that Andrew Little (Health Minister) talked about.

WOCA leader, John Tamihere was doing the haka (advocating) for us, particularly around getting supply. He had different networks that were able to get things moving to support the providers. Things like kai and hygiene packs.

Renee Muru-Barnard (Primary Care Manager): Relationships were important. We could leverage off them instantly for whatever we needed. Part of it was being in a network of 78 providers across the North Island. That meant we were hearing ideas of what was working in other areas.

Te Puea: Those relationships have been really key. We did mobile COVID-19 testing and flu and measles vaccinations aligned with other Whānau Ora providers, like out at Port Waikato. It was huge for that community for somebody to go out there as a mobile unit. We were lucky because we had two vaccines that could be given together. At the same time, we could be testing and managing sore throats. We were able to layer that up with kai boxes and hygiene packs. We tried to pack in as much as we could in one event to ensure whānau got what they needed.

We also worked alongside Māori mental health providers whose whānau were too anxious about sitting in a line to get tested. We went to homes and visited a number of kuia and kaumātua from other Māori providers.

The strength of those relationships means that the providers feel that they know Turuki well enough as a trusted provider and will ring us. But likewise we can ring them. It really did build trust and confidence.

We wanted to capture our learnings from the period but also how it actually turned out. So we filmed stuff that we felt would be important. We started out after the first lockdown. As soon as staff opened up about their activity on a day to day basis, it was quite a cathartic experience for them. They actually started to talk about their personal and professional experiences and it became quite a moving thing about how it took its toll on them. We were working in the dark a lot of the time during the first lockdown and Renee tells the really poignant story of what it was like to go home at night when her beautiful daughter couldn’t touch her. She just had to stay in the car and we all wept over that one. But that was really important because we were so focused on what was happening with whānau. We actually didn’t take a moment to consider what was happening with us.

Renee: We had to morph our general practice, our clinics, overnight. We went from all of our consults being face to face to literally overnight having to do virtual consultations, which we thought would take whānau ages to adjust to. Overnight, we were 100 percent virtual consults. The first day of lockdown, we had done 800 consults in one day, just people ringing in fear. We had to get to everybody, you couldn’t just say we’ll get back to you.

The first couple of weeks, we were doing 15-hour shifts trying to plan and make sure we were available and accessible. Whānau were really fearful. Most of your consult actually was about making sure they were okay from a wairua (spiritual) perspective before you even got to the medication or whatever. We’re a mix and mingle kind of people and to only be allowed in your bubble, I think that created real issues for our whānau. Isolation really impacted on people’s wellbeing.

Cam Swainson-Whaanga (Digital Innovation): We were forced to put our wellbeing services online. We started the new services two weeks before lockdown. They were meant to be a lot of face-to-face sessions. Karakia (setting intentions through prayer), orokoroa Māori (Māori meditation practice), maramataka (living by the natural rhythms set by the moon phases). All three of those had to go online as Facebook ‘Lives.’

Within three months, we had over half a million views. Five hundred thousand, for karakia? It was just phenomenal. The innovation there was forced but it had a great, surprising outcome. Not just for New Zealand or Māori but others all over the world, even in Egypt. They were tuning in, connecting with it, feeling better for it. We had heaps of comments saying, ‘I needed that today,’ especially because it was such a stressful time around the world.

Te Puea: This whole experience really moved us closer together as an organisation because we had to work harder at it. Staff who normally would work together quite closely couldn’t share kai together, they had to separate off because we had to work in bubbles. A lot of them were working from home. It brought a new realisation about how relationships with each other are really important.

We realised we all have our fears and anxieties for our family, ourselves, our futures. I felt it became a big part of our mahi (work) as leaders to care for our staff so that they could care for whānau. Since then we have taken a different route with how we manage people’s work lives. Just about everybody has now been on wānanga (learning forum) for wairua.

We all carry some level of stuff that we don’t always have the opportunity to address or examine. An understanding of wairua can help us be better managers, practitioners, partners, parents and get all of that life balance in place. We realised that they needed to know and experience this so they could refer whānau in because it was really whānau that we were wanting to help support.

The importance of working in networks of providers and caring for our colleagues in the wider Whānau Ora collective across the country has been a valuable takeaway from this experience. Being able to listen in a different way. Rather than thinking, ‘Oh, that’s not a major issue, we’ll skip on to the big issue,’ actually recognising it was a series of smaller issues, both with staff and with whānau, that really impacted on them being able to be well.

Those relationships have been really key. We did mobile COVID-19 testing and flu and measles vaccinations aligned with other Whānau Ora providers, like out at Port Waikato. It was huge for that community for somebody to go out there as a mobile unit.



Turuki Health Care supported whānau at their pop up testing site – who arrived on all types of transport!



Huakina Development Trust

The welcome was warm inside the Huakina community clinic in Pukekohe as we walked through the doorway into this lovingly kept whare (home). A wahine at reception spoke softly in te reo (Māori language), asking us if we'd please sign the COVID-19 register. A few moments later, Huakina Tumuaki (CEO), Maria Clarke, was guiding us along the hallway to a boardroom for our kōrero.

It was the only small window of time she had in a busy schedule that was full for the next two weeks.

After our hui (meeting), Maria said ‘Grab some feijoas for home. We’ve got heaps.’ As she said during our kōrero, ‘We’re marae people here at Huakina.’

HUAKINA’S EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN

Maria: Huakina was established to tiaki (protect) marae and whānau. We have home care and disabilities services so we always need to be prepared in pandemic and emergency situations. We need to have a pandemic plan, a pandemic management plan, and an emergency response plan. Our emergency response was activated as soon as the announcement happened.

KAUMĀTUA

Concern for kaumātua (elders) was the priority as they were considered the most vulnerable by the Government. Two weeks before lockdown, we sought advice from Dr Lance O’Sullivan on what we could do to support kaumātua. He told us ‘flu vaccinations’ and organised a campervan, paramedic and flu vaccines for us. At that time, flu vaccines were very hard to get, ours were sourced from Australia. Our team knew kai was also an essential as our kaumātua shopped fortnightly, no one knew how long the lockdown would last.

Te Puni Kōkiri (Ministry of Māori Development) came through with funding to support our kaupapa (initiative). We negotiated with Pak’nSave (supermarket) Pukekohe asking, ‘What can you give us for this amount?’ They just said, ‘Make a shopping list, shop for what you want and we’ll do the rest.’ The team that supported us were awesome.

We worked alongside kaupapa Māori (grounded in Māori values and principles) providers such as Piritania Minhinnick of ‘Health through the Marae’ to deliver the first drive-through flu vaccinations at Tāhuna Marae. From there we went to Ngā Hau e Whā Marae and onto Mangatangi Marae. We also supported the Waikato Iwi roll out drive-through flu vaccinations for Ooraeroa Marae, Tekohanga Club, Te Awamarahi Marae and Ngā Tai e Rua Marae.

Delivering kai began at Port Waikato, working our way down the river giving food to our whānau. We couldn’t go to the door, we had to give it at the gate. We had to call out and hope they would come. We got lots of comments from kaumātua who didn’t think they were vulnerable. For them, the vulnerable were people that were really sick. One lady said, ‘Last time I heard that word was when they had the leper colony over in Queensland.’

Our kaumātua gave us a lesson in manaakitanga when we delivered kai to Council Flats – ‘Oh, can our friends next door have some?’ ‘Of course they can.’ We didn’t just deliver kai to Māori, we delivered to all people. Before the Level 4 lockdown, our kaumātua attended poukai (Māori King movement gatherings), tangihanga and celebration events. All of a sudden that stopped and they were lonely. These events were part of their life. The inability to talk to whānau and remain in their bubbles was confusing and isolated them even more. When we arrived with kai, they were happy to see someone they knew, although they were careful to just wave out from the windows.

We have a workforce most of whom are home care support and disabilities staff. They continued to mahi but we had many issues around borders. That was difficult and took three lockdowns to get sorted. Onsite packing and delivering groceries was left to a small team who worked tirelessly. Our plan was that if the team became ill the next team who were isolating would take over. Except for our GP (general practitioner) service, the rest of the services worked virtually providing counselling and advocacy support online or over the phone. ‘Zui’ (Zoom meetings) became the meeting place and regular for all providers. We made decisions based on commonsense.

MARAE AS ISOLATION CENTRES

The example of the Christchurch earthquake is a reminder of how quickly Māori at every level can mobilise. The marae at that time were the central place for all people to shelter. Mai i te Ūkaipō, from the source of sustenance – the marae is our principal home. Weraroa Marae became an isolation centre. The marae became a Level 4 bubble for 25 whānau members coming back from America and looking after themselves through the isolation period.

SUCCESS

The Māori response has been so successful because we inherently manaaki. We don’t think of whānau as just being me and my husband, our two kids and my mum and dad. We think of aunty and uncle over there with their family. We think of our cousins. Our cousins are our first friends, they’re our brothers and sisters. When COVID-19 happened, we just did what we normally do, look after people who need support.

Huakina has been influential in many forums but over COVID-19 we needed to work as whānau to tiaki whānau providing ‘one voice talking the same talk’. Kotahitanga supported the voice of Huakina to tiaki our kaumātua and whānau. During the various lockdowns, Kotahitanga shared any resources they received so we could get them directly to whānau. We informed other kaupapa Māori providers such as health through the Marae, Tūwhera Trust, Port Waikato Health Community and Social Services, and Kotahitanga supported them with food for whānau through Papakura Marae.

The Māori response has been so successful because we inherently manaaki. We don’t think of whānau as just being me and my husband, our two kids and my mum and dad. We think of aunty and uncle over there with their family. We think of our cousins. Our cousins are our first friends, they’re our brothers and sisters. When COVID-19 happened, we just did what we normally do, look after people who need support.



“COVID’s intimidating presence! PPE has become normal kōrero for our babies” Maria Clarke - CEO Huakina Trust.



Manurewa Marae

On the showery April 2021 afternoon when we visited, cars lined both sides of the street as a steady stream of whānau arrived at the busy city marae that had recently begun offering COVID-19 vaccinations. Whānau were making their way to tents at the entry to the marae ātea (front court) where their details were checked, before they were led into the wharenui (meeting house) for their vaccinations. Down the way, Māori Wardens⁵ were keeping a watchful eye over events.

We were here to kōrero (speak) with Manurewa Marae CEO, Takutai Moana Natasha Kemp. She was just finishing up a hui as we arrived.

Takutai spoke highly of the Collective and the leadership of WOCA and shared how she led both Te Kaha and Manurewa Marae during COVID-19. Most of all, she emphasised that the health and wellbeing of whānau are the most important considerations.

After our kōrero, Takutai took us on a walk through the Manurewa Marae COVID-19 vaccination process, from when whānau first arrive, to the wharenui where the vaccinations are administered, right through to the room with the tranquil view of the moana (sea) where whānau wait afterwards. Each step of the way, marae whānau happily explained their role in this important mahi.

Nō Ngā Rauru, Ngāti Tūwharetoa me ngā Iwi o Mōkai Pātea ahau. (I am from Ngā Rauru, Ngāti Tūwharetoa and the people of Mōkai Pātea.)

Takutai: We feel very privileged here at the marae that we are a Whānau Ora provider because it gave us the mantle to actually say, ‘Nah, we can do this. We know our communities well and we’re not going to sit down.’

As an essential service, we stayed open. At the beginning of COVID, there weren’t many of our kaimahi who were not vulnerable – aged 55 and above, 60 plus, with underlying health issues. For a marae, that’s a lot of us. We literally had a team of seven. We actually joined forces with Te Kaha. They were young and didn’t have health issues. I was leading both so I merged the two teams together. It was, ‘Ok, Te Kaha you’re coming over here and you’re going to help pack hygiene packs.’ That was our priority. We packed 7,500 hygiene packs here at the marae. We supported our Collective partners and packed them here. We reached out to our community partners, kōhanga (Māori language immersion preschool), kura (schools), ECEs (early childhood education services) and said, ‘Look, we can get you hygiene packs.’

With COVID, everyone shutdown. There was no council, civil defence, local board, nothing at all. We were it. We were our own ‘by Māori for Māori’ Civil Defence. We turned our wharekai, Matukutureia, into a distribution hub.

The husband of one of our staff is a chef and because he couldn’t do anything because of lockdown he came and made rēwana (bread) at the marae. Two days a week he gave his time to bake rēwana with the flour we had donated. We would distribute 100 loaves twice a week to whānau.

We didn’t have the resources to make deliveries so we partnered with the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and with Corrections. They were on lockdown and didn’t have anyone to transport. They would bring ten vans and we would have everything packed and ready for them. They were the best deliverers. Typical MOJ staff, they’re used to banging on windows. People would think someone was coming with a warrant to pick them up. They were unapologetic and would just keep knocking until someone came. Whānau were home because we were in lockdown! They never came back with a hygiene pack or any product that went out. They always said, ‘We’re all good, we dropped it off. Yeah, nah, we just kept on knocking until they were like, “arrrgghh!”’ We also partnered with our community partners out here, with the ECEs, kōhanga

and other community groups in Manurewa. If they had trucks or trailers, we would say, ‘Come and pick up some hygiene packs, kai packs. You’re good to go.’

Another thing during COVID-19 was that MSD (Ministry of Social Development) realised it would be good to put one of their staff members into certain marae. So we have a co-location here with MSD now. Manurewa, Papakura, MUMA (Manukau Urban Māori Authority), Te Whānau o Waipareira, Te Pūea Marae – we all got a case manager. Any of our whānau coming to the marae that needed benefit support, they could top up their green cards. It could all be done onsite here and our whānau didn’t have to go to the local Clendon or Manurewa branches.

People said they needed kai, especially our kaumātua and kuia because they listened to the message to stay home. They weren’t going out and doing their shopping. There were queues at the supermarket, they were no good for our kaumātua and kuia. The other thing was that benefits only come on certain days, so whānau could only shop on a certain day. If there were days where we were in Level 3 or 4 lockdown that was hard for whānau. There was no petrol, no one had pūtea (funds), a lot of our whānau had lost their jobs. We had whānau coming to the marae that would never ever have come here. Now, they were coming for a food parcel or hygiene pack.

We were never a foodbank, ever. But we partnered with Auckland City Mission. Now, you can see kai for miles here. Papakura and MUMA advocated for us through their relationships with Auckland City Mission. Those Whānau Ora relationships became really crucial. Our own advocated for our own. Our own colleagues, our own whānau, they helped us to get this resource.

COVID-19 has had its ups and downs, but it’s been really great for us at Manurewa Marae. It’s created many, many opportunities. They’ve been amazing opportunities. From being an essential service, to moving into being the first Māori mobile COVID-19 swabbing unit in Tāmaki Makaurau. We’re now starting to talk to Oranga Tamariki (Ministry for Children) about community projects. The marae has really come alive through COVID-19. It’s a hub for kai, for hygiene. It’s employment, it’s benefits, it’s support. It’s that Whānau Ora model of whānau support. That’s what we’ve become. We’ve increased our kaimahi here. When I first started, and I’ve only been here not

even two years yet, we only had about 20 to 25 staff. Well, now it’s 60. It’s all because of COVID-19. It’s about knowing what we can do, knowing our community well and just taking on every opportunity. Now, we’ve taken on COVID-19 vaccinations.

Our priority has been our own patients through our GP clinic. We have prioritised our 60-plus age group, our kaumātua and kuia, and then anyone aged 16 and over. We started the week of Easter and a fortnight later we’ve done about 500 vaccinations. We purposefully started slowly, gradually building. We started at 50 a day and we’re now up to 100 a day. By the end of next week, we should be at capacity of 300 a day. It’s all about having the workforce. We started at 50 vaccinations because we only had one or two vaccinators and now we have four. Four vaccinators can vaccinate 300 a day.

What we’ve said to our patients is, ‘It’s your job now to advocate to your whānau and community. Talk to them about your experience here at Manurewa Marae. Share with your whānau why it’s important to you to have the vaccine.’

We manaaki really well. There are only three criteria that I have for kaimahi working in our local vaccination centre. One, you must have the vaccination. The first question whānau ask is, ‘Have you had the vaccination?’ If you say no, we all know what our whānau are like. ‘Aaaaay, oh I’m not getting it.’ We have to show leadership. My second criteria is that you must say ‘Kia ora’ (Hello). We must be able to say kia ora when we’re here. Third, you must smile all day. You must manaaki our whānau all day. They come here, they’re scared, they’re anxious. Some are non-Māori, so they’ve never been to a marae before. We have to reduce their anxiety and make them feel comfortable.

The other blessing we have is that we don’t look like a clinic and we don’t look like the movie theatre. The supervaxers [large vaccination sites] they herd you through. That’s not how we’re set up here. We make sure you can see our pou (pillars), that they’re visible and not hidden behind a blinking message or something. You’re allowed to take photos in our whare, you’re allowed to wear your shoes. We’ve got the floor covered. If you do feel anxious, we have kaumātua and kuia who are part of the team. If you want karakia, we’ll have karakia for you. If you just want to kōrero with them, they’ll kōrero with you.

We have a lot of manuhiri (visitors) from different DHBs, marae and health centres that are coming to have a look. We want to share our learnings and say to other providers you can do this. We want to show that as Māori we’re really proud and we can do it. We don’t have to have these Pākehā (New Zealand) mainstream models. There are clinical rules that we make sure we follow, but we add our own flare and flavour.

Everything we do at Manurewa Marae is under the mantle of the tongi kura (prophetic saying by a charismatic leader) of King Tūheitia, ‘Amohia ake te ora o te iwi, kia puta ki te wheiao’ (we must find ways to look after the wellbeing of the people, and we will get through this). The health and wellbeing of our people is paramount. That’s the key message we want to come through this kōrero. Whatever we need to do to ensure our whānau are healthy and well is what we need to do. Our board has moved mountains to remove barriers so that the marae can operate and support our whānau. It is the same for Kotahitanga. At the heart of everything that we do, it’s about whānau, supporting whānau.



Kaimahi caring for whānau at the newly opened Manurewa Marae Vaccination Centre, Tāmaki Makaurau.

⁵ Māori Wardens are over 900 volunteers providing support, security, traffic and crowd control and first aid, under the Māori Community Development Act 1962.

ESTABLISHING A COMMUNITY SAFE ZONE WITH APANUI

REGION: WAIARIKI
An interview with Ora Barlow – June 2021

Ko Whanokao te maunga
Ko Mōtū te awa
Kō Te Whānau-a-Apanui te iwi
Ko Ora Barlow tōku ingoa

The mountain is Whanokao
The river is Mōtū
The tribe is Te Whānau-a-Apanui
My name is Ora Barlow

On 25 March 2020 Te Whānau-a-Apanui announced the closure of its borders to non-residents in order to keep its community safe from COVID-19. The border, better known as the Community Safe Zone, stretched from Hawai in the west to Pōtaka in the east with a 24/7 manned checkpoint at either side.

The move was the result of a collective decision between thirteen hapū (subtribes) within the iwi (tribe) as well as Te Puni Kōkiri (TPK) – Ministry of Māori Development, Police, Ōpōtiki District Council and Bay of Plenty Regional Council. Each representative from these groups were referred to as ‘ohu’ (communal working group).

The Community Safe Zone operation ran for two months and along with clear messaging from the iwi encouraging whānau (family) to limit non-essential travel, meant that COVID-19 was successfully kept out of their rohe (region). In the following interview we hear from the coordinator of the Community Safe Zone, Ora Barlow who shares her experience of running such an operation.

Tēnā koe, Ora. Tell us about your involvement with the Apanui border.

Ora: My role was essentially to support the organising and coordination of the border – our Community Safety Zone is what we called it. So it was ensuring that we were preparing a bubble right over Te Whānau-a-Apanui as opposed to just individual households. I coordinated the resourcing and all that it entailed in terms of making sure we had a system in place to support checking people who entered and exited Te Whānau-a-Apanui. Other Apanui whānau like Lyn Parekura and Moana Mato pulled in the people to be rostered and were the supervisors on each side of the Community Safe Zone.

How did you develop that skillset to become a coordinator in this sense?

Being Māori, being a woman we are born with a skillset of being able to organise. I guess over my time I've been really fortunate in choosing occupations that involved a lot of large scale coordination. Particularly in the creative industry where I was organising and managing tours on a large scale internationally.

What was the decision-making process in closing the border?

Before the decision to create a Community Safe Zone a team of iwi leaders, local police and medical professionals came together to discuss this growing COVID-19 threat. We're in a very vulnerable community of pakeke (adults) and unwell whānau who live in households of mixed ages. So it was a critical issue that we addressed what would help keep them and the rest of the iwi safe. They talked about a softer response which was more about making sure good messaging was out, making sure that people were stocked up with hygiene packages and what that could look like, and potentially how we could limit people's movements because of shopping because we only have two small shops in our region. Everybody shops either an hour, or an hour and a half away. On a Friday the team came to the Hapū Chair's Forum and presented their recommendations. It was then decided that no, we need to shut down and then have management of exiting and entering the rohe.

So that really got the ball rolling. From there an Iwi Response Team was created which was composed of the different roles we needed: iwi spokespersons that were the only people who spoke to the media so we had clear and consistent communications going out, local police, local medical professionals, Te Rūnanga leadership team and myself as Community Safe Zone Coordinator. We started to talk about what closing the border would mean for us as we didn't have supermarkets, we didn't have petrol stations... so quite basic, fundamental issues that we would have to address in order for us to do that successfully. From then everybody began to work 16 to 18 hours a day just preparing for our borders to be placed into a Community Safe Zone. Dr Rachel Thomson was really kind of the pinnacle in our being able to draft our management strategy for our COVID-19 response. Because it was all based around health. So then we responded to the high level of certainty that it was a very fast moving virus and had to act quickly and strongly.



Apanui locals standing together to protect their border.

How did you organise the border checkpoints? What did that involve?

I started to look for the resources for the coordination of both those checkpoints, because they were both on State Highway 35. There's only one road in and out of our area so compared to other areas it was quite manageable. But of course you have to recognise that what we were asking our people to do was to basically work 8-hour shifts on a 24/7 roster with a minimum of three people per shift on both sides from Hawai to Pōtaka.

Hawai particularly at that time had quite a high volume of traffic because there were still industries that were specified as being 'essential services'. It meant that we were still getting a fairly reasonable thoroughfare of vehicles because we also had whānau that needed to go in and out for essential activities.

On the Sunday before the Wednesday scheduled closure I had called a meeting with our land blocks to see what contribution they could make. One of those Chairs also worked with Te Puni Kōkiri (TPK) as a Senior Advisor. She said let's get TPK to see what they could do for this kaupapa (initiative). We needed resourcing for getting people in place, we needed caravans, we needed lighting for night work, we needed hi-vis gear, cones on the road to keep our people safe. The basic fundamentals to be able to manage that Community Safe Zone really well.

'It wasn't only about whakapapa (lineage), it was anyone who lived within our community we wanted to keep safe.'

Our team then went into a meeting the next day to a larger group including Ōpōtiki District Council, Regional Council, police, TPK to really start to address what that's going to look like because police while supportive couldn't be actively supportive of the kaupapa as it traversed over some of their legal abilities to be able to actually stop people on the road. So we just said, 'Well, we're exercising our mana motuhake (self-determination). These are the things that will ensure our people are kept safe and you can come on board or not, but it's happening.'

This is how it was done, in a very diplomatic way but to show that we were very serious about why we needed to do this and what we were going to do. There was very high communication all the way through this with police, ambulance, all those kinds of services that require high communications and visibility of what's going on.

At the Hapū Chair's Forum that Friday before closing, the motion was passed to secure the iwi zone. On Wednesday we closed, did a karakia (prayer) and then away we rolled.

The first week was madness. I think I probably got three hours of sleep a night really, because you felt the responsibility of our people being on the road.

¹ Each ohu represented areas of local services and organisations across health, iwi/Hapu, Whānau Ora, kura, Kohanga Reo, Police, Local Council, Government and business/industry.



The Iwi Response Team had a data expert who set up the digital permitting system which would allow essential industries to come and go. They had to come through us to get a permit because whilst they would have a Government clearance, what we needed to know was if they were adhering to safe practices – so that was your two-metres apart and travelling in separate vehicles. Like everyone else, the kiwifruit industry on the ground were also working out how to ensure safety of their staff which meant travelling in separate vehicles to avoid crowding, ensuring they went straight to the orchard and no local stops, and separation between their workers coming in and the workers that lived in Apanui. It was quite high-duty, that kind of work. Whilst those kiwifruit industries were good at keeping to Government regulations I believe we made them better.

We had Dr Rachel Thomson coming out and doing training about safe distancing and how to act in a hygienic way. We had local police talking with us about how to approach people, the demeanor that you have and the kind of questions that we needed. We had developed spreadsheets so that we could note who was coming in and going out. We had a permitting system set up administered by each hapū. So each hapū would have a designated person for whānau to contact if they needed to go shopping.

We developed what we called Apanui World (for this story, see p.36), our own supermarket. Everybody did orders online, goods were brought to Te Kaha, then boxed, bagged and delivered for some and others came and picked up. Real kudos to Liisa Wharepapa and her team because it was so much work and a huge, huge endeavor to create a supermarket within a matter of days.

The marae (communal meeting house) were hubs for our hapū delivering, dropping off and organising kai (food) essentials and ensuring that every household was being checked. Our whānau in Ōpōtiki were dropping kahawai and meat to our Apanui kaumātua (elders) that lived in town. It kind of worked like a marae kitchen – only on a bigger scale! Everyone just found a job to do when they saw it. It felt really uplifting to be a part of all that.

More and more as word spread about the iwi bubble, people saw the value of it. It was such a strange time for all of us because we'd never been in this position before. Some of us took it really seriously, others didn't take it seriously at all, and others just saw it as a way to push up against the powers that be, rebelling and all that sort of stuff.

You know when you throw that all into the whole mix, the building up of our Community Safe Zone and creating an iwi bubble, it took a few weeks to really grapple with and get all the systems right but within about week three we were sort of rolling hard.

When you talk about setting up checkpoints and keeping communities safe, people will see you as trying to have authority and so that would obviously create some backlash or some people might be all good with it. How did you manage that part of it – the fact that you really were implementing mana motuhake?

You're spot on, I mean, look, I would say that once we got over what the heck this virus was and what's going on in our country with the borders, the majority, over ninety percent, of the whānau wanted to follow the rules.

The first and foremost thing was really good road management training for our kaimahi (staff), the cone work was put out by people with road management tickets so we had all the signage and the lighting. We had our kura (school) doing heaps of beautiful big placards of a kuia (elder woman) and tamariki (children) holding hands saying, 'Keep us safe' and 'It was all about our people'. Another one was like 'ET, go home' then our kaimahi in our Community Safe Zones were doing videos with each other. So the messaging was part of how we supported people to not see it as being against you individually. It's actually for us as whānau. So what are you going to do to keep us as a whānau safe?

'I didn't particularly like the messaging around the "borders" because it created something other than what it really was for, which was to keep our community safe.'

Then, of course, you have people who are just that kind of person who will do whatever they want to do regardless of whether it puts anyone at risk. We weren't enforcing, we were just saying, 'Well, we're here to keep our community safe and you're not actually supposed to be here so please turn around.'

I know people are thinking about themselves and what will work for them but it was really inconsiderate of a small community that has very small resourcing, including a very small medical clinic that was being put under pressure because people from outside were wanting to get COVID-19 checks or they had the sniffles. It created a whole knock on effect which most people would not have thought about. They would have just thought about what they needed to do to get themselves safe and to spend this lockdown time in a place where they could do that well, and of course they came to their holiday homes.

I wouldn't want to say selfish, but just the unthinking nature sometimes when people want to do things for themselves and they don't see themselves as part of a larger picture. With us as Te Whānau-a-Apanui, we were seeing ourselves as a larger picture first and from there trying to look after each and every single person.

What would you say are some of the biggest successes that you feel that you're most proud of from that time?

We were COVID-19 free. No COVID-19 got through. I mean that's the ultimate success in this time because that's what it was all about. That was our deliverable, our outcome, our KPI measurement. The second part of that was that not one person was lacking –like we had kaimahi on the ground going hunting. I think it was in week four or so that the kaumātua said 'Please don't drop us any more meat, we've got freezers full. We've got too much food, we cannot eat everything.'

For anyone that was unable to drop their rubbish to the dump, people including kaumātua could leave their rubbish at the end of their driveway and it would be picked up. They could have notes and things delivered, groceries were delivered if they needed. Each hapū was checking in to each household to ensure that they had everything that they needed, they were ok.

One of our hapū whānau (local family member) is a councillor on Ōpōtiki District Council and so he was also driving hard with helping those having trouble paying their rates.

We had another whānau member who worked in WINZ (Work and Income New Zealand), and so she was saying if you need help to get on, for whatever reason, whether you've no longer got a job or you're unemployed now, contact her directly. The fact that people knew they could contact us and go, 'I'm in trouble, how can you help?' So all of us were just tapping into every single stream that we could to ensure our bubble was safe and needs were met. Basic essentials, food, money, housing were covered. And then safety of the person at place.

So how did the border continue on and wrap up because obviously it's not in effect anymore, aye?

We merely followed the levels of the Government. When we went down to level three, if we had decided to keep our safety zones up, we would have less support from the police. They would have less ability to turn people around if they've travelled out of a region into another. All that support system was really critical to the success of what we had initiated. I think like any veteran boxer you don't want to be known for the hit that took you down to the ground. You want to be known for the fact that you've really succeeded in the timeframe that you've had.

So as we morphed from level four to level three, the border opened but we kept up the clear messaging. By that stage whānau was used to the messaging from Dr Rachel Thomson. We were still doing small little videos of whānau getting their packages and staying home and limiting unnecessary travel.

We were so good with our messaging that people kind of stayed as long as they could until people had to come out shopping. And even then everybody was masked up.

I think a lot of people from Aotearoa (New Zealand) say this, that even though we were told to stay away from each other it brought us closer. And for Apanui we were so proud to be Apanui, to have done what we had contributed to make that happen. I guess it's that thing of fortitude of our people because as whānau, hapū, iwi, what has always struck me is that no matter how much we may argue with each other – is that we will come together when we must, as long as you have the right way of saying it and you have the right kaupapa in your heart as to why you're doing things. I think that's what has always kept us really well is that we were so clear about our kaupapa.

When you're really tika (truthful) about the kaupapa in which you're delivering and supporting and being a part of, then the kaupapa itself will keep you safe.

In Māoridom, if you stand to do an iwi kaupapa (tribal initiative) you are accountable to your people. All of us in the Iwi Response Team, all of our whānau doing the mahi, all of us were kaupapa driven.

'It wasn't only about whakapapa, it was anyone who lived within our community we wanted to keep safe.'



Apanui kura made creative placards to help protect their Community Safe Zone.



MAHI TAHI 101 AT THE WAIPAREIRA COVID-19 TESTING CENTRE

REGION: TĀMAKI MAKĀURAU
Author: Chris Smythe – May 2021

INTRODUCTION - WHĀNAU HOUSE COVID-19 TESTING CENTRE

When driving through many town centres across Aotearoa (New Zealand), you'll likely come across a pink and yellow banner signposting a COVID-19 Testing Centre (CTC). These banners often lead to a large car park where staff in PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) are stationed, waiting to conduct COVID-19 tests. These COVID-19 testing stations were established under urgency by the Ministry of Health (MoH) as part of the National Emergency Management Response Plan, and have been a critically important part of the public health landscape since March 2020.

The Level 4 lockdown left offices vacant everywhere, including The Specialist Clinic at Whānau House in Henderson, and it is here that volunteers drawn from all areas of the workforce of Te Whānau o Waipareira (Waipareira), in conjunction with Ngā Wātene Māori o Waitematā (Waitematā Māori Wardens)¹, deployed to set up and run the CTC for West Auckland. The CTC team arrives onsite at 7.30am, seven days a week. Every day begins and ends with a karakia (prayer). The vibe is welcoming and relaxed but at the same time serious about performance and serving the needs of the community. We asked Whānau House CTC Operations Manager Chris Smythe to give us an introduction to the team, together with an overview of their journey over the past 68 weeks as they worked to safeguard our community against increased infections from COVID-19.

At the time of writing this article, the Whānau House CTC in Henderson, together with its mobile testing offshoot, has been in operation for 68 weeks and has processed over 50,000 individual presentations for testing.

IN THE BEGINNING

The first positive COVID-19 case in Aotearoa was notified on 28 February 2020. As March 2020 progressed, a growing sense of unease took hold within homes and workplaces across our nation. In response to rapidly increasing domestic infections and news of dire developments offshore, on Monday 23 March 2020 our Prime Minister announced that a nationwide lockdown would come into effect from midnight on Wednesday 25 March 2020.

For most of us, the first few days out of the office were blissful. We were energised and on high alert by the drama of the unfolding crisis and what it might mean for our mahi (work), our whānau (family) and our futures. The summer sun was still high in the sky and the warm weather and comfort of being at home provided a cushioning insulation from needing to think too deeply about what might happen next. Regular morning Zoom sessions with our teams provided a reassuring degree of security that we would all remain connected and that things would soon return to 'normal'.

Meanwhile, Waipareira stalwarts Ngaire Harris, Kim Wi and Lorraine Symons were hard at work operationalising a complex brief from the Northern Region Health Coordination Centre (NRHCC) into what would become the Whānau House COVID-19 Testing Centre (CTC). This required transforming a portion of the DHB specialist centre on the ground floor of Whānau House into a base from which to conduct COVID-19 testing for those living in West Auckland.

INTRODUCING OUR RŌPŪ (TEAM)

Waipareira was extremely fortunate to have three highly experienced registered nurses already on staff - Salome Ravonokula, Grace Crimmins and Feta Taala - and together with Kim Wi these accomplished wāhine toa (strong women) provided the initial scaffold upon which to launch the COVID-19 testing operation. Salome and Kim have over 50 years' nursing experience between them, and in their own way, each has nurtured and cared for our rōpū as mother figures. For many years Kim has been a passionate and forthright advocate for equitable Māori health outcomes, and her steadfast refusal to accept anything less, reinvigorated this wawata (dream) and vision within us all. Grace is a hardworking professional who enriched the team with her skills and experience as an independent nurse vaccinator. Feta joined us from the Tamariki Ora, Well Child programme and entertained us all with her light heartedness and unfailing ability to see the funny side in everything!

The capability of our nursing team was greatly enhanced by Mike De Soto who is a deeply considerate natural nurse. Awhi Walters is an experienced clinician who came to us after working through the peak of the pandemic as an ED (emergency department) nurse in various London hospitals. She brought us a degree of seriousness, which kept us alert to the hidden dangers and reminded us of the need to keep each other safe. Taina von Blaremborg, Annette Nottle, Shannon Joyce and Kristy Klaver shared this journey with us and made valuable contributions to the life and strength of the team.

¹ Māori Wardens are over 900 volunteers providing support, security, traffic and crowd control and first aid, under the Māori Community Development Act 1962.



Te Whānau o Waipareira Testing Station.



Hidden away inside the building, working diligently in the background, has been our dedicated clinical administration team, which for the first twelve months was directed by Lorraine Symons. During the first few months of operation, our administration team consisted of AJ Savelio, Greg Northover and Anu Wijesundara from the Data and Performance Team. Greg has been a longstanding Waipareira kaimahi (staff member) working in many different roles, and amazing AJ is internationally renowned as a former captain of the Samoan national netball team.

Anu is a registered social worker and works as a senior data and performance analyst providing critical data insights across the entire organisation. He has remained involved with the CTC throughout the entirety of our journey and has been a major contributor to the ongoing development of our service. As testing demand stabilised after the first few lockdowns, our data and performance team members returned to their regular work streams and we were fortunate to recruit Georgia Leef-Milner as a replacement. Georgia previously worked for Te Pou Matakana (now known as the Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency²) and worked across both fixed site and mobile testing operations, as well as our Māori Mobile Nursing outreach service.

One of the most rewarding success stories to come out of our rōpū has been Jamiee Rangitaawa. The youngest member of our team, Jamiee has truly blossomed during the last year. Prior to the first lockdown, Jamiee worked as a junior administrator with WaiTech. She joined our team as a runner and after several months progressed into the CTC administration team. A self-starter, she has run this component of the service almost single-handedly for the last four months.

Rick Curtin [our in-house rangatahi (youth) employment specialist] was charged with organising a large team of frontline staff (the ‘runners’) to assist the nurses with their testing duties. Right from the outset, Rick excelled at providing solid leadership for our crew of runners and ensured everything was running smoothly. Tane Samuel, Jade Pairama, Emerson Coe, Johny Wihongi and Jamiee Rangitaawa formed the nucleus of this crew during the first and second lockdowns, and were later reinforced by Terrell Peita, Louise Graham and Lani Andrews, who continued to uphold the excellent standards they had established.

Ngā Wātene Māori o Waitematā,³ led by Waipareira Trustee and Deputy Chair Bumpa Taumaunu, have been an integral and deeply respected part of the CTC rōpū from the beginning, providing manaakitanga (generosity and care), security and traffic management. Our Māori Wardens have been generous in the performance of their duties. Lisett has been an invaluable strength and support, and Fred, Angus, George, Eileen, Teresa, Joachim, Hone and many others have contributed great character and understated mana (status) to our rōpū. Bumpa has also served as our Pou Tikanga (Māori cultural expert) throughout the last 68 weeks, offering not only daily karakia (prayers) and expert guidance in te ao Māori (the Māori world), but also ensuring that our rōpū has a living link to the whakapapa (lineage) of Waipareira and the vision and values of its founders.

During the hectic first few months of operation, when public anxiety and fear were high and patience was sometimes in short supply, the Māori Wardens were there to disarm and defuse tensions, and enveloped us within an impenetrable korowai (cloak) of protection, which afforded us the space to carry out our mahi in a focused and uninterrupted way. This was in direct contrast to many of the other CTC who frequently resorted to seeking police intervention to maintain order.

SYSTEMS

Initially we were registering and triaging everyone who presented for testing via the standard paper form provided by the DHB. This was unsatisfactory in almost every regard. It caused bottlenecks at every point in the process, was needlessly slow and inefficient, and involved the very real possibility of cross contamination, with paper forms being handled by multiple kaimahi outside before being brought into the office for input into the computer-based patient management system – before a test could be administered.

After the first week of operation, we approached Waipareira ICT Director Michael Zheng with a brief to design a tablet-based system to replace the paper registration. Michael and his team worked tirelessly over the next two weeks to create a bespoke app for us. The Whānau House Community Based Assessment Centre (CBAC) app went live on 19 April 2020 and generated an immediate shift in capability. Processing time halved, capacity doubled and kaimahi satisfaction improved immensely.

Michael displayed considerable design prowess by including two extra functions aimed at further safeguarding our team: IPFX phone calling capability for triage nurses to call patients in their cars directly from the iPad, and QR code registration to allow patients to self-register directly from their smartphones. Special mention must also go to James Hsiao, who has remained unshakably solution focused (even under extreme pressure) and provided the very best of technological support.

TEAM CULTURE AND ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

We were presented with an unmistakable opportunity to implement a distinctly Māori, Whānau Ora informed, approach towards building a high functioning team culture. The culture developed by our rōpū prioritises kaimahi wellbeing while also setting a clear pathway for achieving a high degree of self-management. The starting point was to build consensus around a set of principles for best practice organisational behaviour. These included:

- › group commitment to a mana enhancing outlook and approach
- › non-hierarchical management structure to empower kaimahi contribution
- › complete transparency around decision making
- › creating opportunities to identify innovative ideas
- › regular opportunities for meaningful whanaungatanga (relationship building)
- › building an ecosystem of tautoko (support) and awahi (help)
- › there are no good or bad jobs – there are only things that need to be done and people that do them – it’s about adding value.

As trust and confidence multiplied within the team, our rōpū came to understand that the only measure that really matters in an environment of collective responsibility is how each one of us measures up against our own internal standards. What matters is the integrity of our contribution and our individual commitment to supporting the success of the whole.

COLLECTIVE IMPACT ECOSYSTEM

Maintaining positive support amongst the many stakeholders within the wider COVID-19 ecosystem has contributed greatly to the sustained success of our testing kaupapa (objective). We moved quickly to establish a warm, collegial and high functioning relationship with the Northern Region Health Coordination Centre (NRHCC) operations team. The NRHCC is made up of experienced health professionals seconded from the northern region DHBs and is tasked with coordinating the health aspects of the pandemic response. Operations Lead Celeste Gilmer and Clinical Lead Dr Sarah Hartnell have been our main contacts and we maintained daily contact throughout the pandemic to ensure swift, responsive sharing of intelligence, planning and feedback around surges in testing demand and deployments for mobile testing.

Ramesh Prasad from SUB60 Couriers has also been a highly valued member of our COVID-19 testing rōpū. He has visited us every single day we have been open (twice daily during the quiet periods and up to five times per day during surges in testing demand) to collect the completed swabs and transport them to the lab for processing. Of Fijian and Indian descent, his enthusiastic shouts of ‘BULA’ have always brought smiles, levity and laughter to the team.

Immediately prior to the onset of this pandemic, many communities in Aotearoa experienced a sudden upswing in rates of rheumatic fever. Sadly this has mostly affected our Māori and Pacific Island whānau, who often experience additional barriers to receiving high quality healthcare. To address this, we began offering a complimentary service which allowed our nurses to dispense free empiric antibiotics for those whānau presenting with acute sore throats. To date we have administered over 2,000 of these prescriptions, which have saved whānau the time and expense of a visit to the doctor. Augustine Jang and his team from our neighbouring Unichem Waiora Pharmacy have provided outstanding support to enable this service to operate, particularly with regard to liquid antibiotics for babies which require refrigeration and therefore need to be dispensed as required.

In August 2020 we reached out to support our friends at Manurewa Marae to set up their own CTC to better serve the needs of their local community. Waipareira gifted three iPads together with our operating system, and several members of our team spent time at the marae (communal meeting place) imparting what we had learnt from our CTC experience. This sharing of technology and expertise proved to be a fortuitous investment, as several months later we went on to partner with Nicole, Karen and their team to provide a highly successful series of pop-up testing stations throughout Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland), responding to localised outbreaks outside our immediate rohe (region). Moreover, this has been a richly rewarding demonstration of kotahitanga – to progressively act in unity; reaching beyond our immediate sphere of influence to build capacity and grow capability across our partner network.

² The Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency is contracted by Te Puni Kōkiri (Ministry of Māori Development) to invest in initiatives and services for communities in the North Island. Commissioning Agencies work with their communities to determine the best ways to support their development.
³ Māori Wardens are over 900 volunteers providing support, security, traffic and crowd control and first aid, under the Māori Community Development Act 1962.



LEARNINGS

Although it is difficult to adequately put into words, we have all felt the power of the wairua (spirit) flowing around, through and between us, influencing and directing our paths into a profound expression of kotahitanga. It has always been about manaakitanga (care and support), building capacity and adding value.

Crucial to achieving success has been the creation of a relaxed, fun and democratic working environment that respects and values the contribution and mana motuhake (self-determination) of everyone. Kindness, empathy, compassion and generosity are the currency of this rōpū, as they are in any whānau. Instinctively caring for, and supporting each other in this way has extemporaneously projected this same care towards our manuhiri (visitors). We have always acknowledged the potential for therapeutic uplift (catching a good vibe) to result from any human interaction, and have purposefully sought and regularly attained this, most notably through forming very positive ongoing relationships with hundreds of individuals requiring regular COVID-19 tests, and also by taking extra care to reassure and allay the fear and anxiety of first-time test recipients.

During these periods of relentless mahi, it is aroha (love) for each other that has been the ultimate driver of performance. We have always sought to reinforce our growing sense of kotahitanga by regularly sharing kai (food), and have been extremely blessed to have two BBQ masters in Rick and Bumpa, who along with Kimi have excelled at keeping our hearts and puku (stomachs) replete!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This account would not be complete without a heartfelt mihi (acknowledgement) to the many others who have walked beside us throughout this journey, and the many kindnesses they have extended. Rima Dean, Shontelle Clark and Theresa Hunt have always been there to support our often last minute needs, as well as persistently bringing us the kai leftover from hui (meeting). Whaea Evelyn (Waipareira Trustee) and Uncle Jack Taumaunu, who have maintained a constant, supportive presence throughout the last 68 weeks, checking in regularly to see how we are going and often bringing delicious home baking and other treats to smooth our way. We thankfully recognise also, the many koha (donations) that we have received from the community, the notes of sincere appreciation, the many boxes of chocolates, coffees on cold mornings and trays of water on hot afternoons – this is the magic of Aotearoa.

Lastly, I want to mihi to and commend all those who have shared this journey as part of our Whānau House CTC rōpū. Your tenacity and commitment to progressively act in unity has created immense value for our community during the most trying of times. You have humbly and willingly shouldered working in harm’s way, and sacrificed countless extra hours and weekends with your whānau to preserve the safety of others. That we have been able to enjoy our mahi and achieve such a fulsome sense of satisfaction in the process is supreme testament to your increasingly developed sense of tika (fairness), pono (integrity) and aroha. I have always seen my role as being completely about supporting and facilitating opportunities for you to show how great you can be, and you have all excelled in expressing and demonstrating your inner worth, by the myriad of ways in which you have given life to the Whānau Ora⁴ informed approach that we have built together.

⁴ Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.



Māori Wardens were pou (pillars) of support in their communities, working tirelessly to help whānau.



WORKING TOGETHER IS THE WAY FORWARD

REGION: TE TAI HAUĀURU
As told by Erena Mikaere, Elijah Pue, Melanie Evans and Megan Howell - April 2021

Erena Mikaere (Tūhourangi, Ngāti Whakaue) was interim Pou Ārahi (CEO) of Ngā Waihua o Paerangi Trust during the COVID-19 period which impacted whānau (family) in the Ngāti Rangī rohe (region), which includes Raetihi, Ohakune, Waiouru and the upper Whanganui River area. Together with Pou Hautū (Operations Manager) Elijah Pue, Kaiārahi (Whānau Ora' Navigator) Melanie Evans (Ngāti Kahungunu) and housing navigator Megan Howell (Mōkai Pātea) they led the iwi (tribe) response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Erena Mikaere (Interim Pou Ārahi): Those first couple of weeks everything was so unknown, especially that first week. We were really reactive. There was definitely a lot of pressure but not around what we should do and how we should do it. As Ngāti Rangī we're quite self-sufficient and very locally focused. We have some really good partnerships and relationships amongst our community. This is why we were able to stand up a response so quickly and so well for the wellbeing of our whānau – without council and without Civil Defence – quicker than anywhere else around us. Obviously, quicker than the Government could do for our particular isolated area. I think Civil Defence came in two weeks later and asked us for everything we had established. We were like, 'No, no, no. We'll keep running our show. You can come and sit at our table and when we need things from you we'll let you know.' They still set up their normal 'mini-hub' in Ohakune and we kept in regular contact with them. We shared volunteers where needed, and if we needed more information or help from each other it was given. They had a reach into certain parts of the community we did not, and vice versa. We could reach our most vulnerable in the community and we didn't have confidence that they could, hence the reason why we maintained our outreach efforts. All official communications went to them, as is law. But they also came to us through our networks and relationships.

Elijah Pue (Pou Hautū): Ngāti Rangī weren't considered the essential service in the rohe. There was a Christian foodbank, Women's Refuge and these other Government agencies that said, 'We'll deal with it.' Well, we flipped that on its head and said, 'Well, actually, we've got the resources, both in terms of finance and human capability and we'll lead the welfare response in Raetihi and Ohakune on behalf of everyone.' That was brave to really make that stand and say 'we're it'.

RELATIONSHIPS

Erena: The episode affirmed the importance of having relationships already established in our community. Because of our mahi (work) with the Ruapehu whānau transformation plan (which spans education, employment, housing, health and social), we have relationships across all of those sectors with our local people. But also at a Government and provider level outside of our rohe.

We also have relationships with our local health providers. We started a health and social forum. We were meeting two to three times a week initially, and that included the District Health Board (DHB), iwi, council, and all of our local health providers – anyone who was whānau-facing or supporting whānau. We had all these different prongs of communication which were really powerful.

We have relationships with the local supermarkets, Fonterra and Genesis. Corporates, they're fast moving. They were sending things to us left, right and centre. We have connections with all our schools, and the principals and chairs.

I have a relationship with KidsCan as well. All of those deliveries came into our foodbank as schools were closed. We delivered the KidsCan packs to our vulnerable whānau. All of the excess KidsCan kai (food) went into the foodbank for the rest of the community.

We were a little bit luckier than our urban counterparts because we know we can only rely on each other. We didn't wait for anyone to say, 'Can you do this or that?' We got in straight away. For example, our local supermarket connected us up with their food supplier. We 'ticked up' [put on credit] orders on them and they just invoiced us later for it. There were lots of examples of that, including our army brothers and police. We could just tap into them and go, 'I need this, I need that.'

As Pou Ārahi, Erena oversaw the iwi response, developed a plan of action and assigned leaders to those tasks.

Erena: Our leadership group included myself, Elijah and Melanie. We used a messenger chat group to keep in touch. We checked in every morning and everyone would do their round table because we were in different parts of the rohe. Each of them had people they would work with, like our communications lead. He was working with our internal graphic designer to put out posters and translate the messages coming from the Ministry of Health (MOH) into products that our own people would actually relate to because our people are very 'Ruapehu' (volcanic mountain within the central plateau on the North Island of New Zealand) like that (particular about these matters).

Elijah: When the [Level 4] lockdown occurred we stopped doing business as usual. In terms of our Whānau Ora team, we were dealing with the same issues but it was to a really different extreme. It was a different dynamic with whānau being in the same confined spaces for a long period of time. We had to pivot our approach to exactly what the whānau were experiencing in the home. My job was to assist our Kaiārahi (Whānau Ora Navigator) identify the key needs whānau were facing and come up with some tangible solutions.

Erena: Elijah and Megan were on the phone, we had a 24/7 0800 contact line that first crazy week – which included calling our 300 odd Ngāti Rangī kaumātua (elders) across the motu (land). Megan and Mel were doing our foodbank and care.

Melanie Evans (Kaiārahi Whānau): We knew what needed to be done so we just took action. Erena and Elijah helped set up, what did we call ourselves?

Megan Howell (Housing Navigator): We called ourselves Paw Patrol: 'No job too big, no job too small'. We were here for anything. The 0800 number was diverted to my cell phone. People rang up needing things like kai, firewood or prescriptions picked up, or they were worried about their elderly neighbours. We even got calls from Work and Income about grant cards.

Mel: Their office shut down and they weren't allowed to have whānau come in to collect their foodbank or payment cards so they contacted us to pick up the payment cards from their office and deliver them to whānau. We pretty much did anything and everything to remove barriers so whānau had all of their immediate needs met.

With the weather we have here, we knew firewood was an immediate need. Doing Whānau Direct applications became a full-time job for me. We used that pūtea (money) to get the firewood to our whānau – and even extended our reach to send 100 loads of firewood to our whānau in Marton. When lockdown happened, it was the time of year people in our community were either purchasing firewood themselves or going out and gathering it. They obviously couldn't go out to get any.

Megan: Lots of phone calls were coming in from our kaumātua who don't have internet banking. They were saying, 'I'm used to going into the bank to pay my bills. The bank's closed, how am I going to pay my bills? I'm going to be in trouble.' So I spoke with Ngāti Rangī Health because they had a relationship with the kaumātua. I said, 'If you're able to make that phone call to the power company to explain, I'm sure they would understand. If they have younger kids that have internet banking, get them to pay the power bill online.'

The care packages were prepared at a central hub and delivered out across the rohe.

Mel: We were based at Te Pae Tata which is a community hub in Ohakune. We had our foodbank and hygiene packs here.

Megan: We had about six of us helping and about 20 to 25 were involved in doing deliveries.

Mel: Te Tihi o Ruahine (Te Tihi) – an alliance of nine iwi, hapū (subtribes) and Māori organisations which deliver whānau-centred services – played a big part as well, especially with our hygiene packs. Everything was transported from Auckland down to Palmerston North to their base. Then the New Zealand Defence Force would transport it to our trucking depot. We'd drive up there, pack it into our work vehicles and bring it back to Te Pae Tata to sort through. When you look at the bigger picture there were a lot of people involved.

Megan: The roles that we play within the community helped when we made our deliveries because a lot of our whānau already knew us. But there were some people that had never engaged, never been on our books. The first day that we turned up, it was, 'who are you, what are you doing here?' So we explained who we were and what we were doing. Each week we were going back to their homes, they were calling out our names. One guy was down opening up the gate. They were so happy.

It was a big eye-opener with a lot of families that don't normally engage with us to see how they live. That always sticks with me, those poor people. They're always quiet people in the community but they need a lot of aroha (love). I also noticed just how lonely the kaumātua were. How happy they were when you turned up with the kai pack. They wanted to hug you, they wanted to stand there and have a conversation, but we all had our masks on, our outfits, our high vis. 'We can't, we just have to drop and go.' A lot of them were really scared because of their age. 'Oh, if it gets to old people like me, I'll be dead.' They were like, 'We've got money but we're too scared to go anywhere.' And we're like, 'No, don't go anywhere. Let us know what you need.' They would tell us, 'I need my prescription.' – 'Well, we can sort that.'

¹ Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.



While the iwi were concerned about the welfare of whānau, they were also conscious of the wellbeing of their kaimahi (staff).

Erena: The biggest pressure to be honest was making sure that my staff were okay. They wanted to be there the whole time. I knew I needed to look after them and to remind them to look after themselves and their own families. Most of our staff have children. Kids didn’t know what was going on, that was a really confusing time for them. Being a parent myself and trying to be a teacher, a parent, a cook, a cleaner, a pou ārahi, sometimes all within the space of an hour, you felt a little bit overwhelmed, so I could appreciate what they must have been going through.

I knew it was important to put some systems in place to not burn out our staff. We started only doing deliveries on certain days of the week, instead of reacting and delivering kai all the time.

Megan: We were starting work at 7am and on some nights leaving here 6.30pm to 7pm. Self-care was important. We needed days where we just stayed at home and didn’t come in. If people phoned us, I would say, ‘Can you wait until next Tuesday?’ They would say, ‘No, we can’t wait that long.’ So Mel and I would come in, do up the kai packs and deliver them. Or the police would phone for kai packs because people were getting transported to our rohe from Taumarunui into emergency accommodation. We have a really good working partnership with the local police and they would come in and want a kai pack, a sanitary pack, hygiene packs.

Mel: We were pretty lucky that we had whānau at home because we both have young children. We didn’t have to worry which gave us the freedom to be able to come in and work the hours that we did and go home and have dinner cooked for us.

Erena: I struggled in the first three weeks to relax and then once we started to systemise a little bit and I required it of my staff, I knew I needed to require it of myself. I started to not go into the office as much. We set up a home gym – just doing that and going for walks and having a break really. Saying no to some of the Zooms – they’d be happening from 6am until 11 o’clock at night. You were so reachable. Realising that it was mōumou wā (a waste of time) anyway. They would just talk around in circles. We were able to walk away a little bit from the conversations that weren’t actually for us.

The confederation of Whanganui tribes played an important role.

Erena: Te Ranga Tupua is a confederation of Whanganui tribes that we’re a part of. It comprises the iwi chairs from the Rangitikei, Ruapehu, Whanganui and South Taranaki regions, reaching from mountain to sea and stretching out.

Elijah: We agreed Te Ranga Tupua would meet every day to understand how we can collaborate in our welfare and communications approach.

Erena: That forum was constantly in touch. We were having Zooms twice a day. One as CEs in the morning and one in the evening with our chairs giving them updates on what was happening.

Elijah: It was really important for the Whanganui iwi to work together because there are about five of them based within the Whanganui city area and they were dealing with the same people. Not so much for us because we’re rurally isolated, we’re around an hour-and-a-half from Whanganui. Some of the issues that whānau were facing here were quite different to what they were facing in the city.

Together they set about contacting kaumātua across the motu (country) to check on their welfare.

Elijah: At the very start of the lockdown, as a tribe we agreed to ring all of our registered members who are over 60. We said to Te Ranga Tupua, we’re embarking on this challenge and on our list there are about 300 kaumātua. The majority of them are based in Whanganui. We had to ensure that we collaborated in a way that these kaumātua weren’t getting five or six different phone calls asking if they were alright.

Erena: We got people on the phones calling all our kaumātua, not just the ones at home but around the country to check in with them. We started doing that on day two of the lockdown. Everyone just dropped everything. We sent out hauora (health) packs to all of them and they really appreciated it.

Elijah: There were also little things we collaborated on with Te Ranga Tupua. We did some comms together on social media and made some videos together. We also gave them ideas for activities whānau could do at home during lockdown.

Erena: We sent our templates or planning tools to our whanaunga (relatives) which outlined what we were doing to create systems. This is how we run our foodbank, here’s the names of some mates that you can call upon at Fonterra, Foodstuffs, or KidsCan, all of that kind of thing.

Kōrero (discussions) amongst the tribal network enabled Ngāti Rangi to organise support for an iwi outside the rohe that needed help.

Erena: We had another iwi that were kind of in a black spot. They didn’t have a Whānau Ora provider and they needed firewood. There were about 60 different households needing heating. We ended up advocating for them with the Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency² (WOCA). We brought in the resource and shared it out across a different region to help them with their response. So our whānau in Te Ranga Tupua, from Mōkai Pātea right through to Ngāti Apa, that’s how they knew about this iwi. It’s because we were all giving each other updates.

Why was the Māori response successful?

Elijah: The whole Whānau Ora approach is that we pivot to whānau need. We don’t pivot to contractual outputs and what the Government might be giving us. That’s the magic in Māoridom – being able to get on with it. We will meet needs over and above what political pressure or Government departments might be telling us the need is. Only we know and can determine what our needs are and what support we need, not anybody else. It’s the Whānau Ora way that allows us to shine in times of need. Iwi shone right through the motu. It debunked all of those myths that we’re just providing for our own people – this was for the betterment of our community regardless of who you are or where you come from.

What takeaways are there from this experience?

Elijah: When shit goes down in the communities across the motu, who are the ones that come and tidy up and take on the issues? It’s the tribes. No one else puts their hand up and says I’m going to do this and that. It’s the tribes that say, ‘Well, our people need it. We’ve got the pūtea, the human resource, the capability and the infrastructure. Let’s get on with it and not sit in our offices and wait for things to happen, or wait for it all to be over. Let’s go.’ We did and it’s great.

Erena: We’ve developed response templates for everything now if this happens for us again, or an eruption could happen, right? It was a good catalyst for us to get organised. That first whirlwind of reaction in the first two weeks was probably the most unsettling. Now, we know that this is possible. If we find ourselves in this situation again, remembering to focus more on wellness and just managing people’s time better will be critical.

Mel: I definitely know that I would feel comfortable if we were ever put in that position again, and it doesn’t have to be COVID related. We live under Koro, a live volcano. I know we’d be able to go through that again and we would be okay.

CONCLUSION

Elijah: We were able to mahi tahi (work together) so well together with our partners in the community without any barriers. That brought out such a beautiful passion and drive and aroha that we all have for our communities. It debunked this whole myth that primary care, social services, health care and palliative care all can’t work together. We can and COVID proved it. That’s the biggest lesson, it’s that there are no more excuses for us operating in our silos. We’ve all probably gone back to what we used to do, but I think there’s more of an openness for everyone to agree that working together is the way forward.

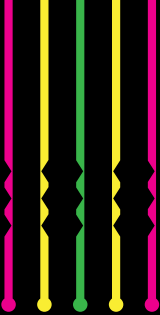
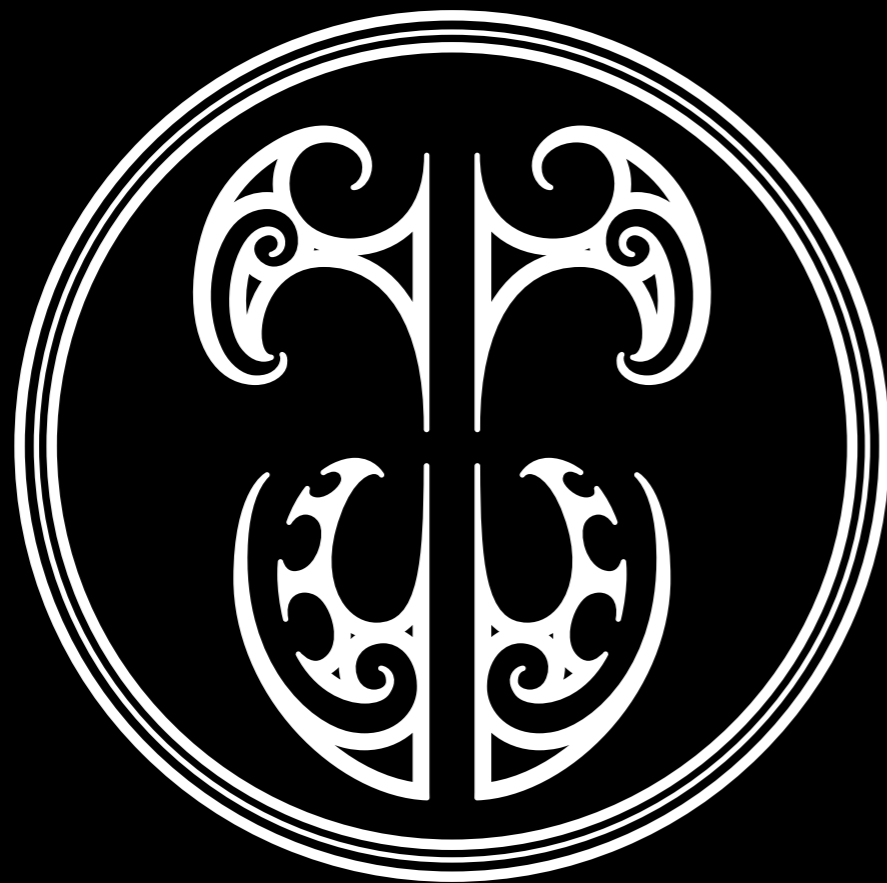
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² The Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency is contracted by Te Puni Kōkiri (Ministry of Māori Development) to invest in initiatives and services for communities in the North Island. Commissioning Agencies work with their communities to determine the best ways to support their development.





WHANAUNGATANGA



The term whanaungatanga has many meanings, but at its core is the concept of family relationships and connection. In the context of COVID-19, whanaungatanga has taken on an even greater significance, as whānau (family) have been forced to stay apart to protect each other from the virus.

Despite the challenges of physical distancing, Whānau Ora¹ providers have gone above and beyond to maintain connections with the whānau they serve. Through regular check-ins, home visits, and even providing meals and essential supplies, our providers have shown that whānau are at the heart of everything they do.

Accordingly, the first story provided by Anna Hughes, Media and Communications Coordinator at Te Puna Ora o Mataatua, highlights how whanaungatanga and having strong community relationships was crucial in their COVID-19 response. This story speaks to the relationship of trust built between a Whānau Ora Kaiārahi (Family Navigator) and a Nan (grandmother) who was worried about her 17-year-old mokopuna (grandchild). The moko was in an unsafe relationship and living in Australia at the time. The Nan was trying to bring her home but didn't have the money or know-how to navigate the process. The Kaiarahi listened to the grandmother's story and looked at the situation with aroha (compassion) and common sense. They then advocated on her behalf and worked with their funders to provide the necessary support. This case highlights how Te Puna Ora o Mataatua was able to go beyond just providing financial assistance to also provide social and emotional support throughout the process. The moko was eventually able to return home and is now safe and living with her Nan. The Kaiārahi kept in touch with the grandmother to check in on them and make sure they had everything they needed. This holistic and whānau-centred approach is a typical example of a Whānau Ora approach in action.

The second story is from Memory Mio from Te Ao Hou Trust in Ōpōtiki and Rangikīa Tracey O'Brien at Te Rūnanga o Te Whānau in Te Kaha who talk about how COVID-19 brought their organisations closer together and strengthened their collaboration. Through the pandemic they have been able to support each other and their communities in a variety of ways, for example, Whānau Direct grants for whānau in need as well as kai (food) and other basic necessities. The pandemic has also brought them closer to their whānau and communities, and has created opportunities for their mokopuna (grandchildren) to learn new skills from their elders. Whānau Ora is about whanaungatanga and COVID-19 has certainly shown how important that is.

¹ Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.

WHĀNAU FELT SO COMFORTABLE THEY TURNED UP ON HORSE OR BIKE WITH THEIR DOG

REGION: WAIARIKI
Author: Anna Hughes – May 2021

Ko Mauao te maunga
Ko Omanawa te awa
Nō Tauranga te moana
Ko Hughes tōku whānau
Ko Anna tōku ingoa

The mountain is Mauao
The river is Omanawa
The sea is from Tauranga
My family is Hughes
My name is Anna

I'm the media and communications coordinator for Te Puna Ora o Mataatua (Te Puna Ora), a healthcare provider supporting the community with whānau (family)-based health, social, and wellness programmes. I started the week before the COVID-19 Level 4 lockdown. Basically, as long as COVID-19 has been around, I have. It was a massive turning point for Aotearoa (New Zealand) and also for the organisation. They have a saying here that pretty much all the staff get a 'baptism by fire' and I was no exception.

I'm originally from Tauranga. I grew up there and did the Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga triangle for a bit. Our son was about to turn five and we didn't want to live in Auckland – we couldn't buy a house, we spent all our time in traffic, and life was expensive. We thought people work their whole lives to retire by the beach so let's do it now! Everything just fell into place and that was six years ago now.

For me, the most important thing has always been working in a place that has community impact. When I first started working in Whakatāne I was the service coordinator for Victim Support and later the fundraising and volunteer services manager at Hospice. To be honest, I was just really feeling so defeated and frustrated working with charities ... We were doing what we could, but it's like being the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff. It was inter-generational and nothing was changing. I was like, 'That's it, I'm done.'

Then the opportunity came up here. I looked at what Te Puna Ora was doing and what they stood for and it fitted so well with my values. It's actually given me hope that we can achieve things that can make a real difference. We look at what our community needs, we listen and we provide a kaupapa Māori (an approach grounded in Māori values and principles) service.

What's really cool is the way of looking at things here is very much about the long term. It's about not being institutionalised by contracts and systems that are already in place. It's about doing things differently. That's been really eye-opening for me. Unfortunately, I've only got about another 11 weeks left because I'm having a baby so I'm going to miss this place.

The thing that drew me in here is the hope. The hope that we can actually do things differently that have better outcomes for families, that get them out of the cycles of things that are stopping them from thriving and which have better outcomes.

We're a 30-year-old healthcare organisation that's grown in the last year and a bit, from 45 staff to over 70, plus our nearly 600 support workers. This means that we have a broad variety of different kinds of contracts. We have a medical centre, vaccination site, counselling service, youth service, we've got employment services, a training academy, housing services, right through to home-based and ACC (Accident Compensation Corporation) care.

The rohe (region) we work in is fairly consistent with the Eastern Bay of Plenty. It goes out past Matatā, out to Murupara and then all the way up past Te Kaha. It's really big. We have a lot of rurality challenges but over lockdown those lines got quite blurry. We serve all of that rohe and then we work with a lot of iwi (tribes) as well. We went out and said, 'Hey, we're going to go do mobile COVID-19 testing in rural areas.' For example, we went to Tūhoe (local tribe) and said, 'Where do you want us?' and worked collaboratively to meet their needs, going out as far as Waikaremoana.

As soon as the lockdown happened, we basically put a lot of our services on hold and rearranged everything. I know there were a lot of other services that couldn't do this because they didn't have the buy-in of staff. Here we have incredible staff who didn't see their families for weeks because they were out on mobile testing stations and they couldn't risk coming home to their kids. They just moved into the garage or moved into their mate's house and just carried on.

Staff were working way outside their normal roles and no one had a problem with it – for instance, our driving instructor became a welcomer at the gate. Everyone just got stuck in and did their part and I think a lot of that was leadership. It was our team understanding what the organisation could do, what our plan was and trusting it, and being willing to do their part because they knew that it mattered. We rearranged, not just a service, multiple services within days and just got out there. Everyone made sacrifices, everyone across the country.

A quite cool thing that has come out of this is that we've received an equity award for the way we did our mobile testing stations. The first thing we did was partner up with the local PHA (Public Health Association) and set up a testing site in Whakatāne and later in Kawerau. Our 'mobiles' [COVID-19 testing units] went out to Waikaremoana, Rotomā, Matatā. Each of those areas was in a completely unique situation because we had local services that were working alongside us



Maxine Kaipara arrives on her hōiho "Blue" for a COVID test in Te Teko.

and bringing people in and that was really powerful. In most of the other areas, the District Health Boards (DHBs) ran testing, but here they gave local organisations the opportunity to step up, which worked really well.

We were the first in Aotearoa to have bilingual signs. We actually got on Māori Television for our signage, making a point that we are in a community that is more than half Māori. It's part of our values and we made sure we had a te reo (Māori language) speaker available at all sites too. We didn't follow the same clinical approach to testing. The first point of difference was a Whānau Ora person at the front to greet people. The initial impression people experienced was a friendly face letting them know what to expect. Then they'd go through the clinical process. At the end, they had someone check on their welfare – whether they need kai (food), hygiene packs, all those sorts of things.

Definitely, having a Whānau Ora¹ wrap-around approach made a real difference. We had counsellors available, we had the full assessment. It wasn't just about people coming in and getting a test. We had people who were isolated, scared, who were going through a really tough time, who had just lost their income.

If people needed a prescription, we'd help them with that. We'd give them a voucher so they wouldn't have to pay the \$5.00 subsidy. It meant we could make sure people were able to get the healthcare they needed. We also kept some commonly needed prescriptions like inhalers with us so we could issue them out.

We had to be assertive about our community needs to roll out this whole process the way we wanted. Then, funnily enough, after we showed that it worked they started rolling that approach out in other areas.

What was really crazy was that we had more people coming to our mobiles out in places like Ruatāhuna than Tauranga had on the same day. This was down to relationships and the trust that had been built. When we went out we didn't just bring our own team, there were staff from local services joining us and carrying on care after we left. We worked alongside local iwi – they were the ones that were our advocates, organising people to come and making them feel safe to do so.

We noticed some mainstream organisations tried to implement similar programmes but those that missed key components – like relationships with locals, and communication and collaboration – didn't work.

In Whakatāne and Kawerau, we had a car available so anyone who needed transport to get tested could call us and we would take them. The other thing that you don't have at your

typical Auckland testing centre is people coming in on horses. In Texas (colloquial name for the town of Te Teko) we had one of the people come along on a horse. We had people come for a bike ride with their dog, or come along on foot, all sorts of different modes of transport. It was awesome because people felt comfortable. The DHB's strict criteria was that you had to come in a car to get tested. Rather than saying, 'Oh, no sorry you have to be in a car,' we would just work around it. We'd tell them to wait at a distance then we'd set up a chair. They'd come sit in the chair and we'd sanitise it afterwards. It was about that flexibility and common sense. Often when you're part of a large Government structure you don't have the ability to compromise. We were in rural areas with vulnerable people and being a separate organisation we could be a bit more responsive to each community's needs.

We did a survey throughout all of that testing on the wellbeing of Māori families of Mataatua. We surveyed over a thousand families and it showed that 10 percent don't have access to a car and 7 percent don't have access to a general practitioner (GP). Really revealing data. So we now have evidence about removing those barriers and how important it was to go out into those communities, making sure that we did it in a way that was accessible, approachable and trustworthy.

We set up an 0800 line for hardship and other information because people weren't able to find information easily. We had people calling needing kai or firewood, information about COVID-19 or travel, or needing emotional support. We had a team of trained social health professionals who could pretty much help with anything.

It was through this line that a Nan (grandmother) called us who was worried about her 17-year-old moko (grandchild). The moko was with an ex-boyfriend who was facing legal action as a result of his violence. The Nan was concerned about the safety and wellbeing of her moko and she'd pretty much exhausted every avenue she could to get her home from Australia. She had no income or family support and there was a fear of further violence. The Level 4 lockdown made it a financial and logistical minefield to get her home. The Nan had basically hit a wall because her situation fell through the cracks. It didn't meet any of the criteria for assistance so she contacted us.

The person who oversaw this was one of our Whānau Ora Kaiārahi (Family Navigator). She was on the phone when the Nan called to ask for help. Basically, it was a matter of looking at the situation, seeing that her need was really genuine but also that she didn't meet any criteria anywhere, because one of the people was in Australia and one of them was here who wasn't a direct guardian. We looked at the situation with aroha and common sense and made a plan.

The Whānau Ora team worked really hard with our funders to plead a case for funding, but it was also about going beyond that. Finance was just a component of the problem; the reality is that a person who was already stretched was trying to navigate the process of quarantine and flying during a lockdown with hardly any flights. It was hard to access flights, they were expensive and it was just a completely different ball game. This was before quarantine centres were set up, so they also had to isolate at home together. It was about making sure that the whole support was in there and that we kept in touch with them and made sure they were okay.

The thing that I'm really proud of is the approach that we take here. We look at families with an understanding of the big picture. It's understanding our Poutokomanawa (central support pole of the meeting house, symbolises heart strength and leadership) values and Māori models of care. Understanding what wrap-around care looks like so we're not just fixing that one need, we're also setting whānau up to succeed in the long run.

We've seen amazing people engage with us because of how we treated them and because we removed all of those barriers. We've had such a great response from the community. I've got all these screenshots of comments we've got on our social media, or letters people have sent in, saying thank you so much for the firewood, for the kai, or for all these different kinds of services.

The thing that I feel is different about us is that it's not just one-off support, it's wrap-around and more. It's about looking at those families and making sure their long term needs are met and that they know where to go when they need help. So we're not in this rescuer position where we're just throwing starfish back into the ocean. We're looking at long-term, sustainable outcomes rather than a quick fix. We have the short-term support, however it acts as the gateway to the real support that they need, resulting in whānau being in charge of their own path, with amazing long-term results that mean they don't need to come back, but know they can if they need to.

The thing that drew me in here is the hope. The hope that we can actually do things differently that have better outcomes for families, that get them out of the cycles of things that are stopping them from thriving and which have better outcomes.

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STRENGTHENING TIES BETWEEN TE AO HOU TRUST AND TE WHĀNAU-A-APANUI

REGION: WAIARIKI
An interview with Memory Mio and Rangikia O’Brien – May 2021

In this interview with Memory Mio and Rangikia (Tracey) O’Brien we learn about their story of collaboration and the friendship forged during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite having few resources they were able to support each other to assist whānau (families) within their respective communities of Ōpōtiki and Te Kaha.

Memory works with Te Ao Hou Trust in Ōpōtiki as the Whānau Direct Coordinator for Eastern Bay of Plenty Whānau Ora¹ providers. Rangikia Tracey O’Brien works with Te Rūnanga o Te Whānau in Te Kaha as the Whānau Ora Health and Social Services Manager.

Tainui te Waka Wainui te Awa Rangiahua te Maunga Ngāi Tai te hapū te Iwi Ko Memory Mio ahau.	<i>The canoe is Tainui The river is Wainui The mountain is Rangiahua The subtribe and tribe is Ngāi Tai I am Memory Mio</i>
Ko te Whānau-a-Apanui te Iwi Ko te Whānau Rutaia te Hapū Ko Rangikia Tracey O’Brien ahau.	<i>The tribe is te Whānau-a-Apanui The subtribe is Whānau Rutaia I am Rangikia Tracey O’Brien</i>

So to start your story of collaboration, maybe you could tell us a bit about yourself, your organisations and communities?

Memory: E noho ana ahau ki Tōrere (I live in Tōrere) but I work in Ōpōtiki at Te Ao Hou Trust. I am Whakatōhea, Ngāi Tai, Te Whānau-a-Apanui and Ngāti Porou iwi affiliated. And I am a Whānau Ora Kaiarataki (leader) for Te Ao Hou Trust Board. Te Ao Hou Trust is predominantly a health-centred organisation that provides Whānau Ora.

We have what’s called ICM or Integrated Case Management who receive referrals from our three GPs (general practitioners) in Ōpōtiki for our whānau. We have Kia Piki Te Ora which is our suicide prevention rōpū (group). One of our kaimahi (staff) whānau, she travels from Tauranga in the Western Bay to our office here in Ōpōtiki, and we have Emma who’s based here in our office. So we have two people on board twice a week and they’re out in the community. We have a domestic violence kaimahi from Tūwharetoa ki Kawerau here on Thursdays and Fridays to hold courses for those men who have been referred by the courts or the probation office. We also have the East Cape section of Healthy Families and we cover from Ōpōtiki to Gisborne. We currently have just one kaimahi known as a Systems Innovator based in our office and in Gisborne we have four, but we’re looking at another three for here. It’s quite a big team, our Healthy Families team, and they work around systems change in all areas. We are all women in our group. Other external kaimahi that come in and utilise our space on a regular basis include Bay Audiology, Eastern Bay Health Services, a COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease) service and the Cancer Society.

In a nutshell, that’s Te Ao Hou Trust. We’re situated right in the community of Ōpōtiki and as you can imagine we are often busy with whānau in our community. There are also other services in Ōpōtiki that we work really well with. We have Te Pou Oranga O Whakatōhea Social and Iwi Health Services as well as WISH (Whakatōhea Iwi Social and Health) services and Whakaatu Whanaunga who are a budgeting service. We work really, really well together and we do a lot of referrals both ways. We receive referrals in and we send referrals out depending on the need of our whānau.

Rangikia: Kia ora (Hello), a lot of beautiful work going on there. I’ve lived here most of my life. I’m a nana, a mother like Memory, an aunty and have whānau all around. Love being home, love working with my people.

We’re Te Rūnanga o Te Whānau so we’re situated right in Te Kaha. Our role is also within the health and social services. We work in the Whānau Ora space, trying to work with our whānau with their aspirations and goals. I have a team of ten and we do pakeke (elderly) programmes with our elderly, we have activity days every fortnight, workshops and we run a shuttle into town for their shopping days. We run kid’s clubs from one end of the motu (island) to the other. We also do holiday programmes for our tamariki (children) as well as mentoring in schools. We work with individual whānau also.

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“I love my mahi ... we can laugh with each other and still be serious in our mahi” – Memory Mio, Te Ao Hou Trust.

Can you recall what life was like just before the pandemic hit and how both your organisations had to band together to fortify yourselves and help your communities?

Memory: So prior to the lockdown, prior to COVID-19, we cruised along just supporting our whānau as we normally do in our community.

When COVID-19 did hit and lockdown came we were thrown into the deep end literally. We started to realise what that meant for us in our office, because we no longer had staff in our space. Effectively just two of us were left – myself and Linda Steel (CEO, Te Ao Hou Trust) – because we were frontline. At that time we didn’t have any other Whānau Ora support workers.

I had also just become the new Whānau Direct Coordinator for the Eastern Bay area and I was thinking, ‘Oh my gosh, what are we going to do?’ So with that impact we hit the ground running. I think the adrenalin gets you going, you know. You’ve got to do something.

In Ōpōtiki as soon as lockdown took place our marae (communal meeting place), like Waioeka Marae, went into gear straight away and they determined off their own backs that they were going to go around and help their whānau, and so they did a food drive. They went into the market and they just stocked their kaumātua (elders) cupboards first and made sure that they were looked after. Then Ngāti Ira and Kutarere Marae did the same thing. Effectively all of the marae kicked into gear straight away without even thinking. They decided that they need to do something for our pakeke (adults), our kaumātua (elder – man) and kuia (elder – woman). There was no hesitation in their support.

Linda and I determined that something needed to happen as well from a Whānau Ora perspective. The commissioning agency also put out that we needed to provide warm clothing and food for our whānau. Whānau Direct² became the tool to enable us to do that. Linda said that we would purchase everything and then we would work through Whānau Direct to have it reimbursed back to the organisation so that our whānau could be looked after. That’s where we basically began running with the Level 4 lockdown really.

It was very hard to have to leave your home to come into Ōpōtiki. I live 26km out of town and to come in every day knowing that my whānau were at home, and I was coming into a community that we didn’t know [whether COVID-19 was around there]. But I must say travelling every day on a road that had no other vehicles was really nice, no logging trucks, no school buses, no other cars. It was lovely, actually, travelling into town on a beautiful day.

Just knowing that we were safe in our space, we did everything that we needed to do. We ensured that there was no contact from anywhere else. We made arrangements if people needed to come in. They sat in their cars while we took the documentation out to them with our masks and gear and got them to sign whatever needed to be signed so that no one was exposed.

What I love about being Māori is that we’re very quick off the mark in thinking about what’s best for our whānau. That manaakitanga (hospitality). That awhi (help) and the aroha (love) for our people is something that makes us shift into another gear, again, to support our whānau.

When it came to the hygiene packs we volunteered to go over and help pack those. That would be on a Monday morning. We would come back on a Wednesday and help unpack and put them out to the communities where they needed to go. That’s where our collaboration with Te Whānau-a-Apanui came in because they had closed their borders, but we had a really good working relationship. It wasn’t just with Te Whānau-a-Apanui, it was us and our community with Māori Women’s Welfare League (MWWL) and different businesses. With Mitre 10 (hardware store) I just needed to give them a call for a forklift and they’d be down to help lift all of the packs. It was really great, that cooperation.

With the food bank, Whakaatu Whanaunga, we had an arrangement where you would do referrals, but we didn’t want to deplete their foodbank immediately so they did referrals to us for Whānau Direct and we supported the whānau in that way.

So you did bulk purchases with Whānau Direct?

Memory: Yes, we did. We had set an amount for whānau per person, so \$50 per head per household and we would do the upstream systems and then they would go and purchase their own groceries. We wouldn’t do it for them, they would go and do their own shopping and that was an arrangement we had with New World (supermarket) as well – and obviously the ‘no’ to no alcohol, that was part of that arrangement. Whānau were happy with that as well, it still gave them their own dignity to be able to go and do their own thing without anybody doing it for them. We never took anything like that away from our whānau.

The hygiene packs we delivered first and foremost to our vulnerable whānau. A lot of them had health-related issues so they went there first and then out to the wider community.

We already had a relationship with the MWWL, with their kaumātua, kuia. We would go down and visit them and see them with well-kits and those types of kōrero (discussion) to just talk to our whānau around being ready. When we got to the delivery of our hygiene packs [the MWWL] had somebody that could grid the township and so street by street they did drops and so they were awesome in their support of us.

Originally there were only two of us in our space so us women would do what needed to be done for our community. Then we brought in two of our other workers to help out once our hygiene packs came in. We needed that extra support and they were able to come in.

Our relationship with Te Whānau-a-Apanui was great. With the ladies, especially with Rangikia. I was able to just work through the Whānau Direct applications with her. The kaupapa (purpose) was to be really creative and supportive of our whānau and their needs in a time like this. I mean there were some that you knew that were kind of taking advantage of the system, but at the end of the day who are we to say whether they needed the help. It’s not our place.

I’ve heard similar stories where the trust just went way up.

Memory: Yeah, exactly. So that’s me really. Everything was very fast-paced and I must say towards the end of last year we did get to a point where we needed to take a break. We were grateful that the trustees at our organisation gave us leave and we were able to take three weeks, which was good because normally I take around two weeks.

So it was just the two of you getting everything up and running, and then luckily you had people come in after to help distribute and that.

Memory: I think the collaboration with the other organisations helped as well. Although, in saying that, WISH closed down, so we had the foodbank team, Whakaatu, which was the other main space for us. They had a skeleton crew on and we worked collaboratively with them as well.

With the borders closed to Apanui I assume someone would have gone and delivered bulk to the border and then distributed internally?

Memory: When we first got the hygiene packs we took them to our marae at Tōrere and met our Te Whānau-a-Apanui whānau there. We’d give them their packs. And then after a while they had a van that would come in to do their shopping. One guy, just one poor guy, who would come in and do their stuff and so two of us would load all of their boxes onto their truck and trailer and then they would go back down again. I loved the way that they closed down the borders.

Rangikia: It happened for everyone so fast. For Apanui we’ve got 13 marae along the coast. So that’s 13 hapū (subtribes). Each of my team looked after a hapū. I was assigned to stay in the office and do the office work. We had a call centre as well that we’d set up.

I was new to Whānau Direct, so having Memory and that relationship where I could just call someone who I knew was there who could answer the questions I had was really important. She was giving me the guidance that I needed to help with whānau applications and also bouncing off what they were doing.

When Whānau Direct allowed for bulk purchases, Memory was telling me what they were doing and I was saying, ‘Wow, that’s such a cool idea,’ so we started doing that as well. We went out and purchased a whole heap of heaters. We wanted to make sure that our pakeke were warm so we targeted them first in distributing the heaters. We ended up getting two big bulk purchases and our heaters went out the door. We also purchased blankets because that was another thing that was easy to obtain and we gave those out too.

What I loved about it was that whānau were sharing these resources. Because we’re all whānau anyway, we connect all the way through this rohe (region). Because a lot of our whānau do live in Ōpōtiki that are from Te Whānau-a-Apanui. Knowing that Memory and the team were there for them, it was lovely for us to know that they were being well supported. It wasn’t just Te Whānau-a-Apanui we were looking after, it was everyone that lived within our rohe.

At first we were told we had to go and help pack the hygiene parcels. But then Te Ao Hou Trust did the packing for us and we just had to go in and pick them up. We then distributed them out to the hapū. So that collaboration I thought was just awesome, to know that they were doing that bit for us.

It was a huge job because you know, our borders were closed. So we didn’t want to send too many people in and out because we were trying to protect our rohe. So that was just awesome.

² Whānau Direct assists whānau to access financial resources when it matters most to whānau, with the intention of making a positive difference for whānau.



Did you hear about how these Whānau Direct grants affected whānau in your area?

Rangikia: There were some lovely stories. We found out that someone needed a stove. It had one working element and all the rest weren’t working, so they were cooking on a fire outside. So there were some good things that did come out of COVID, that we were able to purchase stoves and even washing machines because some of our whānau were doing laundry by hand.

We started looking after our pakeke first because they were our most vulnerable, and then out of that grew other things that popped up, but I just really want to say thanks to Memory and Te Ao Hou for working with us and just sharing everything that they were doing for their whānau which helped us as well.

Memory: I think for me that’s just what we do as Māori really, aye, we awhi each other, I wouldn’t have done it any other way really. Regardless of whether we were Te Whānau-a-Apanui, whether we’re Te Ao Hou Trust or Whakatōhea. For me it was about our people and so wherever the need was then that’s what we needed to make sure that they were supported.

That’s what I love about our collective, is that we’re definitely there to look after our whānau. At the end of the day that’s what it is for us, ensuring our whānau are being supported in whatever way they need to be supported.

Rangikia: It was a wide range of things that Whānau Direct paid for aye? There were bills, there were, oh, it was amazing really.

Memory: Obviously our whānau were without work and they were in a situation where they couldn’t pay, so we were really grateful for that too with WOCA enabling us to do that.

I think the realisation is that the impact of COVID is still happening now. Obviously some of our whānau have still struggled after COVID to just get themselves back into a comfortable position again. Maybe going back to work could have been difficult for some. And so I was glad that we were able to through Whānau Direct, especially during COVID.

I think COVID also brought out a lot of things in our whānau. A lot of them appreciated that time together because normally whānau were out working. Mum was working, Dad was working. Kids were at home doing their own thing. They enjoyed doing things together that they hadn’t done for a long time so that was great. I know my whānau had fun during lockdown while I was at work.

Rangikia: We were so well looked after by the community with the meat packages that were being dropped off, and the fish. Those were still our refrigerator – the sea and the bush – so all we needed were the essentials and our garden.

Memory: You’re a really good example of the impact of COVID on small business aye? And still trying to recover from that, you know. But that’s the reality of the positions that we hold, because with Whānau Direct you aren’t able to provide support to your staff and your immediate family. But in conversation with our manager we said, ‘Look, our whānau are no different to anybody else during this time. So when our staff need that support then we should be able to support them.’

We did support our staff members that needed help during COVID lockdown as long as we notified the Whānau Direct head office. I was always in contact with them to say, look this is what we need to do for our whānau. This is a staff member at Te Ao Hou Trust but they have nothing to do with Whānau Direct. That’s only myself as a manager and so it was fine. Even with the other Whānau Direct staff like Rangikia, they could have come to me and we’d offer that support as well for staff.

Rangikia: Some of my staff did go to Memory.

Memory: Just so there was no conflict of interest or, you know, any perceived conflict. But we needed to make sure that everybody was being supported during that time, and not just whānau out in the community but our support workers, our staff.

Any last words on your collaboration or anything else you want to add there?

Memory: I think we would just continue to collaborate and in whatever way. As Rangikia said, we’re all whānau at the end of the day. I mean the only things that divide us are a couple of bridges and maybe, well actually for me, nothing divides us. I’m really proud that I can be connected to just about every iwi (tribe) along the Coast and further. It’s just having that relationship I think which is the most important thing. Having really good relationships with each other, our communities and our whānau. Yeah, I don’t think that we would stop collaborating to support our people.

Were you on the phone with each other everyday?

Memory: Almost.

Rangikia: I was! I was ringing Memory all the time and messaging her to fix up an application. I think what COVID did for us was to bring us closer to how our old people lived in the old days. You know, there were no barriers. Whānau was whānau no matter where you were and I think that’s what the beauty of it was. The growing of kai (food) and the giving. The giving and receiving. I think that’s what collaboration is about too. Sometimes I think life has gone the other way and people think about themselves. But what COVID brought to our communities was it opened it back up again.

Memory: I know in my own home it actually regenerated the māra (garden). My husband, he’s a māra person anyway, and we had small gardens. But during COVID he’s made it into a huge garden so it’s enough kai to feed the community around us. It’s just what we do now. He’s got kūmara (sweet potato) coming out of his eyeballs at the moment, and potatoes. We have this really neat collaboration with this young lady who also had seedlings. So eight different varieties of Māori potato and three different varieties of kūmara. So we’ve been able to grow those in our own māra and the seeds from those will become next year’s. We continue to grow our kai for future generations. And my mokopuna (grandchildren) loved it, being in the garden with koro (grandfather) and weeding. I’ve got some really cool photos of them down there doing things like that. I think my moko (grandchildren) are very lucky that they’ve got their koro who still does all of that kind of stuff. He’s someone who grows, who fishes, who dives, who is a real good provider and they’ve learnt some good things from him too during COVID. That was the best school that they could ever be at, being at home with their koro learning all of the maramataka (Māori lunar calendar), honestly, everything by the maramataka they know off by heart. I’m still struggling with it but the mokopuna have learnt that during COVID so I’m really grateful for that as well.

What I love about being Māori is that we’re very quick off the mark in thinking about what’s best for our whānau. That manaakitanga (hospitality). That awhi (help) and the aroha (love) for our people is something that makes us shift into another gear, again, to support our whānau.



“Only in Whānau Ora can you volunteer your husband to come do some mahi all day, all for the love of our whānau” – Memory Mio, Te Ao Hou Trust.



‘WITHOUT WHĀNAU WE DON’T HAVE ANYTHING’: FACING PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL CHALLENGES ON THE FRONTLINE

REGION: HAURAKI-WAIKATO
An interview with Gail Poihipi – April 2021

This is a Whānau Ora¹ kaimahi (staff member’s) personal story about Māori connections, how strong they are, how far they reach and how vital they were for her whānau (family) during COVID-19.

Gail Poihipi is a senior kaimahi at Te Kōhao Health (Te Kōhao) in Waikato who was an essential worker during the pandemic, supporting the community with essential packs and social worker support. In other words, doing mahi (work) she loves.

I am totally blessed, eyes wide open and so appreciative. I have always loved the kaupapa (organisation) with Te Kōhao during my time here.

I’m from Ngāti Toa and I was raised marae-based (culturally-centred) in Morrinsville. Our background is being involved and engaged on the marae – I grew up and I lived there. I was blessed to be part of my ancestors, my kuia (elders – women) and my kaumātua (elders – men). I last saw my kuia (grandmother) when I was six years old and she was in her 90s – my mother’s grandmother whom she loved. Homestead was up in Tauwhare. And she had a very tūturu (prestigious) way of dressing and going to tangi (funeral gatherings). On my father’s side my nan passed away at 113 and I saw her when I was 15 years old and she was from Taupō. Again we had the kaumātua in our lives that were able to lead. Unfortunately, once all whānau moved to the city to be urbanised, the marae (communal meeting place) stopped their engagement on a slow basis there. So then I found myself working with whānau a lot, with rangatahi (youth), working within the social sector. Learning from them, iwi (tribes) and hapū (subtribes), so I come into Te Kōhao, eyes open and loving the kaupapa (initiative, culture).

Away from work, Gail had a busy whare (home) with a couple of mokopuna (grandchildren) staying with her, plus her husband had recently been diagnosed with cancer. Aotearoa (New Zealand) was in Alert Level 3 when her son rang with news that two of her older moko had been in a serious car accident.

My granddaughter is 21 and her sister is 20 and they were in this car accident and had to be airlifted from Scotsman Valley in Morrinsville to Waikato Hospital. I was taking care of my mokopuna and my husband, plus mahi continued right through COVID delivering packs and staying in touch with whānau. Once I got word my moko were at the hospital I thought there was nothing I could do as we were in COVID.

There are many connections to these young people. Gail is a grandmother to both girls and she raised one of them, while the sister was legally adopted by Gail’s Aunt and Uncle.

I went down to Auntie’s whare to let them know our babies had been in an accident. They looked at me and asked me how I was going to get in, what was the process with the COVID restrictions. I had my uniform on and said that I would try every trick in the book. I told them I was only the messenger and I would head up to the hospital and they were to come later.

Dressed in her Te Kōhao uniform Gail was granted visitation rights to see the elder of the two girls, the one she also raised. But she could not visit the sister, something that frustrated her as both girls are her granddaughters.

The Doctor allowed me in and I let them know there is another whānau coming – the same whānau who adopted her and thus the legal parents of the younger moko. I told the staff they needed to be there as she had gone straight into surgery once they arrived at Waikato.

The Doctors had agreed they were allowed access and Gail contacted them to pass on the news to head in.

They’re in their 70s. Once they arrived they were not allowed into the hospital as they were seen as vulnerable given their ages. They wouldn’t allow them to see the girls and they were a little bit annoyed ’cos I was in there and I didn’t raise that one, but I am still the grandmother and it still impacts on us. I tried to bring the doctors out to explain that to them but again they were still not allowed in with the COVID restrictions.

Gail was determined to get access for them and made contact with staff at Te Puna Oranga in Waikato Hospital – a department whose sole purpose is to drive and deliver radical improvements in Māori health outcomes by eliminating health inequalities. Gail discussed the family connections and the severity of the conditions of the girls in hospital. Te Puna Oranga contacted Waikato Hospital, but again the immediate parents were not granted access.

They did not get the whanaungatanga (hospitality). The doctors just did not understand how we were all connected as whānau, and how important it was to allow the parents to see their daughter despite COVID. All we knew is she had swelling on the brain and she could die.

Extended family began gathering to support one another and stay updated on their progress in hospital.

We kept visiting the adopted parents and they were gathering with other whānau, their children, cousins and they were singing, talking and saying karakia (prayer). They were on the phone regularly as the younger sister was critically injured. She had two surgeries to reduce the swelling in her brain and by the third operation they believed she was going to pass and they waited by the phone because they believed that would be the last time they talked with her.

Meanwhile, the biological mother of both girls was in Australia after separating from Gail’s son several years before.

She was keeping in touch with the girls online and during COVID she was unable to travel. By the grace of God she got an air ticket and she was quarantined for seven days and then I had to go through processes to get a letter so I could drive up to Auckland and collect her. I brought her back and she stayed with us self-isolating in the shed outside. During this time I still had to go to work, wash and dress and take care of my husband who had to be isolated in the top room. I had two other moko who belong to other family members who are with different partners. Oranga Tamariki (Ministry for Children) were getting involved with different court cases. At the same time the adopted parents are getting frustrated as I am also trying to get their mum into the hospital as well.

Gail soon realised that going to the hospital in between her own mahi meant she was still in her uniform which was accidentally giving her access to her granddaughter. Through the right channels Gail managed to reunite the biological mother with one of her rangatahi.

It was just as her biological mother used her connections through a family member and the Hawke’s Bay CEO to get in and see her oldest daughter who was discharged a few days later and into my care. Unfortunately our youngest girl was in a pretty bad way.

Simultaneously, the Police were trying to interview both girls about the car accident and while the oldest could communicate easily, her sister was in no condition to. Due to their persistence, Gail called a lawyer who temporarily suspended all police interviews, effective immediately.

Once he left I was able to deal with the other sister and find out what was going on. Three days later we got māmā in and the older girl was released and she came home with me.

Meanwhile, the adopted parents were getting frustrated that they were not considered a priority and Gail could feel their anxiety as the youngest girl had suffered a severe head injury and had not regained consciousness. Her goal was to get all parents – adopted and biological – to be at the bedside with her.

Seven days had gone by and everyone was upset, they weren’t sure the youngest was going to survive, by this time she was onto her fifth operation. So we all tried with the authorities to get visiting rights. I was frustrated but determined to get her parents by her side so I contacted the (chief executive officer) CEO at Waikato Hospital, the CEO in Hawke’s Bay and CEO of Te Kōhao Health but no-one could help. They were all really understanding but it was a very difficult time with such tight restrictions due to COVID and protecting the vulnerable.

Gail was feeling helpless and so used her connection with King Tūheitia, contacting him and explaining their situation. The King wanted to help, so he reached out to Waikato Hospital. It was through that call the adopted parents were finally able to go in and see their daughter. Or so they thought.

The kaumātua made their way to the hospital, however due to their age and their vulnerability to COVID-19 they were turned away by staff on the same night.

They knew the COVID was on and accepted they were too vulnerable to get in. I did get in and then it turned to, ‘How come you can get in and we can’t?’ And they were turned around on the night we went to the hospital. They were mamae (painful) in their legs and everything. They didn’t want a ride, they walked all the way down to their car ’cos that’s how mamae they were. They would rather cry it off and just get home because they were as close as they could be with their girl. And from that point on my role was to get that whānau into the hospital, to get that connection again. Because if it was to be the last time, they need to be in that room, they need to be close.

Our marae and our own practices around tikanga (protocols) are solid. We have been raised around life and death and taking care of one another. We know where we are going to, we know where we have come from and we know what we are doing with another. This makes Māori strong, being able to be connected and always staying connected no matter what.

¹ Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.



COVID-19 had been restricted to another part of the hospital, and whilst staff were sympathetic to the situation with Gail's whānau, they abided by the enforced protocol to keep the susceptible safe and that included the elderly.

The fight was to get our whānau connected and it was a long fight. It was a long one. But I thank the Lord that it happened. Amongst everything we know as Māori, as whānau, is where our connections are. Whanaungatanga (relationships) is strong with us. To me, this was about going back into our own home and making sure we prioritise where we all are, that we stay connected and communicate. My siblings were just around the corner, we kept our bubble close and safe, we stayed in touch online and thankfully that allowed me to do what I needed to do. Go to mahi, do our hygiene boxes and take care of my husband, my moko and then drive back up to the hospital.

The COVID-19 period reminded Gail how strong she is and how passionate she is about her whānau and keeping everyone connected.

Without whakapapa (lineage), without whānau, without hapū, we don't have anything. We don't have direction and we don't have compassion. We don't know where to go, we are lost sheep when it comes to having no connection back to our own whānau. It's that journey that has kept me strong all the way through. Even to this day because I have mokopuna. I have 27 now. The

Definitely, having a Whānau Ora wrap-around approach made a real difference. We had counsellors available, we had the full assessment. It wasn't just about people coming in and getting a test. We had people who were isolated, scared, who were going through a really tough time, who had just lost their income.

great thing is I'm active with them, as active as mine were with me, and I'd like to think I'd be 113 - and very active at 113.

The battle to get the adopted parents into the hospital took its toll.

Our relationship has been a little bit torn but what has brought us back together is the tangi we have had. During the end of December I had three of my nannies pass away. The thing is, we are very closely linked, and our whānau when we go to tangi, that is what brings us back together again. We are knitted through that kaupapa (initiative).

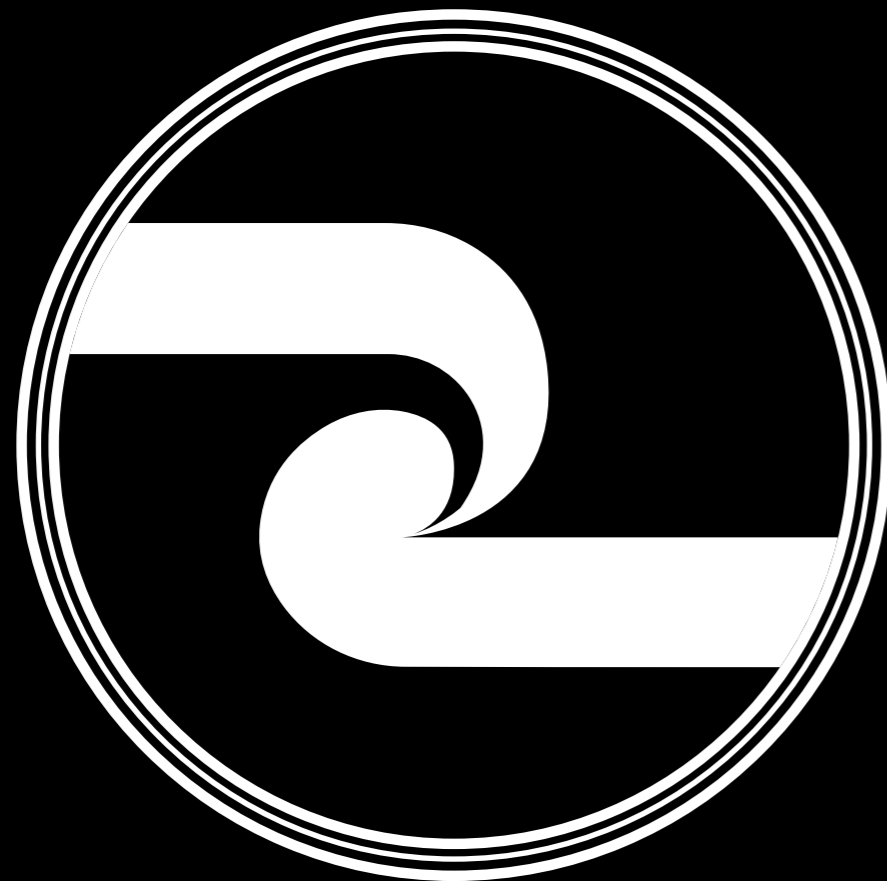
It is now April 2021, sadly Gail lost her husband in December, however her two mokopuna are out of hospital. The oldest has fully recovered while the youngest is slowly recuperating from her brain injury. This process will take some time and she is being heavily supported by her whānau, all parents included. Despite the stressful time and the loss of family, Gail is grateful.

Our marae and our own practices around tikanga (protocols) are solid. We have been raised around life and death and taking care of one another. We know where we are going to, we know where we have come from and we know what we are doing with another. This makes Māori strong, being able to be connected and always staying connected no matter what.



WOCA partners supporting whānau regardless of the weather, Waikato

TINO RANGATIRATANGA



Tino rangatiratanga is a key aspiration for Māori, and speaks to the notion of self-determination. In the face of COVID-19, tino rangatiratanga has been a guiding force for the Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency¹ partners and the communities they serve. Community leaders have stepped up to provide support and leadership during this time. Whānau (families) have also come together to support one another.

In the first story, Chief Executive Officer of Tui Ora, Hayden Wano shares his learnings during COVID-19, and the importance of being true to your values and principles as Māori. Taranaki is a strongly iwi (tribe)-driven region which is different from those providers operating in urban settings. Iwi are also in an economic development and post-settlement space. Hayden emphasised the importance of growing the capability of iwi, rangatiratanga (sovereignty) and their own capability to bring about transformational change for Aotearoa (New Zealand) and to ensure that benefit flows through to whānau. Hayden Wano ends with a hopeful note that each generation can make more aspirational steps and carve out newer pathways for their whānau and communities, where opportunity and aspiration lie. The system has to open its ears and eyes to what is actually going on in Māori communities and not look at Māori through a lens that is 20 or 30 years old.

In the second story, Materoa Mar - Upoko Whakarae (Chief Executive Officer) of Te Tihi o Ruahine says that everything they do as an organisation is focused on whānau and supporting them to be the best that they can be for themselves, their mokopuna (grandchildren) and their whānau. COVID-19 has given her organisation an opportunity to showcase how things can be done differently and more effectively as Māori. However, this also requires being strong in your resolve to ensure that the mana motuhake (self-determination) of whānau is at the forefront of everything they do. Only then can true rangatiratanga be achieved.

In the third and final story, Wheturangi Walsh-Tapiata, CEO, Te Oranganui Trust, Whanganui reflects on how the COVID-19 pandemic has seen iwi step up and take a lead role in the response across Aotearoa. Iwi are clear that they know how to do it for themselves and are not afraid to challenge the status quo. The Whānau Ora² approach, which emphasises whānau and community wellbeing, has been key to the success of iwi responses. Utilising existing Whānau Ora/iwi/ community structures and relationships to develop a coordinated response to COVID-19 was also pivotal in their pandemic response. This included setting up a centralised hub at Te Oranganui, which has been supported by iwi organisations across the rohe (region). As they look to the future, it is clear that iwi will continue to play a vital role in leading the way.

¹ The Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency is contracted by Te Puni Kōkiri (Ministry of Māori Development) to invest in initiatives and services for communities in the North Island. Commissioning Agencies work with their communities to determine the best ways to support their development.

² Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.

WE ARE HERE TO SERVE OUR WHĀNAU

REGION: TE TAI HAUĀURU
As told by Hayden Wano – June 2021

Ko Taranaki ko Pūtauaki ngā maunga
Ko Taranaki, Te Atiawa, Ngāti Tama,
Ngāti Awa ngā iwi
Ko Parihaka te papakāinga
Ko Hayden Wano taku ingoa
Ko te Pou Tu Kūrae o Tui Ora taku tūranga

The mountains are Taranaki and Pūtauaki
The tribes are Taranaki, Te Atiawa, Ngāti Tama,
Ngāti Awa
The communal home base is Parihaka
My name is Hayden Wano
My job position is CEO

BACKGROUND

I have been with Tui Ora, a kaupapa Māori (grounded in Māori values) health organisation and social services provider based in New Plymouth, Taranaki, since its inception, coming up to 22 years. In that time, Tui Ora has gone through four significant changes and we are going through another one as we speak. When I say changes, they have been quite significant strategic shifts. The organisation isn't the same one that it was at the beginning.

We started off in the hauora (health) space. We've expanded over time into the social service sector working with Government agencies, such as Te Puni Kōkiri and the Ministry of Social Development. When the Whānau Ora¹ policy came into being in 2010, we were highly aligned to that approach, so we've adopted it over the years to the extent now that we're fully embracing the Whānau Ora approach throughout our organisation. I wouldn't say that we've 'cracked it' but we've come a long way and we've still got some way to go.

The latest change relates in part to the fact that local iwi (tribes) are now in a post-Treaty of Waitangi settlement environment. Seven of the eight iwi are post-settlement and the eighth will cross the line any time soon. There is a very different mindset as some Treaty of Waitangi claims have been settled for over 20 years while some are more recent, so there are different levels of capability and capacity. There is a movement to a more shared vision which is about improving our lot for our people and for the ones to come.

It has been a natural change for Tui Ora to evolve its business to start partnering increasingly with iwi. We're on that journey in that we're working with Te Atiawa and Taranaki Iwi in the housing space and there are other initiatives in the pipeline.

Taranaki has a population of about 120,000 people, significantly more concentrated in North Taranaki around New Plymouth and the New Plymouth district. Then we have a very rural coastal area and a dispersed South Taranaki area, with two reasonably sized towns in Stratford and Hawera and other smaller ones in Ōpunake and Pātea. This means there is quite a concentration of population towards the north and then quite a rural spread elsewhere.

Through our Te Kawa Māro Alliance with Ngāti Ruanui and Ngā Ruahine, we have significant reach across our Māori population of just under 23,000 people. Typically, Tui Ora would see about 6,000 whānau (families) on an annual basis.

WHĀNAU ORA

The driver for embracing Whānau Ora is we know that we've been affected by colonisation. We know that mainstream systems do not work and have not worked for us. We've had policies going back nearly 30 years, firstly, to address inequalities and now to address inequities. We've not seen any sustainable improvement in that period. We know that by adopting the Whānau Ora approach there has been a positive impact on the lives of whānau – it's happened, the evidence is compelling. That is in spite of the fact that the policy has been a 'political football'. The reason why the Whānau Ora approach continues to endure is because it's making a difference.

Whānau Ora speaks to the fact that our people want to take on more responsibility and be enabled to do so. Te Tiriti o Waitangi has a significant role to play in terms of how iwi Māori and the Crown can partner. Many of our iwi and kaupapa [Māori] organisations have sophisticated structures and know how to manage things like risk. They have mature governance arrangements and, importantly, we're delivering on the ground alongside whānau. Government can have very different discussions with us these days. It all lends itself to a much more open environment that could be good for everybody – good for Aotearoa (New Zealand), good for our whānau.

Aotearoa is going to need us in the future, particularly when you consider our youthful population. In the next two decades, up to 30 percent of the workforce will be made up of Māori. It is a real opportunity to address some of the deeply entrenched inequities.

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Tui Ora leading the way, providing easier access to whānau with mobilised services.

COVID-19

Iwi took a leadership role during the COVID-19 lockdown and kaupapa [Māori] organisations such as ours responded quickly. We had a clear, common purpose and we demonstrated to those organisations that are often cynical about our capability that, without any doubt, they needed us. We were able to reach whānau that people were talking about potentially missing out and we were able to do that quickly. We were able to redeploy a lot of our kaimahi (staff) very quickly. It was helpful to have the brakes taken off by the system. We knew what needed to be done and we just got on and did it. That, to me, was a great outcome from a sad situation with COVID-19.

COVID-19 gave us an opportunity to demonstrate our capability. I also think that in an unexpected way, we gave ourselves a bit of a fright and it showed us what we were capable of too. Sometimes we can be our own greatest challenge, making things more complicated than they need to be. With the appropriate checks and balances in place we were able to set up information sharing arrangements which meant that our respective efforts across the region could be coordinated more effectively.

Taking on a regional leadership role required a different mindset – a different approach. Iwi responded by developing a regional recovery plan. It has been endorsed by Government agencies, by the district councils and the regional council. That outcome can be attributed to the fact that iwi stood up at a time when community leadership was found wanting.

We had the ability to deploy resources to our kaimahi who were out there, feet on the ground. It enabled them to get those resources to our people and into the right places. We had the ability to get resources from Wellington or Auckland out to those whānau, whether it was kai (food) packs, hygiene packs, testing or vaccination rollouts. We could do all of that in a very short space of time to ensure people got what they needed.

When it comes to the vaccination rollout, there has been an openness and a willingness at the District Health Board (DHB) level to look to us and our alliance partners to ensure our whānau have access to the information and services they need. In some respects, there has now been a reverting back to the way that things were before the COVID-19 Level 4 lockdown and, possibly in some cases, more so. We’re challenging that mindset in a constructive but firm way. It’s not a surprise that the system appears to be retrenching. Not only do we need to continue to be vigilant with COVID-19 but we are also facing the most significant reform in decades. The genie is out of the bottle, and there’s an opportunity for us to leverage so much more and take the conversation so much deeper and further than we’ve been able to do in the past. I can only see opportunity – yes, I can see some big risks as well.

SUCCESS

Māori have been successful in our response to COVID-19 because we’ve got a really clear understanding of ‘why’ we need to be doing what we do. We are here to serve our whānau. That’s a common vision we all share. People who work here really understand that. We also have a belief in ourselves that we know what the ‘how’ [of how we may best serve our whānau] could look like too. That requires us to work with and alongside whānau to determine what the ‘how’ should look like. That’s the piece that the system doesn’t naturally get. It thinks it knows the ‘why’ (of why we do this mahi (work) but doesn’t fully understand and it certainly doesn’t get the ‘how’ (of how it should be done).

When our kaimahi were being asked to do work they hadn’t done before, they all knew why they were doing it. They had permission to do what they felt was necessary on the ground. We weren’t being prescriptive. We were successful because Māori were left to determine how it should be done.

What also helped was that we had a well-developed plan for emergency responses. We stood up our emergency response group immediately and this was very effective in ensuring we were organised and responsive, particularly to the needs of our kaimahi.

The need to collaborate was best exemplified in our working with Ngā Iwi o Taranaki (the tribes of Taranaki). Sharing of information was underpinned with memoranda of understanding. Regular ‘zui’ or Zoom hui (meetings) as well as frequent and regular information updates meant that we were able to work from a ‘single point of truth’. We would often remind ourselves that we could not be accused of ‘over communicating’.

At the first lockdown, as an organisation we were about 80 percent prepared for people working in non-essential services to be able to work remotely. Soon after the lockdown was lifted, we were 100 percent ready to work remotely and now can seamlessly move into this way of working at a moment’s notice.

Technology has also changed the way our kaimahi and whānau interacted, accelerating the uptake of the use of these tools.

We have our own unique place in Taranaki and every region will say that. The key is that you can’t make one size fit all. We were able to weave ourselves into our communities and ensure that we did what was needed.

When we were in planning sessions with the likes of the Ministry of Health or DHB, we were advocating strongly for our people – for our most vulnerable – because we know our history, that our people had suffered a terrible toll in the past. We had to ensure access to the appropriate equipment and supplies. That wasn’t always an easy conversation to have and we had to be absolutely on point and at times tenacious. It was critical that we took on an advocacy role to be able to talk into that policy space.

We have our own unique place in Taranaki and every region will say that. The key is that you can’t make one size fit all. We were able to weave ourselves into our communities and ensure that we did what was needed.

CONCLUSION

Taranaki is a strongly iwi-driven region which is different to many of our whanaunga (relatives) in urban settings. Iwi are in an economic development and post-settlement space. We have to look to the growing capability of iwi leadership and to our own capability as a kaupapa [Māori] organisation to bring about transformational change for Aotearoa and to ensure that benefit flows through to whānau.

The system has to open its ears and eyes to what is actually going on and not look at us through a lens that is 20 or 30 years old. If we want to see a transformed system, look to us as being a key player in what that can look like in all aspects of society. We are showing the way. We will bring a Whānau Ora lens to that.

It’s only on the backs of all those people that have gone before us that we can achieve this. It’s our duty to actually continue on with that kaupapa (objective). For each generation, we hope and aspire that we leave less of that work behind for others, when it is our time to go. That each generation, therefore, can make more aspirational steps and carve out newer pathways for our people, where opportunity and aspiration lie.

When our kaimahi were being asked to do work they hadn’t done before, they all knew why they were doing it. They had permission to do what they felt was necessary on the ground. We weren’t being prescriptive. We were successful because Māori were left to determine how it should be done.



THEY NEEDED US MORE THAN WE NEEDED THEM: ASSERTING MANA MOTUHAKE IN THE BUREAUCRACY OF THE PANDEMIC

REGION: TE TAI HAUĀURU
As told by Materoa Mar – June 2021

The documentary *Ka Puta Ka Ora* captures the magic created by Te Tihi o Ruahine (Te Tihi) during COVID-19 and features stories from whānau (families), kaimahi (staff), iwi (tribal) leaders and Government agencies that highlight how the rohe (region) flourished during this time. It recognises that the efforts of many contributed to this success.

The *kōrero* (discussion) which follows with Te Tihi’s Upoko Whakarae (Chief Executive Officer), Materoa Mar, complements these efforts, acknowledging that many have created this magic.

INTRODUCTION

Ko au te uri ō Ngāti Porou, Te Whānau a Ruataupare ki Tokomaru Bay i te taha o tōku kuia. I te taha o tōku koroua ko Ngāti Whātua uri ahau me Ngā Puhi tonu.

I am a descendant of the people of Ngāti Porou, Te Whānau a Ruataupare ki Tokomaru Bay on my grandmother’s side. I am a descendant of the people of Ngāti Whātua and Ngā Puhi on my grandfather’s side.

But I’ve lived here most of my life.

Te Tihi is the Whānau Ora¹ alliance alongside Raukawa Whānau Ora. It’s made up of nine iwi (tribes) and Māori voluntary and non-Governmental organisations and has come together under the umbrella of Whānau Ora. It has a large geographical area. The rohe which it operates within runs from Pekapeka out across to the Rangitikei, then up to the valley, the seven northern hapū (subtribes), back around into Palmerston North. It also takes in Shannon and Foxton and then across to the Tararua, the outreaches of Norsewood and down to Eketāhuna.

In 2010, the leadership of the alliance had the foresight to look at how they could collectively unify to improve the opportunities for whānau in the rohe. At that stage, there were eight parties. They formed an alliance and then over time Muaūpoko Tribal Authority joined and we became our own entity in about 2016. Up until then, we were hosted by the Primary Health Organisation (PHO) originally known as Central PHO and now known as THINK Hauora.

I’ve been in my role pretty much since the alliance started. The relationships in the rohe are outstanding. My role is Upoko Whakarae which entails supporting the aspirations of the alliance governance and making those things come to fruition. It includes always looking for where there is opportunity to strengthen relationships that will provide better opportunities for whānau to lead solutions for themselves. It also involves fostering and allowing innovation to grow and flourish.

COVID-19

We are tight in our relationships, even though at times those relationships have challenges, which is natural. When required we will come together strongly and form the basis of what is needed to execute action. There’s nothing like a common enemy – COVID-19!

I’d say that as Māori we still have in our living memory the Spanish flu and the catastrophic circumstances that occurred for us. Those stories, that *kōrero*, were quite fundamental to our response. We’re very adaptable and we understand the importance of whakapapa (lineage). We understand the role of being the kaitiaki (guardian) for that into the future. Those things helped to mobilise us quite quickly.

For Te Tihi, our role was being ‘the hub’ of the wheel and ‘the spokes’ were all the iwi Māori partners, not only of the alliance, but also including Raukawa, Ngāti Kahungunu and several other Māori NGOs in the rohe. We have great relationships and are really tight so we could respond quickly, so much so that every day at two o’clock we would have Zoom meetings. There were 15 or so on the Zoom from around the rohe. We also pulled in senior Māori staff who were working in the police, council, the emergency response team, or the District Health Board (DHB) because these are our usual relationships. We could hear what was happening in other areas and also respond quickly as required. If there were partners who wanted other things then we would take direction from that and see what we could do about facilitating those efforts.

¹ Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.

SUCCESS

I think we got some wins during that period but that doesn’t mean that we won’t have to guard against Government agencies and others returning to their common behaviours which take away from Māori mana motuhake (self-determination). I think these entities realised that they couldn’t achieve those things without Māori, they had to drop some of their bureaucratic processes and needed us more than we needed them in a way. But they are creatures of habit.

We’ve seen that those in the bureaucracy of Government agencies and others can change for the better. So our expectation of them is now greater, even though it is challenging for them to continue this changed behavior. One of the things about institutionalised racism is that the people who are perpetuating it don’t recognise it. They quickly revert to their previous behaviour, with all the structural barriers and ways of operating that impose on whānau, instead of allowing the mana motuhake of whānau to flourish, especially if there are issues about money. As soon as money is involved, the power dynamic changes; the bureaucrats want to audit more, they want to reach in and be very operational.

We’ve got to be quite strong and push back against the agencies to the point where I think they need us more than we need them. We do have to say sometimes, ‘No, we’re not going to take that contract. We don’t want it that way. If you want to look at outcomes then you need to work with us to unify what the efforts will look like.’ The Government and other Crown-related agencies talk about wanting to improve outcomes for Māori, but they only want to improve outcomes for Māori on the basis of what they believe the solutions to be. That links to what they believe is evidence – they only believe evidence from a Western paradigm and that needs to change.

The Māori Health Authority is an opportunity to showcase and take more leadership on the use of a te ao Māori (Māori worldview) approach and indigenous evidence to inform and develop some of the solutions. But also, most importantly, to have the voice of whānau front and centre. We know what we need as Māori. We can be us, and [the Crown] can be them. We don’t want to be them but they sure as anything sometimes want to be us.

In terms of moving forward, our whakaaro (understanding) is no longer a master-servant relationship [between Māori and the Crown]. From now on, it’s a more permissive environment and a more equal form of partnership, taking the lead from ‘by Māori for Māori’ solutions. I think those things, which are all pieces of the pie, improve our opportunities for mana motuhake and rangatiratanga (sovereignty). That’s how we have been operating – we maintain our own mana (status). I guess some non-Māori are slightly fearful of this because the power dynamic has changed, but I think there has to be a shift in power.

CONCLUSION

We’ve been quite progressive in the way we’ve advanced over a number of years now. Our positioning prior to COVID-19 allowed us to even take matters a step further. Things like: ‘How could you have a fiscal envelope from a Crown agency, as opposed to a contract that denigrates our self-sovereignty?’ Then developing the outcomes against Whānau Ora and delivering on those. We’ve been doing some work looking at that for the iwi and Māori space, but also getting the resources more into the hands of whānau. The other part is creating spaces where whānau are able to rejuvenate, revitalise and heal. We can’t heal on the back of patchy services. We need spaces where we can deal with some of the deeper issues that have occurred over generations for us to move into a different space. Only we can do that.

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HANDLING THE EMERGENCY RESPONSE IN THE WHANGANUI REGION

REGION: TE TAI HAUĀURU
As told by Wheturangi Walsh-Tapiata – May 2021

He ki tēnei nō te Te Tai Hauāuru. Ko Taranaki tūturu, ko Te Atiawa, ko Ngā Rauru ko Ngāti Ruanui ōku iwi. A tae au ki Te Awa Tupua, he uri anō ahau nō Ngāti Rangī, nō Te Āti Haunui-a-Pāpārangi. I tupu ake au kei raro i ngā pae maunga o Tararua, he uri anō ahau nō Ngāti Kauwhata nō Ngāti Wehiwehi kei raro i te korowai o Ngāti Raukawa au ki te tonga.

In Taranaki my iwi (tribe) connections are Taranaki tūturu (strong links and devotion): Te Atiawa, Ngāti Ruanui. Ngā Rauru. From the mountain to the sea, I also hail from Ngāti Rangī under Koro Ruapehu and Te Āti Haunui-a-Pāpārangi along the Whanganui river. I spent much of my upbringing in and around Ōtaki and I also whakapapa (descend) from Ngāti Kauwhata and Ngāti Wehiwehi under the korowai (cloak) of Ngāti Raukawa au ki te Tonga (to the south).

INTRODUCTION

My name is Wheturangi Walsh-Tapiata and I’m the Mātaiwhetū or the Chief Executive Officer of Te Oranganui Trust. My partner is also from Ngāti Porou and Te Arawa, so that’s where the Tapiata name comes from.

Te Oranganui is nearly 30 years old. It’s an iwi (tribal)-governed health and social service organisation primarily created, evolved and grown out of the health sector – but it also has had some social services contracts. We’re governed by four iwi entities: Ngā Rauru (South Taranaki), Tama Ūpoko and Tūpoho (the middle and the lower reaches of the Whanganui river), and Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa (South Rangitikei). I have a group of staff of about 170 and we operate in multiple diverse spaces.

We have two medical clinics, mental health and addiction services, disability support services, Family Start and Tamariki Ora, Whānau Ora¹, Healthy Families and we also work in Whanganui Prison. There is certainly a diverse range of areas and, of course, we deliver right throughout the wider Whanganui region.

WHĀNAU ORA: TE PŪTAKE O NGĀ KAIMAHI KATOĀ (THE FOUNDATION OF OUR WORKFORCE)

We often say that, given that Whaea Tariana [Turia]² was one of our previous chief executives, Whānau Ora is something that evolved and got nurtured from Te Oranganui. While we have Whānau Ora specific contracts, we fundamentally believe as an organisation that all of us should be working from a Whānau Ora space. Therefore, in all the reporting that comes to me, my managers talk about how it is that they reflect Whānau Ora in their work or what is a Whānau Ora story that’s occurred in their sector that also aligns with the Whānau Ora Outcome Goals.

Yes, we do have Whānau Ora specific contracts and we’ve had that for a number of years ever since Whānau Ora has been around. We also have Whānau Ora contracts with our District Health Board (DHB) that are of a similar size to the contract that we have with the Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency³ (WOCA). More recently we have created an alliance with Te Tihi o Ruahine Whānau Ora (Te Tihi) and we have a Kainga Whānau Ora contract with them.

Te pūtake o ngā kaimahi katoa. So the foundation of all of the work that we do is Whānau Ora. We’re not a lead agency but we have always had Whānau Ora contracts and have always been included in a lot of conversations around Whānau Ora with WOCA.

GATHERING A RESPONSE ON THE BRINK OF THE PANDEMIC

When COVID-19 started to gain prominence internationally and we started to increasingly see it in the media, the iwi leaders of this rohe (region), Te Ranga Tupua⁴, started to gather and to recognise that epidemics and pandemics have often been very detrimental for Māori in our rohe with significant Māori populations having passed or died. And we still had vivid indicators of that in terms of some of the settlements up the Whanganui River in particular, where stories are told about whole communities who died during the Spanish flu epidemic and were buried in mass graves. All of that still has heartfelt significance for us as Māori within this region.

The iwi chairs felt that they should start meeting to consider what their response should be. At the same time, as a health and social services organisation Te Oranganui was preparing itself. Probably the most significant indicator of this to begin with was updating our business continuity plans and ensuring we became aware of who would be essential workers.

So, there were two streams that were going on, the iwi response and Te Oranganui response, including how we were linked to each other. Because COVID-19 was seen as a health kaupapa (policy), the iwi chairs immediately involved Te Oranganui along with other iwi health and social service providers to be a part of the conversations in terms of how we should be reacting, how we should be supporting our people in our rohe – and this was before Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced the lockdown.



Te Tai Hauāuru clinical kaimahi mobilised the flu vaccine to vulnerable whānau during the COVID-19 response.

There were a few critical factors that were really being discussed in the beginning. I can think of three:

- 1. iwi roadblocks
- 2. tangihanga (funeral) policy
- 3. creating a central hub.

IWI ROADBLOCKS

Our iwi of Ngāti Rangī, Ngāti Uenuku in the north, found that people were coming back from overseas and they were coming to the likes of Ohakune – small communities – to stay in their holiday bach. So Ngāti Rangī were quite vocal about wanting to ensure that there wasn’t an excessive group of people coming into their communities and potentially bringing COVID-19 with them. Some of the early COVID-19 numbers in our region were those people coming back from overseas. There were a lot of discussions by those particular iwi in the north, as well as discussions by other communities about how to protect themselves. For example, Rātana (Māori religion) made a decision to set up a roadblock and if you drove past on the main highway you would see a really big sign basically saying that Rātana as a whole community was only open to those who really needed to go into that community and other than that that they were in a lockdown space. The other community was Kaiwhaiki in the lower parts of the river. They too decided to set up roadblocks. A further roadblock was set up on the Whanganui River because, believe it or not, we still had tourists thinking that they could travel up our river. Of course, that meant that we needed to have good relationships with the police, which I think we did, because it meant that police were able to effectively support those communities. In the case of Kaiwhaiki, it meant as well that they wanted to protect their kaumātua (elders) and whānau (family), and so they also chose to establish a number of kaiāwhina (assistants) who were the only people in that lockdown who could go out and get groceries and prescriptions and address any other issues.

TANGIHANGA POLICY

The second issue that we started having discussions around was the tangihanga policy. I think that our iwi chairs were influenced by what was happening and what was coming out of the National Iwi Chair’s space, but then they were having to consider what that might mean locally. We were also lucky because one of our relations was Che Wilson, president Te Pāti Māori (The Māori Party). He was very active nationally in trying to give advice around the tangihanga policy and would regularly hook in with our iwi chairs to look at how we might respond. That was very, very important for iwi, for marae (communal meeting place), for whānau because this far down the track we’re hearing some very, very sad stories of whānau members who passed away and how these restrictions affected them. Local key relationships with the Whanganui District Health Board (DHB) and the funeral directors also occurred.

¹ Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.
² The Honourable Dame Tariana Turia was the first Minister for Whānau Ora between 8 April 2010 – 8 October 2014. Turia was voted in as Labour MP for the Māori electorate of Te Tai Hauāuru in 2002, then became the list MP for the same region between 2005 - 2014 under Te Pāti Māori (Māori Party).
³ The Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency is contracted by Te Puni Kōkiri (Ministry of Māori Development) to invest in initiatives and services for communities in the North Island. Commissioning Agencies work with their communities to determine the best ways to support their development.
⁴ A confederation of all of the different entities from South Taranaki through to Taumaurunui and down to Bulls and every other iwi entity in between. Composed of iwi Chairs from the Rangitikei, Ruapehu, Whanganui and South Taranaki regions.



SETTING UP A CENTRAL HUB ON BEHALF OF COLLECTIVE IWI

The third significant conversation was how we were going to support our people. Whanganui has often been very responsive as a collective group of iwi to floods which means iwi have had to come together collectively and to consider how it is that we support each other and our own. What was different on this occasion was of course that it was a health kaupapa where we all had to be off the streets. In some sense the iwi responded similarly, because I can remember the weekend before the national lockdown was announced, the iwi chair said to me, ‘Previously Te Oranganui has been the central site in which we have coordinated our iwi efforts, and we would like to ask you to do that again.’ So, for me, I had a few days to consider how our organisation would be a central hub. Not the only hub – because iwi had their own hubs – but a central hub on behalf of the collective of iwi chairs.

I had a couple of managers who weren’t required day-to-day in terms of essential services and they had previously led this iwi response during the time of the floods. So, they hooked into action and brought with them a group of staff. The staff who operated the hub came from across the organisation. There was a significant group of them from our Whānau Ora team.

They had strong networks in the various communities that they work in. For those who weren’t in the hub they would be proactively working in their communities and connecting back to the hub. These kaimahi (staff) were quite critical in terms of contacting key whānau. Because the other thing that happened during that time was, we had whānau that returned home from other parts of the country. They weren’t the normal whānau that we would work with, but we had to become aware that they had returned home.

The announcement of a national lockdown happened on the 23 March 2020 and by that time we had already been tasked with setting up the iwi hub here at Te Oranganui.

A LOWER AGE LIMIT FOR KAUMĀTUA AND KUIA

When Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern initially announced the lockdown she wanted all of those over the age of 70 to not be at work, but to be working from home. Our iwi made a collective decision that while that was good for the general population – given the fact that our people are those who often have long-term conditions, who are often impacted most critically by the likes of flu or anything that is going around in our community – they recommended that all iwi-Māori organisations and Māori ensure that those aged 60 and over stay at home. So that was another critical decision that Te Oranganui had to take on board because as an iwi organisation we had to be seen to be supporting our iwi chairs, but we have an aging workforce so we had to consider those who are aged 60 and over, myself included.

We have quite a strong relationship with our DHB and our Primary Health Organisation (PHO). Right from the very beginning they asked us if we wanted to set up a Community Based Assessment Centre (CBAC). We became the only permanent iwi CBAC in our DHB rohe. Other iwi had pop-ups, other iwi aligned with the DHB and we supported them with these as well, but we were the only iwi organisation that had a permanent CBAC. The CBAC and the iwi pop-up clinics, particularly in our remote river communities, required a lot of organisation on our part.

ACHIEVING THE HIGHEST RATE OF INFLUENZA (FLU) VACCINATIONS IN THE COUNTRY

Leading up to the lockdown, we saw people having their flu vaccinations as a form of immunity. We had quite a strong flu immunisation plan and when I say we, not only Te Oranganui and other iwi-Māori providers, but also in conjunction with the DHB and the Whanganui Regional Health Network (WRHN) our PHO. We pushed hard in terms of encouraging people to have their flu vaccinations. We had pop-up clinics in very remote communities up the river, all our river systems, into our small rural towns. Two things our communities were very, very grateful for was that we went to them, because they’re used to having to get into a car and travelling for an hour or two to Whanganui. The second is that resulted in the Whanganui DHB rohe having the highest rate of vaccinations across the country. I think it was something like 72 percent, but in addition our Māori rates were in the 80th percentile so we feel that we did quite a good job in that space.

WHĀNAU ORA HYGIENE PACKS

The awesome thing about our pop-up clinics for flu and COVID-19, as well as our hub, was that we were able to distribute our Whānau Ora hygiene packs to our communities. Te Oranganui received those for the southern part of the rohe and Ngāti Rangī received them in the north. Both of us were the two Whānau Ora providers in our rohe. We also added kai (food) packs and pēpi (baby) packs and worked with the other iwi in our rohe, as well as having a phone system that enabled us to ask whānau how they were doing and whether they needed additional support. When we had the pop-up clinics people could get a health check, have a range of immunisations and be given a hygiene pack if they needed. Our whānau indicated that they were really grateful for all of this support. I would like to acknowledge WOCA in this context.

We were absolutely inundated with hygiene packs. We had the army initially driving into town with their trucks carrying all the boxes. We didn’t have the space here in town to store them. Eventually, we ended up having to get self-storage units. Nonetheless, those were a critical part of the koha (donations) alongside the kai parcels that we were able to give out to all the whānau that we work with. When I say we, not just Te Oranganui, we had relationships with all the other iwi who were able to say, ‘Can I have 50 packs this week, can I have 20 packs next week?’ That is something that maybe not every other organisation or entity will realise, that that is a powerful example of how Whānau Ora were able to support our rohe. Nā reira, ngā mihi ki a rātou (So, sincere thanks to them.)

CONTINUING THE COLLABORATION IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

Our iwi leaders are adamant that we’re not out of COVID-19. So even though the Alert Levels move from 4 to 3 to 2 to 1, our iwi leaders have often been the drivers of reminding our wider community that COVID-19 is still with us. All it needs is for one person to start the community spread and that will most likely impact our iwi communities. A good example of that is the New Zealand Masters Games held in Whanganui in February 2021; it was our iwi leaders who reminded the organisers that we needed to be diligent around things like keeping track of where we’ve been with QR codes⁵ and around social distancing. So, I think that our iwi leaders continue to show leadership and I’m incredibly proud that our response is an iwi response, not necessarily a community response. What we as iwi would say is: In a time of need we didn’t wait around, we just stood up and got going, and got moving.

PREPARING FOR A NEW KEY KAUPAPA (INITIATIVE): COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

Now what we have, of course, as a part of the ongoing concerns around COVID-19 is the whole issue around vaccinations. It is quite a critical kaupapa.

Te Oranganui are again the only iwi provider rolling out the vaccinations in our rohe. We’re the only significantly big provider that has nurses etc that can undertake the vaccination training and deliver vaccinations. So, we’ve got quite a big plan at the moment around the roll out of the vaccinations.

What we have said – and I’ve heard other iwi say it around the country – is that you might say we’re going to roll out to the border workers, the health workers, to all those over 65 – but as an iwi organisation Te Oranganui are saying we’re committed to giving vaccinations to whānau. If that means that a whole whānau turn up for a vaccination we will vaccinate them if they’re 16 years old and over. In our remote communities we can’t vaccinate the 65-year-old, then return to vaccinate the 50-year-old and then return to vaccinate the 20-year-old. We must vaccinate them in groups. ‘We’ve been quite strong in terms of our position with the DHB and the Ministry of Health in terms of saying we will vaccinate whānau. If a whānau unit comes to us we will vaccinate them’.

COMMUNICATIONS

Of course, we have a really big piece of work around communications because we do have our population who are still quite skeptical about having vaccinations. One of the areas we are going to suggest is to consider a message of Tiaki Tō Whānau (Protect Your Whānau). What I mean by that is, if you have your vaccination, you contribute to ensuring that your mokopuna (grandchildren), your tamariki (children) and your whānau are safe.

Te Ranga Tupua iwi chairs have re-instigated their communications (comms) committee with a view to considering what are the comms that we need to be sending out to our people. And in addition, what are our messages, not the MoH messages because we know that when you are bombarded by a whole lot of information quite often you go to a key source. We have contracted a local group to lead our vaccinations, including the comms. They know the community, they have the networks and they are driving information hui (meeting) first up to answer all of the questions that whānau have before confirming the clinic, in our kura (schools) at our marae and in our small remote communities.

What the lockdown told us is that quite often our whānau look for our messages, look for our videos, look for our pamphlets. So, we’re trying to maintain that as we move into the vaccination space. We are tasked with gathering all of the information and then ensuring that we present it in a way that our people will understand.

We created a survey to see whether staff were yes, no or undecided [on getting vaccinated] and what we found was that we had a significant group that were undecided. So, we used all of their questions and we formulated that into a pamphlet where we listed facts and myths, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) and key info around the vaccination itself. We’ve even got a little bit of a word search in te reo Māori as well as te reo Pākehā. We’ve put that out on our Facebook page and our email lists throughout the organisation and then what’s happened more recently is the DHB has asked if they can look at that and consider how they could use it in terms of their distribution out to our communities.

⁵ “Under all alert levels, businesses and services must display the official NZ COVID Tracer QR code posters wherever customers or visitors enter the premises.” <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/COVID-19-novel-coronavirus/COVID-19-resources-and-tools/nz-COVID-tracer-app/nz-COVID-tracer-qr-codes>



ON THE LOCAL RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Each iwi entity stood up on their own. Each had a COVID-19 response plan. In addition, we all came together to look at how we could support each other and how we could make this work right across our geographical region.

I think Māori invented Zui (Zoom meetings) because it was almost from the time that we woke up to the time we went to sleep at night we had hui going via Zoom. I do think that as we moved along in the COVID-19 lockdown we recognised that maybe we had too many of those and we needed to reconsider whether we needed to have all of them.

‘COVID required us to work together. We recognised significant gaps, but we also recognised significant strengths about the way in which we were operating.’

When we first started, there would be 50 or 60 people in the iwi chair forums. Very soon thereafter the iwi chairs recognised that the forum just needed to be an iwi chair’s forum. They would invite the DHB, the police or the local Mayor or whoever if they needed to have a conversation with them. They also created a technical advisory group, which consisted of all the General Managers or the CEOs of the iwi organisations. This group worked more closely at the ground level but fed up to the iwi chairs.

The other thing that was pretty awesome was the way in which iwi – mainly those who had already settled – gave a koha to start up the central hub. We didn’t wait for the Government. The only Government funding we received initially was from Te Puni Kōkiri (TPK)⁶. By the end of the lockdown, we were also working with the Whanganui District Council who were able to refund a lot of the spending that we had made – particularly around the purchase of kai.

The fact that iwi had their own responses – we had eleven different iwi groupings and they all had their own responses. They also had whakapapa (lineage) relationships with the iwi next door and they were able to have those conversations. But over and on top of that, to have Te Ranga Tupua and the centralised hub which just happened to be based at Te Oranganui was definitely a plus. Plus, plus, plus all the way around.

MANA MOTUHAKE O TE TAI HAUĀURU

Iwi are very clear that we know how to do it for ourselves. If that means moving forward that we don’t always see eye to eye with each other – the other being whatever group or entity comes and has a conversation with us – then we will critically consider what our iwi position is. Again, that’s what I’ve been seeing in terms of iwi leadership and that’s something that I’ve come to admire about the iwi leadership in this rohe.

At this point, the response from Te Oranganui has purely been with our DHB, and they’ve actually supported us because they know the geography of the region that we cover and that we’re going to have to think about different ways in which to do this. They know that when we look back to the flu vaccination initiative last year, that’s what resulted in us having really high numbers. We used our Whānau Ora approach to reach out to our communities. Our kaimahi would go and pick whānau up and bring them to the pop-up clinic, to have their medication, to the supermarket – whatever was required. We know that we have a methodology and a practice that works.

We remind the DHB about their Treaty obligations, their pro-equity stance and to be honest I think we have some very good, strong voices in that space. While they might say this is how we want to do it, we say well, yes but, in our communities, this is how we want to do it and we know that that’s effective. So, we’ve had quite a good relationship in terms of working together.

As a rohe we’re not a group of iwi that are boastful about ourselves. We look initially to ourselves, albeit we also like to be informed by what is happening in terms of examples outside of our rohe, in terms of what’s happening with other iwi and in terms of what’s happening nationally. Fundamentally, at the end of the day, I think we had to come up with our own response to ensure that that worked for us, and I think we did that well.

Ko te pae tawhiti whāia kia tata, Ko te pae tata whakamaua kia tina. Seek out the distant horizons while cherishing those achievements at hand.

⁶ The Ministry of Māori Development in Aotearoa, New Zealand.



THE BONDS OF TE ARAWA HOLD STRONG AND TRUE

REGION: WAIARIKI As told by Jenny Kaka-Scott – May 2021



Ko Horohoro rāua ko Tawhiuau aku maunga Ko Pokaitu rāua ko Rangitaiki aku awa Ko Kearoa rāua ko Rangitahi aku marae Ko Ngāti Kearoa Ngāti Tuara Ngāti Hui aku hapū Ko Ngāti Manawa te iwi Ko Te Arawa rāua ko Mataatua aku waka

My mountains are Horohoro and Tawhiuau My rivers are Pokaitu and Rangitaiki My meeting places are Kearoa and Rangitahi My subtribes are Ngāti Kearoa, Ngāti Tuara, Ngāti Hui The tribe is Ngāti Manawa My canoes are Te Arawa and Mataatua

BACKGROUND

At Healthy Families Rotorua, we work alongside the community to think differently about the underlying causes of poor health and the conditions that hold problems in place. We take a systems perspective which locates us right in preventative health rather than at the bottom of the cliff. Healthy Families Rotorua has an explicit focus on improving Māori health and reducing inequity for groups at increased risk of preventable chronic diseases: we call this ‘holding a position in Māori System Regeneration’.

The Healthy Families approach sees us partner with community leaders to create local solutions, driving sustainable change that is owned by community – not delivered to community. Healthy Families Rotorua is led by Te Arawa Whānau Ora, uniting with the vision to see healthy, active and connected communities in Rotorua. I’m the manager for Healthy Families Rotorua and I lead a team who are building local capability in social innovation methodology and co-design solutions.

COVID-19

Like the rest of the country, we only got a few days’ notice of lockdown and so we did a quick pivot and put together a rapid response. The Healthy Families team was redeployed into the Whānau Ora’ space to assist with the heavy lifting of delivering support and safety to whānau (family).

During the lockdown, agencies, support services and leadership all had to be reshaped and refitted for a new purpose. The idea that a single entity should in some way umbrella the collaboration of local efforts was advanced by Te Puni Kōkiri (Ministry of Māori Development). Te Arawa Whānau Ora was suggested, however a leadership transition at the time made that difficult. Ultimately Te Arawa Lakes Trust put its hand up to provide the invisible infrastructure instead.

Almost immediately the marae (communal meeting places), hapū (subtribes) and iwi (tribes) response kicked in and people and resources were redirected to the areas of greatest need: koeke (elders), vulnerable whānau, all whānau, and whole of community. Overnight, everyone wrapped their head around Zoom technology and protocols and a virtual network of interconnected people and entities was born.

Whānau became authorised essential workers able to deliver to, check in with, and serve whānau across the rohe (region). Nothing beats kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face), not even Zoom and FaceTime.

Together Te Arawa Whānau Ora and Healthy Families Rotorua handled the distribution of cleaning and hygiene products transported to us weekly from the Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency² (WOCA). It was a massive task. At the end of it, we’d packed, allocated and delivered something like 30,000 boxes to whānau across the Waiariki rohe. It was enormous but we didn’t do it on our own of course.

We did a stocktake to keep aware of kaimahi (staff) wellbeing. We knew which whānau had kids and which ones were in the vulnerable category because we’ve got quite a few elderly in our organisation. Some of our kuia (elders – women) were put straight into working from home, but did a lot of the calls in the call centre. By the end of it, the kaimahi were pretty exhausted. They were working past 11 to 12 hours sometimes. They were huge days and there was a lot of pressure to deliver well, on time and to where the greatest need was.

¹ Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.
² The Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency is contracted by Te Puni Kōkiri (Ministry of Māori Development) to invest in initiatives and services for communities in the North Island. Commissioning Agencies work with their communities to determine the best ways to support their development.





Healthy Families Rotorua team, packing hygiene boxes together at the Rotorua Lakes Council.

The biggest pressure for me in distribution was the data collection. It was almost a manual track and trace system in the beginning. It's quite different now but we didn't really understand COVID-19 then. We created a system where each box was numbered so that if it was necessary, we could track back to who packed the box, who delivered it, who did this, that and the other thing. Gathering so much data at pace from your makeshift bedroom office – one computer, one screen – is hideous. Creating systems now that are easy to pick up and run with (should we need to do this all again) is ideal and a way we can keep kaimahi from unnecessary burnout.

We need to learn the lessons and adapt. In the end, HealthShare created a tool for us whereby whānau could register themselves for a pack and input their own data. Each morning and evening, they would send us a spreadsheet of who had registered themselves and where we needed to deliver. It was a fantastic collaboration that actually made it possible for me to deliver thousands of packs a week without causing a bottleneck in the packhouse. It also meant we had a better, more equitable way to distribute resources across the community. What was really positive was how Waiariki worked really well together; COVID-19 brought us closer together as a Whānau Ora region.

If you're a systems change innovation unit like Healthy Families, the COVID-19 lockdown was actually the perfect time to be innovative, to be creating new systems. The Rotorua team didn't actually have that experience like the rest of Healthy Families did. The other sites did some amazing things during lockdown because they had a massive online audience all over the country they were able to reach out to.

SUCCESS

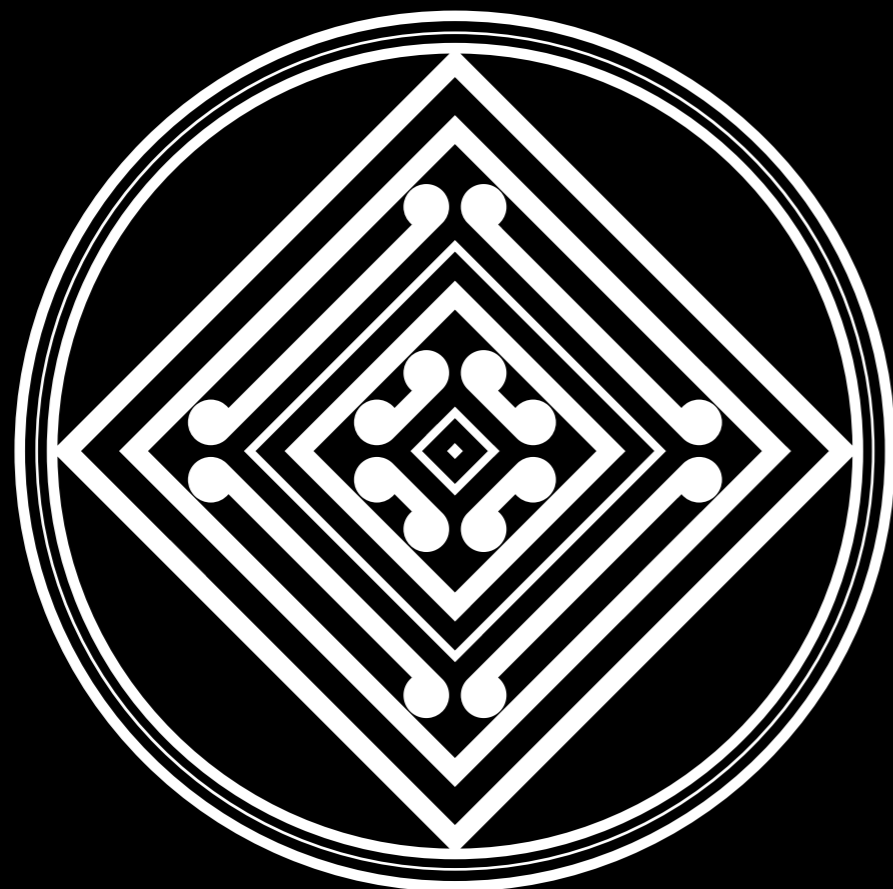
We've been successful with our response to the pandemic, tuatahi (first), because of our whakapapa (lineage) and tuarua (second), our leadership. There was an abundance of leadership at every juncture of decision making, planning and delivery. The relationships, the networks and the collectives are already there, they're always there, and in Te Arawa, those relationships are really very intimate. Although we might fight it out on the Matatini stage [at Te Matatini Kapa Haka Nationals], when it comes to a common threat, the bonds of Te Arawa hold strong and true. Our kaumātua (elders) in this instance, were the really vulnerable group, so there was no question that everyone should do their very best to ensure their safety and wellbeing was protected, and then the safety and wellbeing of all whānau. The hapū and iwi network that I talk about exists all the time, it's active all the time, it's just not necessarily activated in an iwi-wide way all the time. But we know it's there.

Like most things, you learn most of your lessons when times are tough and during adversity. Fear of the unknown drove a lot of emotion throughout the first COVID-19 lockdown, yet fluid, workable systems were created and the people showed courage, intelligence and resilience – but most of all aroha (love) and manaaki (generosity and care) for and towards each other – and that's really the secret to it all.

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MANAAKITANGA



Manaakitanga is the principle of caring for others, and it's something that was seen in action time and time again during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first story comes from Tessa Robin, Operations Manager, Te Kupenga Hauora Ahuriri, and outlines the myriad ways manaakitanga was expressed in their community. One way was in the response from whānau (families) and the gratitude that kaimahi (staff) received. Another was the way in which kaimahi went 'over and above' to support those in need – whether that be COVID-19 related or not. Another learning was taken from supporting whānau living in emergency accommodation, such as how to provide kai (food) that was easy to prepare and cook. Moreover, the way in which different organisations worked together to support whānau was yet another key learning – with Te Kupenga Hauora Ahuriri utilising their relationships to advocate for change and improve outcomes.

The second story is about how Whānau Ora¹ has assisted Jess in her personal journey and how her whole outlook has changed for the better. Jess' story highlights the importance of seeking help and support, especially during difficult times such as COVID-19. Thanks to the manaakitanga provided by Tania Edwards – a Kaiārahi (Whānau Ora Navigator) at Te Tai Tokerau, Te Hauora O Ngā Puhi – Jess has learnt how to better manage her emotions and reactions, which has had a positive impact on her whole family. COVID-19 was a challenging time for Jess, but she feels that she and her family have come out of it stronger than ever before. Thanks to the support of Whānau Ora, Jess has been able to turn her life around and is now helping others who are going through tough times.

The third story is about Alice, a mother living in the Far North who had faced many personal challenges prior to COVID-19. However, through the support of Whānau Ora Navigator Mary, Alice has regained her confidence and belief in herself and reignited her passion for dance, which would eventually lead to her becoming a Zumba dance instructor. Alice's story is just one example of the amazing manaakitanga that takes place within Whānau Ora every day. Alice has used her passion for dance to stay connected with her community and help others connect with their wellbeing. When COVID-19 hit New Zealand in early 2020, Alice was also able to quickly adapt her teaching methods to deliver live online classes. This has helped her on her journey to wellness and enabled her to manaaki (show respect, generosity and care for others) her community through her love and passion for dance.

The fourth story, shared by George Kingi, captures the moments of manaakitanga throughout the COVID-19 pandemic by employees of Te Whānau o Waipareira. It also reflects on the re-engineering of the organisation and how this affected employees and teams. In his respect, manaakitanga became even more important to help everyone through these changes.

The fifth and final story in this section is from the Whānau Direct team at Te Whānau o Waipareira, and provides a great example of how the principle of manaakitanga was used to support their teams and communities during times of crisis. For example, the team worked together to ensure that everyone had what they needed in order to do their work, including food and breaks. They also communicated regularly and openly, which helped them to overcome any challenges quickly and effectively. With manaakitanga in place, the team were also able to go above and beyond to process the dramatic increase in Whānau Direct² applications and grants. Through their hard work and dedication, they were able to make a real difference in the lives of those who needed it most.

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² Whānau Direct assists whānau to access financial resources when it matters most to whānau, with the intention of making a positive difference for whānau.

MANAAKITANGA: THE PRIDE OF AHURIRI

REGION: IKAROA-RĀWHITI
As told by Tessa Robin – May 2021

**I te taha o taku māmā, ko Ngā Puhi te iwi.
I te taha o taku pāpā, ko Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti
Maniapoto me Ngāti Tūwharetoa ngā iwi.
Tihei Mauri ora.**

*On my mother’s side, my tribe is Ngā Puhi.
On my father’s side, Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti
Maniapoto, and Ngāti Tūwharetoa are my tribes.*

INTRODUCTION

Prior to coming to Te Kupenga Hauora (TKH) I was a public servant with Māori Affairs and the Māori Land Court system. I landed here about 2000, so I have been with the organisation for 20 years. I came here initially to support my mother who leads the organisation and tried to leave a few times, but whānau (family) comes first. Now I wouldn’t want to leave and I guess health and helping our whānau is really important to me. So, now I’m the Operations Manager – and that’s a big word for someone who will just do anything.

We have support services across ages from birth to grave really – our tamariki (children), rangatahi (youth), hapū wāhine (pregnant women), māmā (mothers), kaumātua (elders) – we have services that will support them all. Our mahi (work) is based mostly around Napier City and the population here but we also have a suicide prevention service that supports the whole of the Hawke’s Bay District Health Board (DHB) catchment area, which is from Hawke’s Bay through to Wairoa and Mahia. Our target population is Māori but we have a lot of non-Māori that prefer to come through us as well. This includes our Pacific [Island] whānau, our Pākehā (New Zealand European) whānau and some of our other whānau as well.

LOCAL IWI/HAPŪ RELATIONSHIPS

In Ahuriri, Ngāti Kahungunu is our only iwi (tribe), within our rohe (region) we have people that come from all over. We’re either dual iwi citizens or our whānau have come here for mahi, for the weather, for relationships, for all sorts of things. We have a huge number that connect to Ngā Puhi, a huge number that connect to Ngāti Porou and to many other iwi.

Otherwise, we do have a lot of our hapū (subtribes) that stand strong within their own rights, so we have relationships and work with them. A couple of them worked alongside us during the Level 4 lockdown – Ngāti Pāhauwera who are based around the Mohaka/Raupunga area and Ngāti Hineuru, which is more of our rural whānau from Te Haroto heading towards Taupō area. There were also many other hapū around that contributed, but those ones were key during lockdown. We have a lot of whānau that live in the Ahuriri area that don’t live in their hapū areas anymore. So the work with our whānau was based on whakapapa (lineage) – making sure they were connected to their whānau back home while catering to their needs in Ahuriri. But, in saying that, we made sure that everybody was looked after. If you were Māori, non-Māori, hei aha (whatever), whatever age you were, we made sure that everybody was catered for.

MANAAKITANGA FOR ALL

Just before COVID-19 hit I was ready to fly out of the country to take a well-deserved holiday in Rarotonga – and that didn’t happen! But for us, before COVID-19, it was busy. Our whānau were struggling, our whānau were already facing housing shortage issues – already facing tough times with emergency housing. We were dealing with whānau who were struggling to feed their children, whānau who had trouble accessing health support. We had some good relationships with the likes of our local GPs (general practitioners), with some of the other fellow providers, and neighbouring Post Settlement Groups (PSGs). But then along came the lockdown and our relationships with all of these partners improved. I could say they were amazing, actually. And even with our funders, if we called for something we would get it. It was really, really good.

The evening that the lockdown was announced the chairperson for Te Taiwhenua o Te Whanganui-a-Orotū called me to say, ‘Hey, the iwi is doing this, can you help?’ And I said, ‘Absolutely.’ So, the next morning we met at one of the iwi offices and then we came back and my staff had everything set up ready to go here.

When the pānuī (news) first came to us the iwi said any assistance or services offered were going to be for Māori. For us, that wasn’t right because we need to support everybody. We have Samoan staff, we have Rarotongan staff and we have Pākehā staff. How am I to have them working here and saying no to their own whanaunga (relatives)? For us as Kahungunu, we pride ourselves on our manaakitanga (showing generosity and care for others) and I know we do that as Māori. But as Kahungunu we do pride ourselves on manaakitanga and manaakitanga for everyone, not just to one group of people – and so that (directive) quickly changed. Our iwi understood that we were supporting anybody and everyone.

One of the results was we ended up working with our Pacific Island whānau through one of the local churches that’s quite big here. Their leaders came in and helped connect us to those in need. They also helped us with deliveries of kai (food) and hygiene parcels. Some of our Pākehā whānau, for example, would say, ‘Oh, it’s come from you Māori people’, you know! Just because we were the face, we were the ones out there doing the work. We were well aware that funds were coming from central Government and other funders, so we were doing it on behalf of the community, really. This is something we are good at: we were able to mobilise, we knew our community and we knew the most deprived of our community.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, THE AHURIRI WAY

We also know the tricks and the issues to community engagement here. One of the funny things that happened around that was to do with how we trained our staff to go out into the community for parcel deliveries. We had the Māori Wardens’ turn up to support us, as they did other groups. For these volunteers we put every single person who came into our site through our own COVID-19 control procedures, but also community safety. Things like having people with you in your vehicle, and making sure your driver never gets out from behind their wheel. The driver stays there in case you need to do a runner. You know, people kind of thought that that might sound a bit silly, but the reality was when some of the deliveries went out, the recipients would get chased by neighbours asking for their box! It was really interesting how it wasn’t until our volunteers came in to help us that they learned about how our community operates. You might live in the community, but it is so different when you work in it. You need to know how to protect yourself because we are not armed with a gun or a bullet proof (vest) or a stab vest or anything like that. We are armed with our nous, our intuition and our charm.

To get word out about the kai parcels, some of our partners were calling people using Facebook and that, but mostly people saw the deliveries happening and were asking, ‘Where did you get that from?’ and ‘How do I get that?’ So it didn’t take long. Some people left it a bit longer to reach out for help, mostly because they didn’t want to reach out because they were ashamed, but they had no reason to be ashamed. There were plenty who still didn’t reach out, but other family members would tell us on their behalf anonymously.

As for our staff, some had children or were unable to come to work so they were working remotely along with those over 65. Other staff were rostered to help with the packaging of our kai parcels and all that work. Our nurses were doing a lot of phone consults and supporting whānau who might not have had access to the medication they needed. Or, just trying to put them at ease with anything that was going on for them. There was also the need to do what we called ‘over the fence’ stuff. We had numerous self-harm events. Staff would go out, take kai, pick a patch, as a way to get through to them and just have a kōrero (chat) with them over the fence. And then where we needed to assess it, we would call in the services from the hospital or any other crisis service to come in and help. We had a number of non-COVID-19 related deaths as most regions did, so we were also supporting a lot of those whānau in terms of mental health.

There was one very moving case where we had a rangatahi whose partner had passed away unexpectedly. They had a young baby and it was just a lot to deal with, especially when you can’t have people in your space supporting you during lockdown. The best we could really do was over the fence. So that was probably one of the harder cases that our team had to deal with. With that particular case, the rangatahi was ringing up almost every day for a food parcel. We were scratching our heads, like, she just got one, why do they need another one? And so, it highlighted for us, somebody is calling for help. Go out, talk, see what it is.

LEARNINGS

One of the learnings that we took from this time, which was in particular, from our whānau living in emergency housing. How were they going to cook a meal when all they had was a little hotplate and maybe a pot provided, a microwave and a tiny little fridge that didn’t even have a freezer? So, we soon started learning that we needed to change out some of the kai that we were ordering in and get some microwave meals and some meals that they could make with what they had.

We also started asking ourselves ‘What can we be doing to help these whānau know what meals they can make from out of this kai?’ Because you wanted to give people staples that they know what to do with. There was rice in the parcel but not a lot of our whānau knew how to cook it. So we were going to utilise some of Whānau Ora² funds and Whānau Direct³ funds to get whānau crockpots and different things like that. But we managed to strike a deal with Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ) to say that actually, these people in emergency housing have no access to a freezer or adequate space in their tiny fridge. Especially if you have got an entire whānau living in there and they can only fit like a day’s worth of stuff in their little storage. So, we got WINZ to provide certain cooking resources and supplies. Or to discuss with the motels that some of the whānau were staying at, to put in some big fridges or a shared area where there was access to some of these things.

So those were the learnings that we took from those things. But one of the biggest takeaways for me was seeing the response from a lot of our whānau. The gratitude that we did get from whānau.



Maria Sakaria (front) and Noela Apineru (back) – welcome the arrival of fresh kai ready to pack and provide for vulnerable whānau at Te Kupenga Ahuriri.

¹ Māori Wardens are over 900 volunteers providing support, security, traffic and crowd control and first aid, under the Māori Community Development Act 1962.
² Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.
³ Whānau Direct assists whānau to access financial resources when it matters most to whānau, with the intention of making a positive difference for whānau.



SURVIVING LOCKDOWN THROUGH GENEROSITY AND AROHA IN THE FAR NORTH

REGION: TE TAI TOKERAU
An interview with Jessica (Jess) Hobson and Tania Edwards – May 2021

Ko Marumaru Atua te waka Ko Enuamanu te maunga Ko Te Roto te roto Ko Touariki me Pā Te Ruaroa ngā iwi Ko Te Are Kariori te marae Ko Atiu te whenua Ko Reg rāua ko Vaine ōku mātua Ko Shane Edwards tōku hoa rangatira Ko Tania Edwards ahau.	The canoe is Marumaru Atua The mountain is Enuamanu The lake is Te Roto The tribes are Touariki and Pā Te Ruaroa The meeting place is Te Are Kariori The land is Atiu My parents are Reg and Vaine My husband is Shane Edwards I am Tania Edwards
Ko Tuwatawata te maunga Ko Mataatua te waka Ko Whirinaki te awa Ko Waikotikoti te marae Ko Tūhoe te Iwi Ko Ngāti Whare te hapū Ko Sharon tōku māmā Ko Taituha tōku pāpā Ko Jessica tōku ingoa	The mountain is Tuwatawata The canoe is Mataatua The river is Whirinaki The meeting place is Waikotikoti The tribe is Tūhoe, the subtribe is Ngāti Whare My mother is Sharon My father is Taituha My name is Jessica

COVID-19 showed how resilient whānau are when supported by Kaiārahi (Whānau Ora¹ Navigators) at Whānau Ora. This is just one of the many success stories from the Far North.

Tania Edwards is a Kaiārahi at Te Tai Tokerau, Te Hauora O Ngā Puhi and looking back on COVID-19 even she is surprised at just how much impact she had on whānau (families) like Jess’, who refers to Tania as her ‘lifeline’ – something Tania finds quite humbling.

Tania: I saw Jess the other day. I asked her if I actually did anything for her during COVID-19. She started laughing, you know, because when it’s your every day, you don’t feel like you did anything special. I suppose it would be different if it wasn’t in my nature to want better for people. But, you know, I want every woman to be as happy in their relationship as I am in mine. Every man to be as happy in his relationship as I know my fortunate husband feels. Every child to have everything my children have and more. That’s what makes me happy. I want what I go through to be the norm and for them to be able to experience that so that they can teach their children that this is what is normal. That, that other stuff isn’t what is normal.

Over the years Jess and Tania have become very close and Jess is quick to point out that COVID-19 would have been very different if it wasn’t for Tania, so much so she finds it hard to relate to how life was just four years ago when she made a life-changing decision.

Tania: My husband, myself and our nine kids moved up here to Kaikohe from Porirua. We have a long history, he and I, so 20 years of being in a relationship as well as married which was pretty difficult. My husband was a gang member, he’d been in and out of jail and it was quite a hard life.

Tania has become part of the whānau (family) and she looks at the strength Jess had to make the decision to move her family.

Tania: She’s not so much a ‘client’ anymore, but this is her safe space. This mum with her nine kids and all that has happened, she has learned all these responses and reactions that means she no longer fires up straight away. Jess allows herself the time and space to react.

When COVID-19 hit and the country was forced into lockdown, Tania made it her priority to check in on Jess and her whānau as they resided together in a whare that had no clean running water or electricity.

Tania: Jess would say that they are that family that would probably kill each other if there wasn’t someone like me keeping them focused on their goals. I also made sure they had kai (food) packs and hygiene packs. And then one day their water pump blew up and their generator stopped working. We looked at our options and what we could do given that it was COVID-19. We sorted them a water pump, I sourced pipes and hoses through some of my connections as they really needed them. We accessed Whānau Direct² and we were able to spread that out.

Online budgeting was also accessible to the whānau with Tania facilitating some online sessions.

Tania: I went out and would hotspot off my phone so they could still manage their financial literacy classes over Zoom to keep them on track to achieve what they needed to achieve, to get where they needed to be. Because they did so well we worked really hard with them. One of the things Jess really really wanted was to be able to cook a roast.

Jess was used to living fairly basically and it was important to her that her family had kai.

Jess: We got a gas oven, I mean that was massive for us. I wanted to have a choice of baking or roasting because I was boiling everything up until then.

The whānau were living off the meat they caught, whether that would be fish or wild pork and Tania remembers the impact the different food packs had on them during lockdown.

Tania: We were able to access some of the kai packs, the frozen meats that we had through Ngāti Hine, so we had a variety there. I have never seen a family appreciate a chicken as much as they did.

Tania became so close to this family, often opening her own home to them.

Tania: During COVID-19 we just did what we could. I mean they had no water or the water was too dirty for them to use. I didn’t have a problem with them coming into town and using my shower. And they’d bring all the kids in. And then you know, while Jess is washing the little ones the other daughter’s up the road washing their blankets and clothes. At that time there was so much going on, but the easiest thing, it was the simplest thing to offer them my shower and it was one of the most appreciated. You know the little things really mattered for them.

Tania also gave them unconditional access to her home to fill up their containers with water if and when they needed. This relationship between Jess and Tania strengthened even more when Tania offered to support the eldest daughter.



Jessica Hobson with her flourishing whānau at their homestead in Kaikohe.

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Left: Jessica and her son Detroit, the youngest of her nine children.

Tania: Jess's eldest was pregnant, she came back from Australia just before lockdown and they didn't know what they were doing. Basically they were living in this building, not a home. So we worked with them and she signed up with us. She had her own plan to get her finances underway as well as a home for them. I worked with her and her partner calling around to people I knew and we got him a job in Whangārei and a cabin on the land. We also got them a little inverter so she could, you know, have the lights on there. Being pregnant it was a bit scary but when her baby was born she had power in her cabin. Jess is proud of her girl who works in the Whānau Ora call centre, won an Otago University scholarship and was the recipient of The Young Business Enterprise Award for Northland. Her partner is now also studying.

Jess's third-eldest daughter helped to instigate some change in her parents as after telling them she was pregnant her father turned his gang patch in. Subsequently, their lives started on a different path as they then headed north.

Jess has also spent some time on herself. In the past four years she has completed several courses, become a volunteer and she is now looking at studying online, something she would never have considered before Whānau Ora.

Jess: It has given me a sense of empowerment and they have shown me that it's okay not to be perfect and that I can still see things that I have done well. It has really made me a better person to be around for my whānau.

Jess wants to learn how to help people but first she is still teaching herself not to take too much on as her journey of growth continues.

Jess: I can be fearful in an instant and quite abrupt on the attack. But now I learn to give my husband the space. When he gets on his bike – I let him go. That could stop him from potentially killing me. Now I breathe, I wait and I am happy for my whānau to leave knowing that it's better for them and it's not something against me.

Tania is proud of this whole family and it is that support that keeps Jess going and in a lot of ways it keeps her grounded.

Jess: Tania helps me, she supports me and she tells me how it is. I talk to her about a lot of things, she is a great sounding board for me. We can spend hours talking – it's been so cool for me. Even my husband, when he sees me starting to react he'll tell me to call Tarns. Even my daughter goes and chats to her.

Tania has seen the transformation in Jess and says her whole demeanour has changed, she is confident and strong. Whilst she has facilitated great gains in Jess's life, Tania refuses to take the credit for how this whānau has changed their path towards a brighter future.

Tania: I am privileged to work with them. And I am clear with everyone that it is their journey – that they are navigating their success. I walk alongside them, but when they stop, I stop. When they start walking, I start walking. My job is about supporting whānau along their path – whatever that looks like for them.

Jess wants people to know there is help, no matter how bad you think things are or how isolated you feel.

Jess: Definitely go to Whānau Ora – if the first person doesn't fit for you, keep going because there are so many great people. They provided me with a wraparound service that is continuous support while also encouraging me, showing me what I am capable of.

Tania says her enjoyment with her work is seeing the change in people.

Tania: Our whānau aren't used to success, and success comes in many forms. I mean the fact that Jess gets up every day and puts one foot in front of the other, that is success.

When Jess thinks back about COVID-19 she smiles and recalls what a great experience it was at her whare with all of her whānau around her.

Jess: If we were still in Porirua it would have been very different, I would say prison and Women's Refuge. It was a beautiful time for us to be together, we were used to that. Whānau Ora helped us out and we got by. It's the changes in the past four years that helped that so much.

Jess is a realist and knows that while her journey is still continuing, she is grateful she no longer parents with guilt.

Jess: I feel that the world is no longer looking down at me and judging me with my nine kids and crazy husband. I can look at myself now and see what is going on, I am not in denial and I am very proud of myself. I am proud of my whole family.

I am privileged to work with them. And I am clear with everyone that it is their journey – that they are navigating their success. I walk alongside them, but when they stop, I stop. When they start walking, I start walking. My job is about supporting whānau along their path – whatever that looks like for them.

-Tania



HARNESSING WHĀNAU CONNECTIONS THROUGH DANCE

REGION: TE TAI TOKERAU
An interview with Alice (pseudonym) and Mary Korewha – May 2021

For a solo mother in the Far North, the COVID-19 lockdown was a chance for her to share with dozens of whānau (families) how she gets through challenging times. Through the art of dance. Something the support and encouragement of her Kaiārahi (Whānau Ora¹ Navigator) made possible.

Alice embraces dance as a form of self-confidence as a wahine (woman), a mother and a daughter, while strengthening her resilience to move forward from an abusive relationship. She is still working her way through the experiences that have led her to where she is now and this increased confidence has allowed her to teach dance during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Dance has always been a passion of Alice’s because of the way it makes her feel and she wanted everyone to experience that to help them get through the challenges of being at home. She herself had faced and overcome some dark times in a violent relationship. Alice has chosen to share her story so that others can see there is always a way out, there is always a way to survive.

Alice hid what was going on in her whare (house). She would be the life of the party, confident and socialising. Physically, Alice’s body changed from the abuse.

Alice took solace in her children while getting as much support as she could from her own mother who was often caught in the crossfire. ‘Mum has been my prayer warrior... she was there for the kids. She could protect my children and I am so grateful for that’.

Then, Alice rediscovered her love of dance, something which gave her confidence and made her feel good, which was something she desperately needed. ‘I have always loved to dance, it’s so good for me and I am good at it. It took me away from the pain, just for a little bit – and I could do it with my girl!’

In March 2018 while Alice was at the hospital for some counselling through Family Start, she met Kaiārahi (Whānau Ora Navigator), Mary Korewha. This was a major turning point as the pair connected instantly through Mary’s own journey as someone who had also experienced abuse.

Alice: *Mary’s been there, she gets it. I started to find my strength and I would listen to her beautiful prayer, she would always pray for me. I was being haunted by my own traumatic thoughts because I couldn’t understand why I was still alive. Mary would say it was a privilege for her to work with me, but ... she saved me. I know if I didn’t meet her when I did, I would probably be dead.*

Alice has been baptised, she has become a Zumba instructor, her confidence is growing and she thanks Mary for all of it. **Alice:** *I was scared of finally putting my story out there. It is hard to accept but I don’t want anyone to have this pain and*

feel powerless. Telling my story is freedom for me. Meeting Mary, seeing her every week, showing her my suffering has been amazing. She saved me. I always say meeting Mary gave me my strength.

Around three months later, Alice was living with her mother and two children at home and she was regularly dancing. It was a struggle to sever the ties with her ex-partner but legal orders were put in place that meant the two of them had to stay away from each other in order to move on. ‘I started dancing again and I became a Zumba instructor which I really loved. Dancing just gives me such a great feeling of freedom and confidence.’

Pre-COVID-19 Alice was teaching a few classes a week to locals which she really enjoyed.

Alice: *I was well on my feet because of Mary. I could ring her whenever I needed to, and I did. I think meeting Mary gave me my confidence back to get through anything. I mean I’m still learning and still growing but in a much better place. Now I am away from my ex, I can dance and teach any time I want to.*

Mary helped Alice personally by paying for the community hall Alice uses to teach her dance classes three to four times a week, and the numbers were growing.

COVID-19 arrived in early 2020 and then in March the country went into lockdown. Alice told Mary she wanted to teach classes online to help people through this stressful time. Mary didn’t hesitate.

Mary: *It was through her believing in herself through [what] she was capable of, that is dancing, that became the vessel for Alice’s wellness. It got her on a journey going forward so when COVID hit she was teaching dance in Rawene and Kaikohe. To maintain those classes we needed to get her linked in through Zoom so she could still teach and reach people out there.*

Through Whānau Direct² Alice was able to have Wi-Fi and then promote her live online classes for whānau and tamariki (children) through Facebook so they could all continue to dance during lockdown. She teaches 7 to 9 year olds, 10 to 12 year olds and adults. Alice and her daughter often taught together from their living room to anyone who wanted to learn and were able to access her social media platforms, something Mary could see were well received.

Mary: *She was doing a great job. Alice helped so many people stay active and have a nice distraction from COVID, but right there in their homes. She kept those classes going right up until we were able to get back together at Level 2. Once you could have gatherings of more than ten people, she was back in the hall at Rawene. In Kaikohe she teaches in a church.*

Teaching dance during all the lockdowns in Aotearoa (New Zealand) not only increased Alice’s confidence, it also kept her connected with her community. Most importantly it strengthened the relationship she has with her daughter and her mother who were all healing and growing together.

Alice has grown close to Mary who she credits for increased confidence and belief in herself to teach dance classes.

Alice: *Mary always makes me feel like I’m worth something. It’s definitely more than just what she’s working for, it’s within herself. I don’t think she realises how much she does for me, the impact having her in my life has [had]. It never feels like it’s work. I call her my Earth Angel. Mary saved my life and made me feel human again. She makes me feel like I do when I dance, like anything is possible because I have that confidence. I believe in myself and that’s what really matters.*

I have always loved to dance, it’s so good for me and I am good at it. It took me away from the pain, just for a little bit – and I could do it with my girl.

¹ Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.
² Whānau Direct assists whānau to access financial resources when it matters most to whānau, with the intention of making a positive difference for whānau.



DIVOC – TURNING THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC AROUND

REGION: TĀMAKI MAKĀURAU
Author: George Kingi – May 2021

I te taha o tōku pāpā,
Nō Ngā Puhī, Waikato me Ngāti Pikiao
Ko te taha kaha mōku, te taha o tōku māmā,
Nō Te Whānau-a-Apanui, Ngāti Porou me Ngāti Awa.
Ko au te pāpā o āku tama purotu, koi ake me te
hātakēhi
Ko Wiremu, Okaire rātou ko Tawatihitihi
Ko Teah tōku whaiāipo, hoa rangatira me he toka tū
moana mō mātou te whānau
Ko George Kingi ahau
Tēnā koutou katoa

On my father’s side,
I am from Ngā Puhī, Waikato and Ngāti Pikiao
The side that I have strong links to, is my mother’s
side,
From Te Whānau-a-Apanui, Ngāti Porou and Ngāti
Awa.
I am the father of beautiful boys, who are very
intelligent and hard-case (full of good humour).
Wiremu, Okaire and Tawatihitihi are their names.
Teah is my darling, my chiefly life partner, who is the
anchor for our family.
I am George Kingi
I acknowledge you all

Mokori anō, tēnei au ka mihi ki ngā atua
Ki ngā tini mate kua whetūrangitia, haere atu rā
Huri noa ki a tātou te hunga ora, tihei mauri ora!
Me mihi ka tika! E mihi ana ki ngā kaimahi katoa, mō tātou i whai wāhi mai ki te
mahitahi mō te oranga o te iwi Māori, otirā, mō ngā tāngata katoa ki te patu i te
Mate Korona, i haumarua ai te ao katoa.
I tipu ake au ki te rāwhiti o Tāmaki Makaurau
I kuraina au ki tērā wāhi hoki
Kāore au e akona ana ngā tikanga me ōna reo engari, i mohio tonu au he Māori au.
Nō reira, kei te ako tonu au ki te kōrero me te whakamārama i te ao Māori me ērā momo.

INTRODUCTION

In February 2020 I joined Te Whānau o Waipareira Trust (Waipareira) as one of six operations management leads. We had oversight of cross-sector services supporting whānau in West Auckland with a focus on whānau Māori (Māori families): kaumātua (elders), mātua (parents), rangatahi (youth), tamariki (children) and pēpi (babies).

I led the ‘Mātua Cluster’ – the biggest rōpū (group) made up of 47 kaimahi (staff). Our cluster was responsible for servicing nine mental health and additions services made up of two mental health service teams, five family-centred services and one Kaiārahi, Whānau Ora¹ Navigator’s service. We also had a specialist rōpū of registered nurses and cancer navigators.

Whakarongo (listen), whakarongo, whakarongo – that was my agenda for the first three months.

What I learnt prior to the Level 4 lockdown was that our ability to provide appropriate services for whānau (families) was very much restricted. We were navigating an inefficient state contracting system that addressed whānau needs from disconnected silos. Kaimahi were placed in the difficult position of being asked to meet contractual obligations while also having whānau health and wellbeing at heart. This created a workforce culture and practice that was strained, tired and both over- and underwhelmed. So, I planned a number of team building activities including a Mātua Cluster strategic planning day for all 47 of our kaimahi. My intention was to create a high trust culture that would be fun, safe and productive. The day involved the exchange of knowledge, active engagement (as opposed to passivity) and the development of a clear, simple action plan.

The strategic planning day was like ripping out the weeds and planting seeds in a new garden.



Members of the DIVOC team

COVID-19 ANNOUNCEMENT

In the first few weeks of learning about the extent of COVID-19 we had to move fast, together, to keep informed and up to date. We learnt very quickly that our current contracting restrictions and practices in our organisation needed to be turned on their head.

What took place was amazing, the whole organisation restructured (what felt like) overnight!

Waipareira restructured to be completely community/whānau responsive with our most vulnerable – kaumātua, single-parent whānau and overcrowded where (homes) – having top priority. Instead of having unevenly-staffed cluster teams focused on siloed service contracts, we created five smaller, full-service ‘home’ teams with an equal number of members. They included mental health, rangatahi and tamariki workers, as well as clinical staff such as nurses. We called them ‘Multi-Champion Teams’ (MCT).

These were completely new teams, new people, new terms, practices and new learnings.

DIVOC

We worked immediately on building team culture using whakawhanaungatanga (establishing relationships) – learning about each other’s interests and skills outside of mahi (work). We also made a point to have fun and laugh.

We built a strong culture of connection and trust which allowed us to move fast on decisions and action them – and we created a new rōpū name, ‘DIVOC’. We wanted to lighten the serious vibe, so we took the word ‘COVID’ and spelt it backwards – DIVOC. We added a slogan to it: Turning the global pandemic around!

We would check in daily via Zoom chats, meeting online for an hour a day, and one scheduled in-house day per week in the office.

During our Zoom chats we created a check-in process made up of four questions suggested by team member and tōku teina (younger brother), Johnny Kingi:

1. What are you grateful for?
2. What have you done for self-care?
3. How do you feel?
4. What do you need?

This process allowed everyone to reflect on their holistic health and wellbeing and allowed me to take note of what they needed. A lot of the time they needed reassurance and a compassionate ear. They also wanted to be well-informed, so I made a point to share any information that I received as soon as possible back to them. If I didn’t know something, I would say ‘I will find that out for you as soon as I can.’

A couple of our DIVOC team had completed their certification with the Whānau Ora Diploma and were set to graduate. But due to COVID-19, all graduates missed their chance to walk across the stage in front of their whānau to accept their certificates. We decided to organise our own surprise graduation for two of our members. We all chipped in from our own pockets to organise gifts and decorations for the room setup which included a red carpet with LED lights on the edges. We also had a kākahu (cloak) Māori and a Pacific Island version of a kākahu, ula lole necklaces, a cake, a chocolate goodies hamper, our very own DIVOC certificates and a big hākari (feast). They were blown away and humbled by the gesture.

¹ Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.



In one of our DIVOC Zooms, a team member was feeling sad as it was the anniversary of her mum’s passing, so we organised to lip sync her mum’s favourite song ‘Simply the Best’ by Tina Turner and hold space to share her favourite memories. Although these were small actions of aroha (love) and manaaki (generosity and care) they had a big impact on the whanaungatanga of our rōpū.

TRANSFORMATION

Waipareira began a number of large-scale projects, including the establishment of a warehouse storage for PPE gear and the establishment of a drive-through COVID-19 testing station.

To support these changes, seven functional teams were created. The numbers of staff within these teams were determined by needs in each area, for example, a set number of nurses for the shift work at the testing station or a specific number of people in the food bank to prepare kai (food) parcels.

In addition to overseeing DIVOC, I was also assigned to be management lead for the Delivery Team. This team contacted all whānau registered on our system, grouped their addresses by suburb and then delivered hygiene and kai parcels.

We created seven zones around the West Auckland area. Each zone had two kaimahi that organised deliveries within their zones. This work demonstrated the need for up-to-date technological resources. This led to our organisation commissioning Whānau Tahī Ltd (a leading Māori health IT provider) to develop a new delivery system app – that tracked deliveries in real time – within the very short time frame of a week.

We learnt a lot along the way. Not everyone was happy, some kaimahi needs were not met but we all understood that no one had ever gone through a global pandemic. It was a volatile space to navigate through at the time. Trying to keep it together in the different teams required good lines of communication.

SHIFTING INTO A NEW GEAR

Personally, I felt like my teams were the best teams to be a part of – we created a good culture together and everyone had a space to share their own thoughts, fears or ideas. Others were asking to shift or swap into my teams, because they liked the idea of a different style of leadership. People weren’t made to feel managed in their work but instead were free to do the right things in a safe, guided way.

COVID-19 really did highlight who the cooks in the homes were. We would see at lunchtime who had what and share kōrero (stories) and laugh while practising social distancing. It was weird but good. I felt the teams shift during a kai – through the whakanoa (lifting of tapu – sacredness) process – where everyone became tau (settled).

In one of our DIVOC Zooms, a team member was feeling sad as it was the anniversary of her mum’s passing, so we organised to lip sync her mum’s favourite song ‘Simply the Best’ by Tina Turner and hold space to share her favourite memories. Although these were small actions of aroha (love) and manaaki (generosity and care) they had a big impact on the whanaungatanga (relationships) of our rōpū.

For our functional team, our mahi was better suited to the early morning. Before delivering any hygiene parcels to whānau our team would warm up by passing 1,500 hygiene packs from the warehouse into a van for transport to the next storage place. Then they would unload the van to the new loading bay until they were ready for deliveries. The Delivery Team would then load up their vans for each zone and try to get through as much of their delivery lists as possible. By the end of the day, the team would be physically drained but would still be asked to support other teams in their functions, like helping in the food bank.

My Delivery Team were often the team requested when there was physical mahi to be done. Our team recognised this and as a collective asked to implement a tinana (physical) wellbeing plan consisting of stretching and resting often. Each hygiene pack often consisted of cleaning products that could total over 8kg in weight. We were also asked to double-handle packs as storage warehouse space became scarce.

I remember one afternoon, after a long day of transporting and stacking hygiene packs, we had a truck arrive late at 4pm with two 40ft containers of kai from external food banks. It had to be unloaded and put into storage and perishable items needed to be chilled. I needed my team to come back to the warehouse and work overtime. It was a hard ask but I felt okay with it as I was on the frontline with them and never asked them to do anything I wasn’t prepared to do. And they all came back! Physically, we were using the same muscles over and over again to shift heavy boxes, putting a strain on already tired bodies. Once we started there was no room to hide from the mahi. We all did our bit and we moved the boxes in record time. When the last box was in storage everyone was absolutely exhausted but something clicked and we entered into a whole other level of whanaungatanga.

The whānau expression of gratitude meant everything to our kaimahi. It was a privilege leaving our bubbles – going out to check in on our most vulnerable whānau, to kōrero (talk) with them and deliver a hygiene pack or a kai parcel.

Akohia te tikanga, kia ako (Teach me the facts and I’ll learn)

After months of uncertainty the cracks were beginning to show. The pandemic conditions drove kaimahi to crave the old norm. We were imploding in on ourselves as a team because we were set up on short-term foundations that were not sustainable. As a management lead I felt that I failed to make decisions to prevent negative effects on the team which contributed to the implosion. This is part of my experience as a management lead and I learnt a lot.

We achieved so much as an organisation, and as kaimahi we all had a new appreciation for our mahi and the on-going challenge essential workers face on a daily basis, lockdown or not. So to celebrate that, my team leaders and I organised rōpū wellbeing activities.

The DIVOC team went to Ōkahu Bay for a deep session of whakawhanaungatanga (relationship building) and identity building through an activity called ‘Matarau – the hundred faces.’ It was confronting but thought-provoking and necessary to pull down walls and break down barriers. This added another piece of whakawhanaungatanga to strengthen our new whakapapa (lineage). I’m sure everyone that day found a new understanding for who they are and why they do what they do.

The Delivery Team was no different. They were treated to a therapeutic self-care day at the Parakai hot springs with a team of kaimirimiri (massage practitioners) and kairomiromi (deep massage practitioners). He tohu pai ki au, ko te kai (a good sign to me is the food), and there was always good kai on an outing.

‘Reflecting on my leadership style, I try to remember that I am enough. Whether I’m directing teams in certain or uncertain times – I’m aiming to lead change for good.’

So many things excited me about the role but the constant uncertainty was a challenge. An opportunity to shift from a management lead to a strategy role subsequently presented itself and I took it. Since leaving the management lead space, the entire workforce of Waipareira has been re-engineered (again) into three geographical clusters. This means new teams, new leadership, people, personalities and systems. That is what is inspiring about Te Whānau o Waipareira – it’s never afraid to challenge its own systems, try new things and make it work for the benefit of whānau. Many people came and went during this time. I trust they are all well and continuing the amazing mahi of serving our whānau.

*E ai ki ngā kōrero,
Akohia te tikanga, kia ako. Akohia te pono, kia mārama. Akohia te pūrakau,
kia maumahara i whakairotia i te ngākau ake atu anō.*

*As the saying goes,
Teach me the facts and I’ll learn. Teach me the truth and I’ll understand. Tell
me a story and I’ll remember that forever in my heart!*



STEPPING UP RESOURCES FOR WHĀNAU: BEHIND THE SCENES

REGION: TĀMAKI MAKAUARA
An interview with the Whānau Direct Team – April 2021

Ko ngā kaimahi o Wai-Intel ki Te Whānau o Waipareira Trust mātou
He uri o Ngāti Kuki Airani, Ngāti Pukenga, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Guangdong mātou
Ko Naomi Waka, Brynette Waka, Natasha Bell, Greg Northover, Anita Kuang ō mātou ingoa.

We are the staff of Wai-Intel at Te Whānau o Waipareira Trust
We are descendants of The Cook Islands, Ngāti Pukenga, Ngāti Porou, and Guangdong
Naomi Waka, Brynette Waka, Natashas Bell, Greg Northover, and Anita Kuang are our names.

On the first floor of Whānau Tahi House in Henderson, Auckland you'll find a small, tight-knit team who provide support and training for Whānau Direct¹. Whānau Direct is a Whānau Ora² programme that offers access to financial resources for families facing obstacles that stand in the way of their goals.

Led by Manager Naomi Waka and Team Lead Natasha Bell, the Whānau Direct team validates applications from all 80 Whānau Ora providers and partners across Te Ika-a-Māui (North Island of New Zealand). They also provide support for Kaiārahi (Whānau Ora Navigators) across both Whānau Direct and Te Whānau o Waipareira (Waipareira) digital platform, Whānau Tahi.

When the pandemic began, the team faced a number of challenges including the induction of new staff, an adjustment to a more digital workspace, and most significantly, a change in policy which dramatically increased their workload.

ADJUSTING TO A DIGITAL WORKSPACE

Natasha Bell was promoted to Team Lead just before the pandemic hit. She recalls that the team was in a good place with their workload and systems.

Natasha: Then COVID-19 hit and we went into total lockdown. We had to figure out what we were gonna do, because everyone couldn't work face to face anymore. The kaimahi (staff members) couldn't go out, visit whānau (families) and do assessments with them. They had no photocopiers, they couldn't go to the stores to get quotes and invoices, etc. Everything had to be done online. That was where the massive struggle was, trying to find a better way for them to be able to have quick access to Whānau Direct and upload their assessments and things like that.

We chose to have them not do assessments, so they'd just enter all the details into the system. The system became totally computer based rather than kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face). We just learned it as we went on day by day.

Now that everyone was required to work from home, processes were quickly put in place to digitise steps that were previously paper-based. Kanohi-ki-te-kanohi assessments were replaced with gathering information over the phone and entering data directly to the Whānau Direct system.

DRAMATIC INCREASE IN WORKLOAD

The team had to respond quickly to changes in Whānau Direct policy that would dramatically increase their workload. Two requirements for applications were relaxed. The first allowed for providers and partners to bulk purchase items so they could easily distribute resources such as kai (food), bedding, and other household items. The second allowed that whānau could make more than one application for pūtea (funds) during the same financial year. Naomi Waka and Natasha say this contributed to a dramatic increase in applications once COVID-19 hit.

Naomi: It was the first time we've had a huge number of applications come through. One day, over 200 applications came through. It just kept growing throughout the night, so most of us would stay on to try and complete them because the next morning there's gonna be another whole bunch of applications coming through.

Natasha: Our roles didn't change but it just got harder. The average application a day outside of COVID would probably be about 25-50. Through COVID it would have been about 200 plus a day. We worked through the whole of Easter. We more or less dreamt about Whānau Direct; it was that busy.

TRAINING PARTNERS

To help with the huge volume of mahi (work), Naomi and her team worked closely with Whānau Ora partners to upskill them on any gaps that were hindering the process.

Naomi: That was a real struggle because you had providers that had partners who were sending in their own receipts. But for our team, we don't know who's who so we just put it all onto the lead partner. It was hard because they were like 'Oh but we haven't run out of money', and we were like 'You have run out of money!' They also wanted us to reconcile but we didn't have time because we had so many applications coming through... So that was some of the difficult things. But now we have a better system in place where it's way easier.

Natasha: We started to teach them like, 'Here you go, here are the tools so you can do it'. We gave them instructions on merging documents on their end so we could carry on and complete our applications... At the moment the providers find it a lot easier than the first lockdown. Their feedback to us was, 'You've done awesome and thanks for all your support!'

MULTIPLE TRAINING STREAMS

Naomi also held training across the Whānau Tahi platform, as well as the Waipareira app designed to track deliveries of hygiene and kai parcels.

Naomi: There were all types of training running. Some days I just had one right after the other. I don't know how I survived! At the end of the day, I'd leave the office really late. I'd be here till 8:00pm, then I see the police car drive by and I'm thinking they might stop and say, 'Excuse me, shouldn't you be home cos it's a lockdown?' So I'd leave, go home, open up my laptop again and that's when I'll see [my team] on Whānau Direct. I'd tell them to get off and go to sleep! I was always telling them to get off and go to bed [laughs].



Ngā kaimahi o Whānau Direct Team. L-R: Anita Kuang, Natasha Bell, Naomi Waka, Katrina Neilson, Brynette Waka, Greg Northover.

¹ Whānau Direct assists whānau to access financial resources when it matters most to whānau, with the intention of making a positive difference for whānau.
² Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.



KAIMAHI PERSPECTIVE

Anita Kuang: *Ko Anita ahau (my name is Anita). My role is Systems Administrator and I work closely with the team on the Whānau Tahī system.*

Daily we used to run reports and support whānau on any system queries and also customise the forms or contracts in the system. But after COVID-19 hit we just all jumped in to help with the Whānau Direct applications.

It was the first time I had seen those real stories that affect our whānau. Some of them lost income and they cannot afford anything for their families. Some of them had rent arrears or they cannot buy any groceries, they cannot travel to visit their close family members. So those stories really touched my heart. After we delivered the hygiene packs or delivered the vouchers, those whānau really appreciated our support.

From my perspective those stories are really touching and they tell us a lot. Because by reading numbers, those are just code numbers and it wouldn't infer or tell us what they have provided to the wider community. The ongoing support the whole team's doing is actually amazing.

The biggest challenge for me was that I got to think outside the box. For those applications it was my first time that I have entered them. I got to learn really fast because Tash and the Whānau Direct team didn't have time to explain to me all the details, even though sometimes I would bother them. Another challenge was we had to be able to crack the volumes. As Tash said it was ten times the volume before COVID-19 hit.

CONCLUSION

During the early days of the pandemic, the Whānau Direct team at Waipareira strengthened their existing sense of awhi (embrace) and kotahitanga (togetherness) in order to overcome their various challenges.

Naomi: *Apart from supporting the team, I also was the only one in the office from our team because I didn't want them to come in. I just wanted them to stay at home and be safe. I know for our team there were long hours. From my experience I think Friday night was the night where I thought I could stay up. So I would stay up until 6:00am in the morning to help support them because I just really felt for my team.*

Natasha: *We just worked as a whānau really well. We connected, we communicated. We didn't want anyone to struggle, you know. We struggle together.*

Naomi: *It was sad to see a lot of whānau struggling during that time. I think that would also drive us to continue to stay up late and do these applications. And we have each other's back. It didn't just happen during COVID-19, my team has always had each other's back. We roll together, that's what it is.*

BUILDING A NEW FUTURE THROUGH
TE AO MĀORI

REGION: TĀMAKI MAKĀURAU
Author: Joseph Andrews – May 2021

<p>Ko Tangihua te maunga Ko Wairoa te awa Ko Waitematā te moana Ko Mahuhu-ki-te-rangi te waka Ko Tirarau te marae Ko Ngāti Whātua, Ko Ngā Puhi ngā iwi Ko Te Parawhau, Ko Te Urioroī ngā hapū Ko Hohepa Anaru ahau</p>	<p>The mountain is Tangihua The river is Wairoa The sea is Waitemata The canoe is Mahuhu-ki-te-rangi The meeting-place is Tirarau The tribes are Ngāti Whātua, Ngā Puhi The subtribes are Te Parawhau and Te Urioroī I am Hohepa Anaru</p>
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As a young boy, I was brought up in a small place called Tangiteroria, in between Whangārei and Dargaville. Blink and you'll miss it! Life was simple back then. Rural setting, no issues with traffic, only cows. The only trouble with rangatahi (youth) was there were too many of us. But we all knew how to mahi (work), mahi at home, mahi for whānau (family), mahi at the marae (communal meeting place), mahi in the community.

Our kaumātua (elders – men) and kuia (elders – women) were always looked after and treated with the greatest respect as rangatira (chiefs). Over the years many have left us and now adorn the night skies as shining stars joining their whānau and our creator.

E te atua, homai ki a mātou i tēnei wā, tō maramatanga, tō rangimarie, tō kaha, me tō aroha.
(Dear Heavenly Father, give unto us now, your understanding, your peace, your strength, and your love). Āmine (Amen)

As with all good things, closely behind it is evil. That evil has been COVID-19! These are unprecedented times and COVID-19 has affected everything in its path: shutting borders, causing panic and uncertainty. The health sector has been overloaded and those most vulnerable are our kaumātua, kuia, tamariki (children) and mokopuna (grandchildren).

RUNNING THE HYGIENE DISTRIBUTION WAREHOUSE

I was approached by John Tamihere to set up and manage our Te Whānau o Waipareira Hygiene Distribution Warehouse on Railside Ave, Henderson. I jumped at the opportunity to be a part of this amazing kaupapa (purpose). My 20 years of experience in the construction, building and warehouse distribution sectors would be put to good use. 'To serve and protect' kaumātua, kuia, tamariki, mokopuna and whānau.

KAIMAHI

An amazing team of kaimahi (staff) were allocated to me and within 24 hours the warehouse was up and ready to operate. Our back-office team had our first shipments arriving within 48 hours. Product lines were confirmed, health and safety protocols in place, kaimahi trained, picking-packing processes confirmed and order confirmation from partners ready. We had a never-ending pool of kaimahi ready and willing to play their part when required. Working with our people for our people – there has been no greater satisfaction in my whole working career than during this time working with Māori, by Māori, for Māori. Our tikanga (customs, protocols) was always at the centre of our kaupapa – as all kaupapa are. Every day started and finished with karakia (prayer).

PARTNERS

There was a common theme when our partners turned up to collect their orders. Coming from as far as Kaipara and Hauraki-Waikato, our tikanga was always at the forefront and adapted due to COVID-19. A mihi (acknowledgement) was always received from those collecting their orders, these mihi contained the aroha (love) from their rohe (region), their kaumātua and kuia, and whānau, acknowledging our kaimahi and most importantly Te Whānau o Waipareira. They couldn't wait to deliver the hygiene packs to their whānau.



CAREER CHANGE

I had no issues, no tiredness, no problem working under this kaupapa (initiative). It was just like we were all back at our own marae doing what we do for our whānau. Our people heard the call to arms and they came with willing hearts, ready to do whatever was required. This kaupapa had a really huge effect on me. I was starting to have thoughts about a change in my career path. Little did I know there was another kaupapa just around the corner.

INSPIRED TO INSPIRE

I’ve worked for many companies in my career like Fletcher Building, Carters, McVickers, to name a few. But nothing compares to doing the mahi with our people for our people. I’ve chosen a path that isn’t motivated by money or business, but by identity, whakapapa (lineage), whanaungatanga (relationships), manaakitanga (hospitality), aroha, tautoko (support), kawa (customs), pōhiri (welcome), te reo Māori (language), kotahitanga (togetherness). I am proud to be Māori and my passion to help our people to unlock their potential took me to a new role at Te Whānau o Waipareira as a Kaiārahi (Whānau Ora¹ Navigator) for Ngā Tini Whetū.

I attribute the man I am today to my mum and my nannies. I too was disconnected due to trauma and colonisation, but now I have regained my mana (status) and planted myself firmly back in my whenua (land)! Reconnecting myself to my identity! And my people. Having lived-experience, I can now awahi (support) whānau on their aspirational journey and to dream the dreams they once had. To have aspirations and to be inspirations for the next generations. We as a people have always held the answers to our own questions, the solutions to our own problems, the healings to our own pains.

Working here is not work. This is a movement, a kaupapa. And has been the easiest decision I’ve ever had to make in my whole life.

Nō reira ka nui te mihi kia koutou Tēnā koutou tēnā koutou tēnā tātou kātoa.
Tihei! Mauri Ora!

Therefore, Great Salutations to you all
Thank you all
Call to claim the right to speak!

Working with our people for our people – there has been no greater satisfaction in my whole working career than during this time working with Māori, by Māori, for Māori. Our tikanga (customs, protocols) was always at the centre of our kaupapa – as all kaupapa are. Every day started and finished with karakia (prayer).

¹ Whānau Ora (family wellbeing) is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.



Joe Andrews providing tamariki care and support while working on the frontline of the COVID-19 response.



GLOSSARY

ā-hinengaro – mentally

ā-wairua – spiritually

āmine – amen
Aotearoa – New Zealand
ariki – high chiefs
aroha – love, compassion
awhi – embrace, help

haka – advocating physically
hākari – feast
hapa – challenges
hapū – subtribes
hapū wāhine – pregnant women
hapū whānau – local family member
harikoa – happiness
harirū – handshakes
haukāinga – home, true home, local people of a marae, home people
hauora – health
hauora Māori – Māori health
hauora whānau – health providing community

hei aha – whatever
hinengaro – minds, mentally
hōhā – annoying, exasperating
hui – meeting

iwi – tribe/tribal, home people
iwi kaupapa – tribal initiative
iwi whānau – tribal community

kahawai – type of fish
kai – food
kaiaako – tutors
Kaiārahi – Navigator: The ground-force of Whānau Ora who support and advocate for whānau to access integrated care and support.
kaiarataki – leader
kaiāwhina – assistants
kaimahi – staff, staff member
kaimirimiri – massage practitioners
kaimoana – seafood
kāinga – the home
kairomiromi – deep massage practitioners
kaitiaki – guardian
kaitiakitanga – stewardship and guardianship
kākahu – cloak
kanikani – dance
kanohi – in person
kanohi ki te kanohi – face to face
kapa haka – Māori performing arts
karakia – recite a prayer, chant, setting intentions through prayer
kaumātua – elders, elderly man/men
kaupapa – policy, purpose, initiative, agenda, theme, objective, culture
kaupapa Māori – an approach grounded in Māori values and principles
kawa – customs
kei te pai – okay
kete – baskets
kia ora – hello

kia tūpato – be careful
koeke – elders
koha – donation
kōhanga – Māori language immersion preschool
koinā – there you have it
kōrero – chats, discussion, talk, statement, stories
kōrero whakawhiti – conversations
koro – grandfather
koroua – elderly man/men, grandfather
korowai – cloak, wraparound support
kotahitanga – togetherness, unity
kuia – elder (woman/women), grandmother
kūmara – sweet potato
kura – school

mahi – work
mahi tahi – work together
māmā – mother/s
mamae – painful
mana – status, authority and prestige; supernatural force in a person involving one’s charisma and spiritual power
mana motuhake – self-determination, autonomy, self-government, independence, sovereignty, and control over one’s own destiny
manaaki – show respect, generosity and care for others
manaakitanga – hospitality, the process of showing respect, generosity and care for others
manaaki tāngata – caring for people

manaaki whakapapa – caring for lineage, past, present and future
manuhiri – visitors
māra – courtyard, garden
marae – communal meeting place
marae ātea – front court of communal meeting place

marae-based – culturally-centred

Maramataka – Māori lunar calendar, living by the natural rhythms set by the moon phases
Matariki – Māori New Year
mātātoa – to be fearless, courageous
mātauranga – knowledge
mātua – parents
maunga – mountain
mauri – life force

mihi – acknowledgement
mihi atu – give acknowledgement
mirimiri – massage
moana – sea
moemoeā – dreams, vision
moko – grandchild/ren – short for mokopuna
mokopuna – grandchild/ren or great grandchild/ren
motu – island, country, land
moumou wā – waste of time

ngākau Māori – literally defined as a Māori heart, includes the capacity to establish deep and meaningful relationships with everybody which is centred on a mutual goal. Ngākau Māori is a commitment to the development and exhibition of cultural values; whanaungatanga, aroha, manaakitanga, whakapapa and waiuatanga.

ohu – communal working group
oranga – health
Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children
orokoroa Māori – Māori meditation practice

pā – Māori settlement
Pākehā – New Zealand European
pakeke – elders, adults
pānui – news, notification
Papatūānuku – Earth mother
pāua – abalone
pēpi – baby, babies
pono – honesty, integrity
pou – pillars
poukai – Māori King movement gatherings
pou tikanga – Māori cultural expert
pou tokomanawa – central support pole of the meeting house, acts as the main structural support of the building and symbolises heart strength and leadership
puku – stomach
pūtea – funds, money

raiti – beacons of light
rangatahi – youth
rangatahi Māori – young Māori
rangatira – chiefs
rangatiratanga – sovereignty
Rātana – Māori religion
rēwana – bread
ringa raupā – essential workers
ringawera – kitchen worker
rohe – area, region
rongōā – healing
rōpū – collective, group
rūmaki reo – Māori-language immersion
rūruhi – elderly women

tae mai – arrived
Tāmaki Makaurau – Auckland
tamariki – children
Tamariki Ora – Child Health
tāne – man
tangata – person
tangī – funeral
tangihanga – funeral gatherings
tāniko – weave/embroider
tau – settled
tautoko – support
te ao Māori – the Māori worldview
Te Ika-a-Māui – the North Island, New Zealand
te pūtake o ngā kaimahi katoa – the foundation of our workforce
te reo Māori – Māori language
tiaki – protect
Tiaki Tō Whānau – Protect Your Whānau
tika – direct, correct, straight, fairness, truthful
tikanga – customs, protocol
tinana – physical
tino rangatiratanga – sovereignty
tiwhana – the arc of the rainbow
tohu – symbol
tohunga – priests
tokotoko – support
tōku teina – my younger brother
tongi kura – prophetic saying by a charismatic leader

tono – claim/request/application
tuarua – second
tuatahi – first
tumuaki – chief exeuctive officer
tūpuna – ancestors
tūranga – foundation
tūturu – strong links and devotion

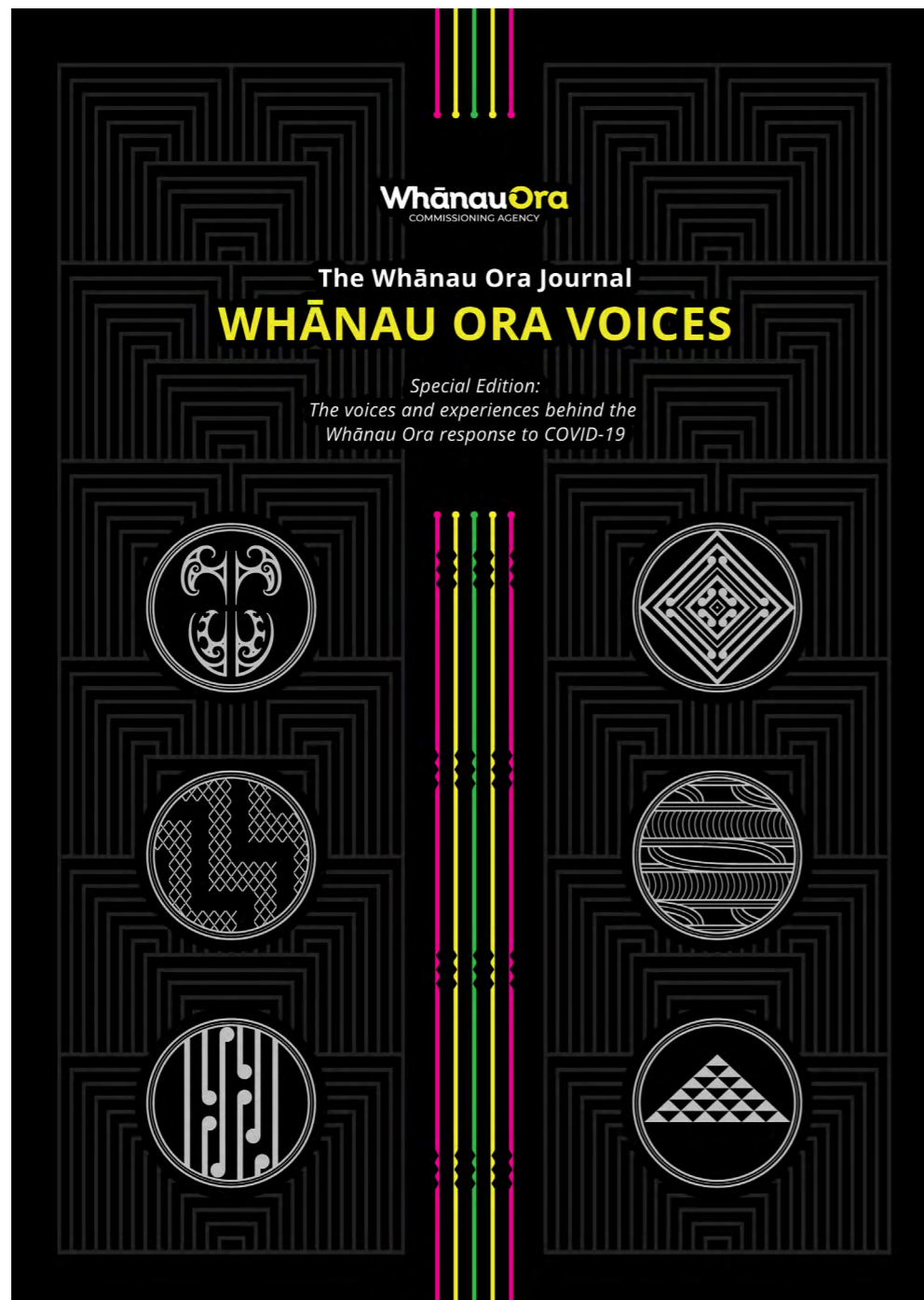
upoko whakarae – chief executive officer

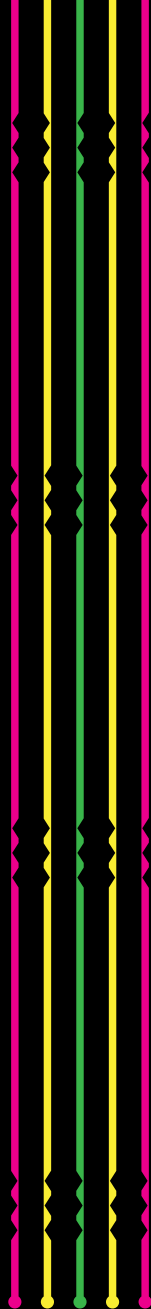
wāhine – woman/women
wāhine toa – strong women
waiata – song
waimarie – fortunate
wairua – spiritual, the spiritual realm
waiuatanga – spirituality
waka – canoe
wānanga – learning forums, seminar
wawata – dream
whakaaro – plan/understanding
whakamā – embarrassment
whakanoa – lifting of tapu – sacredness
whakapapa – lineage, geneology
whakarongo – listen
whakataukī – proverb
whakawhanaungatanga – the process of establishing relationships and connections with others
whānau – family/families
whānau hui – family meeting
whānau kaumātua – elderly family members
whānau Māori – Māori family/families
Whānau Ora – family wellbeing – is an indigenous wellbeing policy and initiative in New Zealand, driven by Māori cultural values that puts whānau (family) at the core of decision-making about their future, providing support and services to assist them to achieve their dreams and aspirations.
Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency (WOCA) – contracted by Te Puni Kōkiri (Ministry of Māori Development) to invest in initiatives and services for communities in the North Island. Commissioning Agencies work with their communities to determine the best ways to support their development.
whanaunga – relatives
whanaungatanga – relationships, relationship building
whāngai – foster
whare – home, house
wharekai – dining hall
whare tūpuna – ancestral house
whenua – land

zui – Zoom meetings

WHAKAMĀRAMA, UNDERSTANDING THE COVER

The kaupapa (purpose) of the journal is a connection to the values and philosophy of Whānau Ora, which is represented in the six pou (pillars) on the cover. The title in te reo Māori, 'Whānau Ora', is central and significant. The word 'whānau' means an extended family group who care for each other, and 'ora' means wellbeing. So the journal is focused on the wellbeing of whānau. Māori artist Lissy Cole's influence and inspiration is also reflected through the use of vibrant colourings with the pink representing harikoa (happiness), the yellow is waimarie (fortunate), and the green is taumata (elevated platform). Finally, the contemporary tāniko (weave/embroider) shows the innovation and response that Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency partners took to aid and support whānau through the pandemic.





WhānauOra

