



thriving in practice

CONNECTED - REFLECTIVE - EFFECTIVE



HUIA O'SULLIVAN AND ACTION INQUIRY CONTRIBUTORS

families commission
kōmihana ā **whānau**

te waipuna puawai
MERCY BASIS LTD



AUG 2011



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Citation: This document should be cited as: Thriving in Practice: Connected – Reflective – Effective, Huia O’Sullivan and Action Inquiry Contributors 2011. Families Commission and Action Inquiry Partner Organisations, Auckland

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ISBN 978-0-478-36903-8

This resource benefited from the awahi of many contributions.

I express sincere thanks to Puamiria Maaka and staff at Te Waipuna Puawai, for opening doors and allowing me to become a part of their whānau for a time. In particular, Tara Moala and Jo Flavell for our regular reflective learning sessions aimed at enhancing youth development practice.

To the storytellers of Te Waipuna Puawai Young Mothers Support Group, Tania Wilkinson (and her son Ryland) and Halie (and her son Jack), who opened their doors, their hearts, their families whānau, allowing me to sit and listen to their stories around their kitchen tables.

I acknowledge with deep gratitude the manaaki and generosity of time gifted by Nanny Ann Milne, Whaea Judith Riki, staff of Kia Aroha College, Te Whānau o Tupuranga and Clubhouse 274.

To the parent/teacher storytellers of Te Whānau o Tupuranga, Whaea Haley and Whaea Allison – for their openness and willingness to share their perspectives so as to gain fresh insights.

Ki ngā rangatahi o Te Whānau o Tupuranga, thank you for letting me in. I will always value the gift of inspiration you generously gave to me, to gently guide me on your poutama so that your voices may rise and be heard from the top. In particular, I acknowledge Aniwaniwa, Ivory, Kaya, Dion, Paihere for contributing to the Tupuranga poem.

I am grateful to the communities and agencies of Glen Innes and of Ōtara who contributed their insights to help inform this work. In particular, Glen Innes Family Centre (Chris Makoare and Kathleen Nelson), Glen Innes Police (Jack Scanlan), Ngāti Whātua ō Orākei Health Services (Waimirangi Howell), Birthcare (Phillipa Ipsom); and in Ōtara, Staff of Turn Your Life Around (TYLA) and Sam Chapman and whānau. Many thanks to the Families Commission staff for their advice and support, in particular: Bobby Newson, Te Ūepu Māori, Lynda Murray, Steve Attwood and Charlie Moore.

To Henriata Nicholas, our artist and graphic designer, thank you for visually representing the work. Master Tenzin Tseten for use of his photos.

My guiding light for shining the way forward, Dr Sue Copas, whose tireless commitment, relentless courage and authentic caring provided me with the leadership, friendship and strength that continues to be my beacon of hope for change for families whānau.

Pai mārire
Huia O'Sullivan



**Mā te whakatau, ka mōhio
Mā te mōhio, ka mārama
Mā te mārama, ka mātau
Mā te mātua, ka ora**

*By discussion comes understanding
By understanding comes light
By light comes wisdom
By wisdom comes wellbeing*

Hemi Henare, Ngāti Hine



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I noticed...

A different way of being

Humility

no assumptions

no judgement

Participating fully

taking the time

helping out wherever she saw a gap

hands in, all in

rolled up her sleeves and got on with it

really assisting us with our work

without having to be asked

Authenticity

genuine interest

with everyone... staff... young mums

“what’s going on?”

“what’s happening for you?”

engaged

wanting to learn

A stand-out contrast

didn’t behave like a researcher

or government worker

when you participate in processes like these

people often come to observe

When I think of Huia’s approach

and her practice

I am reminded of Lilla Watson’s words...

“If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time;

but if you’ve come here because your liberation is bound up with mine,

then let us work together.”

Puamiria Maaka

Manukura, Te Waipuna Puawai

“Kuhu mai,” was my immediate response when Huia first approached me in April 2010, to look more closely at Te Whānau o Tupuranga in Kia Aroha College. We have many visitors and have been asked many times to be the subject of stories and research and we are very cautious about these requests, always mindful that our community is one of the most over-researched and under-served in the country. However, in our very first meeting I knew that Huia implicitly understood our Māori context and the complexities of us as a whānau. My invitation to Huia to ‘come in,’ to wherever she wanted to be in the school therefore, was genuine and was the beginning of a strong relationship based on mutual trust.

In the beginning I invited Huia to specific events—Board of Trustees’ meetings, presentations at staff meetings, and school activities—but as Huia met staff and students she quickly became part of what we did, and we didn’t need to invite her anymore, because we knew she would just be there. Huia peeled the potatoes and helped out in the marae wharekai, she dropped in and spent hours in classes, sat through kapa haka practices and marae live-ins, and became part of the staff conversations in the staffroom. Nothing was off limits as we knew Huia was always going to treat our knowledge with respect. This is whanaungatanga and its inherent principle of reciprocity at its best. At every step of the journey Huia gave back – information, aroha, manaakitanga, mana – always prepared to listen and reflect, and to seek our feedback.

Why? Because Huia ‘got us’ perfectly, and, when you go against mainstream practice to change the way schools usually operate, this deep understanding is unexpected, and rare. We appreciate this relationship, and this taonga that it has developed and produced, and we feel privileged to have been part of this journey.

Ann Milne
Principal, Kia Aroha College



In a moment in time
When things were in place
This work happened

The Families Commission set out
On a relational journey
With Te Waipuna Puawai
With Kia Aroha College
Exemplars nestled within their communities

Thriving in practice connecting
With people spiritually emotionally culturally socially
As people as families whānau and as communities
These exemplars are leading the way
In family whānau centred practice
Showing how to humanise the work
While aspiring to achieve outcomes for wellbeing
Always striving always wanting more
For their families whānau and communities

In these pages we invite you
To engage with this relational journey
To connect with family whānau centred practice and
To reflect on its implications.



in it together





“In it together to dream big”



Innovative beginnings...

What government, social services and families want and value does not always radically differ. What often differs is the priority families place on particular outcomes and values over time. We believe we must start with families' priorities and motivations if we are to collectively pursue good societies and good lives (Lockett, Schulman & Vanstone 2010, p.3).

For some time now the Families Commission has been working with a number of exemplary organisations that put 'families whānau' priorities and motivations at the centre of their practice. From previous work we'd learned there were links between this way of working and effective outcomes for families whānau. We'd also learned that good relationships are at the heart of this approach¹.

Keen to learn more from exemplars who care about effective and respectful ways of working with and alongside families whānau and their communities, we set out on a relational journey of 'doing it differently together'.

This resource *Thriving in Practice* explores that journey from the perspectives, and largely in the words of, those working at the interface (Parker & Heapy 2006), or frontline. Based on collaborative work in two Auckland settings, a community development organisation and a secondary school (introduced in more detail later), it provides practice-based evidence for a more connected, relational approach to working with families whānau and communities in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Thriving in Practice* is a companion resource to the publication *Thriving: Connected, Reflective, Effective* (Copas and Action Inquiry Contributors 2011), which also charts a collaborative journey with key staff from four exemplary social service organisations who came together to learn more about the various dimensions and principles of practice informing, what we have come to call, a family whānau centred approach.

The relational basis of the work detailed in *Thriving* is repeated here; as conversational and collaborative processes were mirrored in the *Thriving in Practice* relationships.



¹ See Appendix 1 for a summary of previous work in this area—called Innovative practice—in the Families Commission.

Understanding that good relationships are premised on trust (Parker et al. 2008), characterised by give and take, and fostered through thoughtful constructive discussion among equals, we aimed to be active participants in a conversational and collaborative process.

These expressions – conversation and collaboration – are ubiquitous, particularly within the social services arena. Taken for granted, they are used every day and everywhere, often with little thought given either to their meanings, or to the practices, relationships and commitments they refer to, at any given time.

Not so in this work. We began intentionally, as we meant to go on, by proposing a collaborative action inquiry. That is, researching and learning **with** people, working together as peers, and using conversation as our core action learning process (Bray et al. 2000; Brown & Isaacs 2005; Hurley & Brown 2009). Complex relationship and trust building formed the mainstay of the research process. Active participation was fostered via ‘relational engagement,’ a process that frames research as intentional conversation, occurring, “within a context that respects the coherence of multiple communities and facilitates dialogue rather than debate”. (McNamee 2000, p. 23)

This way of working together, “developing intentional, effective, transforming, timely action inquiry in the midst of everyday life” (Torbert 2004, p.7), is in itself a breakthrough, and creates the conditions for real and ongoing change. It does however require two crucial mind shifts.

The first is the idea of conversation as core process, which debunks the widely held notion that talk and action are somehow separate activities.

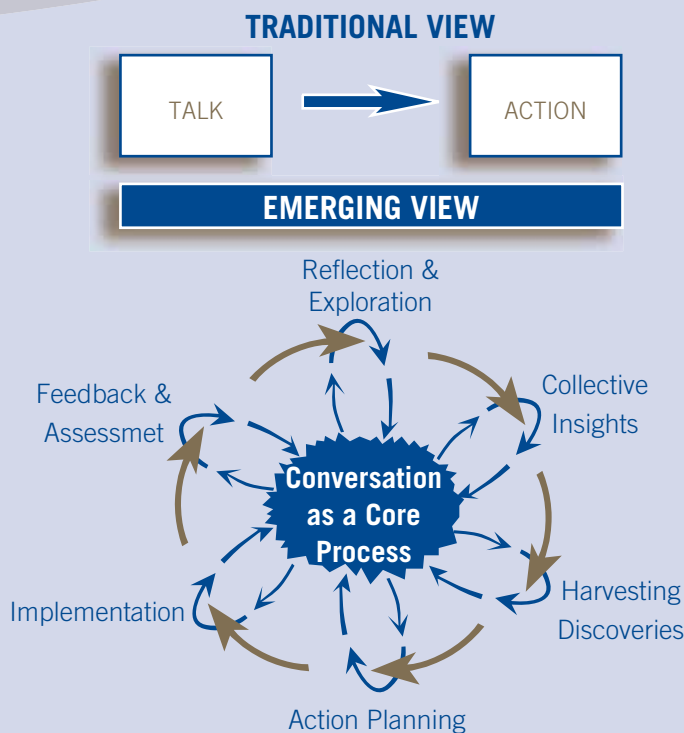


Figure 1: The relationship between talk and action using conversation as a core process (Brown & Issacs 2005, p.37)

Conversations are action, because we live in language.

Speaking is the primary and most influential medium of action in the human universe... People who speak of moving from talk to action are apparently not awake to the fact that talk is the essence of action (Torbert 2004, p.27).

Nevertheless in the crazy busyness of 'doing' that characterises much of our organisational and personal lives today, speaking as the 'most influential medium of action' is something that seems disregarded, forgotten, or simply unknown. Sadly evident here in Aotearoa New Zealand, where the derogatory saying, "We need less hui and more doey," has particular and lingering currency. Yet:

Since our earliest ancestors gathered in circles around the warmth of a fire, talking together has been our primary means for discovering common interests, sharing knowledge, imagining the future and cooperating to survive and thrive. The natural cross-pollination of relationships, ideas and meaning as people move from one conversation to others, enables us to learn, explore possibilities, and co-create together (Hurley & Brown 2009, p.3).

As important, is how we go about the 'cross-pollination of relationships, ideas and meaning,' for we are perhaps more deeply influenced by how we speak to one another, than by the content of what we say. This brings us to the second crucial mind shift, understanding what is meant by collaboration.

Collaboration is a paradox; an over-used notion that seems to be everywhere and nowhere. According to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* to collaborate can mean either "to work jointly" or "to cooperate traitorously with an enemy." Put the two meanings on either end of a continuum and the difference between configures a very slippery surface. A landscape often shot through with underlying politics and power relations.

The organisations we worked with are aware of this dilemma. As a result they are clear about what collaboration, and collaborative relational processes mean for them, and why their particular way of 'doing collaboration' is so effective. We call their approach 'authentic collaboration' (and detail the characteristics and practices of this way of working in the following section). So let's start with a definition and rationale. Here's the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* again on what it means to be 'authentic' – it means to be "genuine, reliable and trustworthy."

The Manukura (Chief Executive) of one of the organisations we worked with put it like this, "*We create together, with the people, enhancing all of our lives.*"

And that, in a nutshell, is what authentic collaboration is all about. At its heart are people working together in respectful, genuine and responsive relationships to create effective outcomes that touch everyone. Those involved see themselves as "knowledge equals" (Flood 1999), and recognise the varied and various forms of knowledge, power and resources each brings to the work. There is also the value-explicit aim of mutuality – of partnership and reciprocity – working together to 'enhance all of our lives'.

From: ***Thriving: Connected – Reflective – Effective***, Sue Copas and Action Inquiry Contributors, 2011

Through this resource, we invite you to explore a frontline perspective. To share in the experiences of people within exemplary organisations, working as equals with families whānau and community partners.

This resource is laid out in three sections:

- **In it together** reflects the relational journey with two exemplars.
- **In conversation with families whānau** offers stories of two young mums engaged in Te Waipuna Puawai Young Mothers Support Group and poetry from Te Whānau o Tupuranga, looking at family whānau centred practice through their eyes.
- **In and on reflection** responds to inquiry questions that help to guide family whānau centred practice, and concludes with a call “to humanise the work”.

So let us embark on a relational journey together, for a moment in time to consider the possibilities, and reflect on family whānau centred practice, what does it look like, feel like, work like and for whom?

Nau mai
Piki mai
Haere mai



Authentic collaboration: a relational journey

**Kororia ki te Atua i runga rawa
Maungarongo ki runga i te w'enua
W'akaaro pai ki nga tangata katoa**

An acknowledgement of spirituality and spiritual forces
The importance of making peace within yourself and with others
The necessity of maintaining goodwill, despite conflict

Ko Taranaki te maunga tapu
Ko Waitara te awa
Ko Te Atiawa te iwi
Ko Huia O'Sullivan toku ingoa

I am a mokopuna of the lofty Taranaki mountain. My name is Huia O'Sullivan.

I joined the Families Commission 18 months ago as an Engagement Advisor. Based in the Auckland office, my role was to engage with, support and learn from organisations working with, and responding to, the needs of families whānau. I came to this role with a professional background in health promotion, and a passion for grassroots community development and community action.

The role also offered me the opportunity to reconnect with my colleague Sue Copas (we had worked together in a previous organisation). Sue had already begun to develop relationships with senior staff in a number of exemplary organisations, to learn more about organisational kaupapa, the values and principles guiding and shaping their work. This collaborative action inquiry, working with the Auckland Women's Centre; the Anglican Trust for Women and Children, Auckland; Know Your Neighbours Project sponsored by Lifewise and Takapuna Methodist Church; and Te Waipuna Puawai, has resulted in the written resource *'Thriving: Connected, Reflective, Effective'*, (Copas and Action Inquiry Contributors, 2011). This has developed key principles and inquiry questions for Family Whānau Centred Innovative Practice.

Sue's work with Te Waipuna Puawai, opened the door for me at one of the exemplars. Then with the support and blessing of Te Waipuna Puawai Manukura (Chief Executive), Puamiria Maaka, I was able to form relationships and work with practitioners at the interface of service delivery. Te Waipuna Puawai is a thriving community development initiative of Nga Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy Aotearoa New Zealand. It was formerly established in 1999, with centres in Glen Innes and Eilerslie, and a community mandate to operate in surrounding low income areas. Te Waipuna Puawai offers highly regarded 'second chance' education opportunities to young mothers and early childhood care and education for their children, along with wrap-around support and family whānau centred social services.

My introduction to the second exemplar began through prior work in the Families Commission. Not long after I joined, the Commission hosted a workshop in Wellington called, 'Schools, Families and Communities'. This workshop brought together a number of innovative school and community leaders from around Aotearoa New Zealand to share their experiences of working to intentionally integrate schools, families and communities by using family whānau centred approaches to education in their schools.

At this workshop a number of participants from schools and communities in Auckland decided to develop a regional learning cluster. The intention was to continue the collegial conversations and knowledge-sharing around the emerging concept of schools as hubs for a more joined up approach to community wellbeing. Kia Aroha College, formerly known as Te Whānau o Tupuranga and Clover Park Middle School, was an integral part of this initiative.

Kia Aroha College is situated in the Ōtara community with a kaupapa that is 25 years in the making. Dedicated to building strong relationships with families whānau and community over time, Kia Aroha College emphasises a whole systems collaborative approach. Focused on excellence in learning – culturally, socially and academically – it seeks to develop warrior scholars to become leaders of the future.

With two exemplars identified in very different settings, I needed to explore the possibility of establishing and developing respectful mutuality (Tuhiwai Smith 1999), with each. If my involvement with these exemplars was to be meaningful, the development of an authentic collaborative process to undertake the work was key. This is an approach that values kindness, respect and connectedness towards common outcomes (Swartz 2011).

Early conversations with staff established appropriate opportunities for me to see family whānau centred practice in action. Working together, we decided a process where I would be led, and held, by staff within the exemplars, who were in relationship with the families whānau and community partner organisations. This was the beginning of an authentic collaboration, a strengths-based approach that values emerging learning.

Figure 2 represents the characteristics and practices of authentic collaboration. Throughout my journey with these exemplars I had the privilege to work with people who practice authentic collaboration. Caring people who demonstrate a persistent willingness and flexibility to foster the hopes, dreams, aspirations and priorities of families whānau.



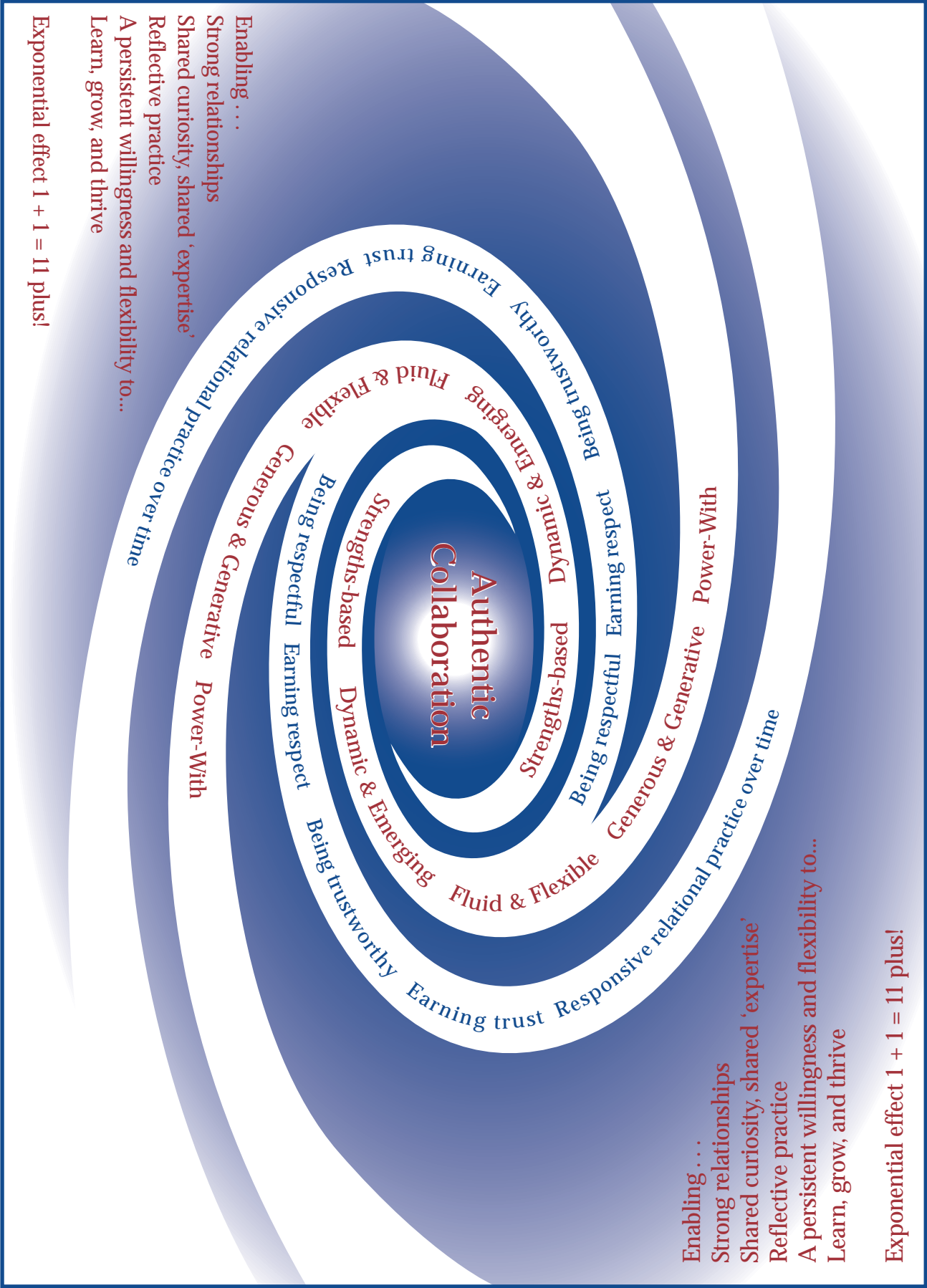


Figure 2: Authentic Collaboration—Characteristics and Practices

Relationship, relationship, relationship...

We began as we meant to continue, with whakawhanaungatanga and, as Ann Milne noted earlier, ‘its inherent principle of reciprocity’ (p. 11). This is a fundamental factor to establishing ongoing relationships that support cultural conscientisation. Bringing us together in a connected manner to form a ‘whānau of interest’ (Bishop 1999, p. 174). Relationships where we established and appreciated each other, first and foremost, as people.

- Knowing and appreciating that we sat at the table as nannies, koro, whāngai, mothers, aunties, nieces, sisters, daughters, fathers, uncles, brothers, nephews, sons.
- Knowing and appreciating that we made up and served the very families whānau and communities we were talking about.
- Knowing and appreciating that we each brought with us our many professional hats, job titles and forms of expertise.
- Knowing and appreciating that what we shared in common, front and centre, was our commitment to the wellbeing of families whānau and their communities.

These mutually beneficial understandings and relationships embrace what can be called an ‘*and and*’ approach to power-sharing. I was welcomed in and invited to participate fully in the life of the school. Along the way opportunities to observe and be observed built trust and allowed us to cautiously seek, and curiously find the answers to questions that mattered most.

For families whānau and exemplars: Who is she? Who are her people? With whose authority does she come? Can she be trusted? Can she hold our stories?

For the Families Commission: Is there a spark of interest to create a basis upon which to form and forge an authentic relationship? If so, what is our value-add to this community? How will we maintain authentic and reciprocal relationships over time?

For both: How can we work together to achieve effective outcomes that touch everyone?

“Gee, bet you didn’t think you would be doing this [drying dishes in the wharekai] working at the Families Commission?” I recall the words from Nanny Ann, Principal of Kia Aroha College.

“It’s the best way,” I reply.

Before I could ask anything of the people working within Te Waipuna Puawai or Kia Aroha College and the families whānau with whom they work, I sought to identify and appreciate the complexity and interconnected systems of support that make up and define their worlds. To build relationships in which those involved were appreciated and validated as the authorities on their knowledge and experience. I came in, not as an outside expert, but sought to be a contributing member and work with and alongside families whānau in the environments that are most important to them.

I listened carefully and sought to act purposefully. Deep bellied laughs and shared interests enabled our initial thin strands of connectedness to grow stronger with each engagement. Working together we explored the possibilities of how to best illuminate a family whānau centred approach in these two very different settings, to show the ‘differences that makes the difference’ in achieving effective long-term outcomes.

Thinking and learning together we shared knowledge, crystallising our thinking, uncovering and exploring the complexity of layers and webs of support that make up the interconnected family whānau centered system. At the same time we looked for opportunities to share what we were learning along the way.

Figure 3 is a representation of some of the connections, webs of support and learning opportunities that occurred along the way. With whakawhanaungatanga alive and well, our passion and aspirations for youth, community development and wellbeing connected across sectors and enabled us to contribute to various forums, workshops, collaborations, conferences, hui locally and nationally. These engagements further illuminated the merits of this approach. Through robust discussion with others, we shared and tested how to apply a family whānau centred approach in policies, practices and attitudes. This learning was part of the exponential effect working together in authentic collaboration allows.



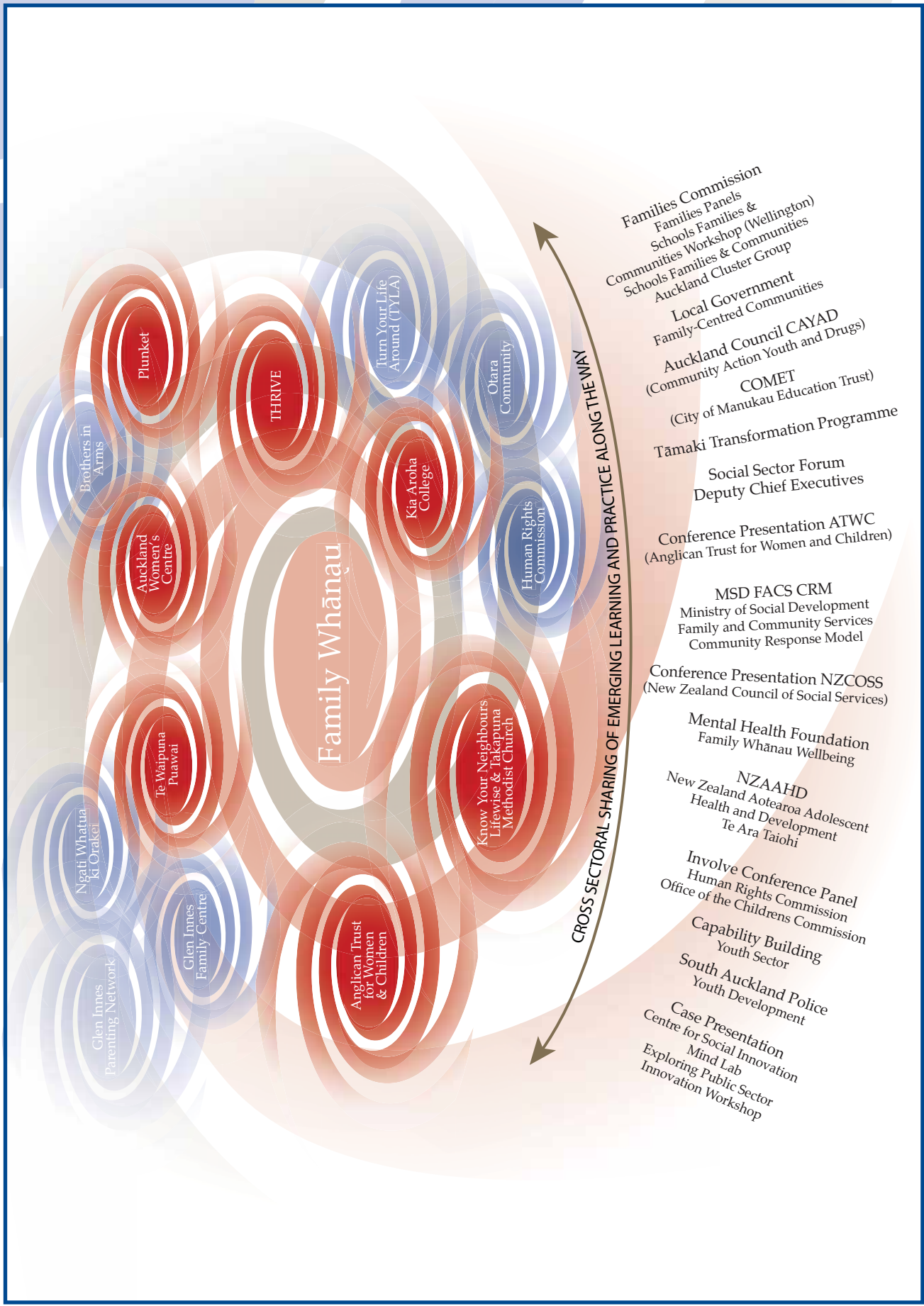
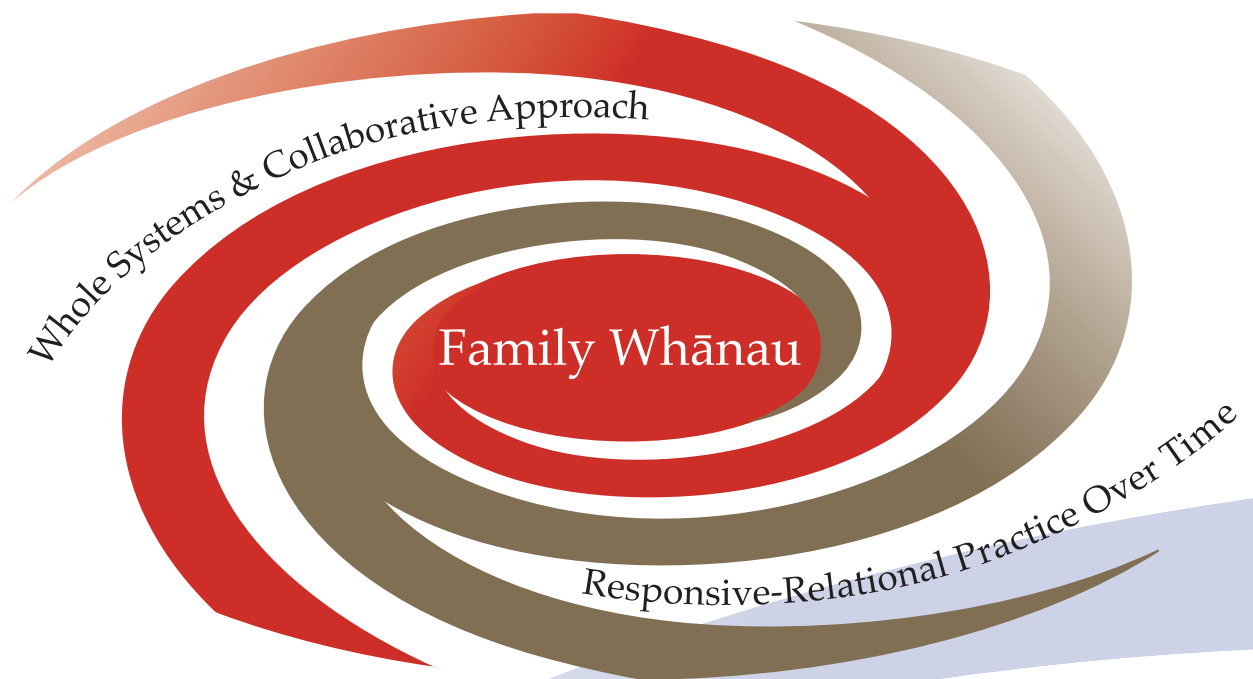


Figure 3: Collaborations & Learning Opportunities



Key Principles of Family Whānau Centred Innovative Practice

- Family whānau are at the centre of everything; of policy, process and practice. Service providers adopt a strengths-based authentic collaboration with families whānau. They work together to identify issues and aspirations that become the focus of attention for setting and achieving improved outcomes.
- Work is collaborative and oriented to developing a whole systems approach. It is holistic and systemic, working broadly within and across families whānau, communities, organisations and sectors.
- Practice is responsive-relational and continues over time. This means work is built around the development of respectful, trustworthy and responsive relationships with families whānau, other agencies and service providers – both Not-for-Profit and Government. Services and supports adopt a flexible ‘what it takes’ attitude to achieve whatever goals or outcomes are initially set and/or emerge as relationships develop.

It is important to note the crucial difference between effective principles of practice and the more widely used terms ‘models’ and ‘best practice’ (often associated with a programmatic framework). As with some programmes, ‘models’ and ‘best practices’ are specific and often highly prescriptive. In contrast, effective principles provide guidance and allow for variations of context, situations and circumstance. Guiding principles are readily transferable. A metaphor is the recipe - ‘add a teaspoon of salt’ = best practice prescription, and ‘season to taste’ = effective guidance principle (Patton 2011).

Key Principles of Family Whānau Centred Innovative Practice: Inquiry Questions

What do the webs and interconnections of systems thinking look like, feel like, work like – and for whom?

How do you/will you invest time to see, think and do complexity and interconnection?

Power-With: How do you/will you identify and respectfully engage everyone who needs to be in the room?

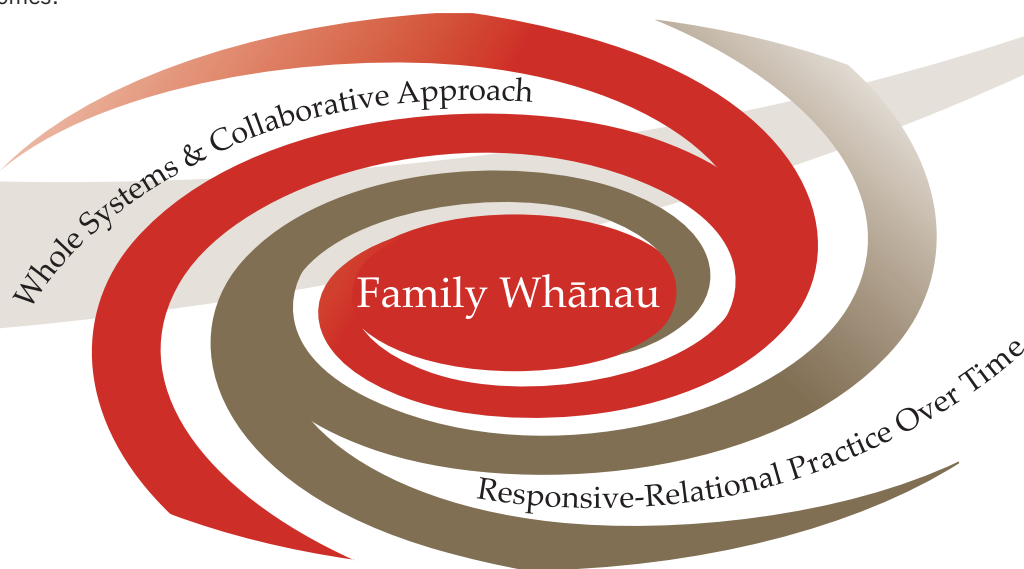
How do you/will you work together to collectively identify and explore each others assumptions and interests? Then... how do you/will you find and expand common ground, and jointly take ownership of, and be accountable for, agreed processes and outcomes?

What do you mean by authentic collaboration?

What does authentic collaborative practice look like, feel like, work like – and for whom?

How do you/will you develop and support authentic collaborative practice?

How do you/will you recognise, and then work with, a collaboration that is not working?



How do you/will you develop and support responsive relational practice?

How do you/will you develop and support reflection in and on your responsive-relational practice?

How do you/will you develop and support staff to work responsively within reflective, dynamic, and authentically collaborative relationships – doing ‘what it takes’ with families and colleagues over time?

What do you mean by respect?

How might your definition of respect be the same as, or different from, the families whānau you are working with and for?

What does authentic collaboration **with** families whānau look like, feel like, work like?

How do you/will you position and keep family whānau at the centre of everything, everyday? Policy, practice, funding, accountability...?

How do you/will you lead, resource, and support the development of a family whānau centred approach as core strategy in your organisation?

How do you/will you create the organisational will and dedication to weave authentic collaboration into your organisational fabric?

How do you/will you negotiate and balance the inevitable tensions - a persistent willingness to hang in there and do ‘what it takes’ with families whānau over time, with the need for ‘runs on the board’ (short and medium term goals and outcomes) while still playing the long game?

And so to the conversations...

In conversation with families whānau, conversations were always kanohi kitea (Smith, 1999) in the environs in which families whānau stand tall and play vital roles. As Durie et al (2003) note, working alongside, and participation as Māori in Te Ao Māori, has important implications for outcomes; linked to secure identity, vibrant Māori communities and enhanced whānau capacity. Allowing such conversations to take place around kitchen tables; while preparing kai for a weekend wānanga; while sweeping rubbish to care for Papatūānuku; while looking after baby so mum could eat her lunch during class time; or while listening to the banter of students as they debated who would win the weekend waka ama champs. On other occasions, the local library provided a warm hub for reflective learning conversations with Te Waipuna Puawai staff, while korero with students of Te Whānau o Tupuranga took place in the beautiful surrounds of the college's architecturally designed buildings.

In these conversations we engaged in rich, ongoing and meaningful dialogue. Importantly, these conversations with families whānau held their aspirations, their challenges; their frustrations; their happiness; their plans for the future and many other taonga.

In the following pages, I recall my conversations with two young mums (Tania and Halie) participating in Te Waipuna Puawai Young Mothers Support Group. These layered stories (Ely, Vinz, Downing, Anzul 1997) were re-created from notes and transcripts from a number of conversations over time. The poetic re-presentation from Kia Aroha College foregrounds the students, principal and staff stories in a way that focuses on the 'essence' of their experiences (Ely, 2007; Glesne, 1997).

Poetry [is] not just a method of organisation and presentation, it [is] also a practical and powerful method for analysing social worlds (Ward 2011, p. 360).

Looking through the eyes of young mums and through the eyes of students, the principal and teachers, these narrative accounts illuminate key characteristics, benefits and outcomes of a family whānau centred approach; what it looks like, feels like, works like, and for whom, in two different settings. The 'noticings' that follow the narratives highlight some of 'the differences that make a difference' in achieving effective outcomes.

*People's stories of their lives are tapu to them
Treat their stories with dignity
Treat them with sacredness
Stories come from a life
And the harder the life
The more sacred the stories*

Bobby Newson, Te Rārawa, Ngāpuhi
Kaihono, Families Commission



in conversation with families whānau



Tania's Story: 'I would talk... and they would listen'

There was something different about Tania. The first time we met, I noticed her immaculate presentation and, in our early conversations, her broad outlook on life became obvious. Was it that she had lived overseas and experienced a different way of living? Or was it the deeply grounded values in which she had been raised?

Tania embraces life with a freshness and a sound approach to providing for her son, her partner and her family. She has an assertive, positive attitude about keeping her family together. "I want us as a whānau to be strong," Tania explains. She is crystal clear that this aspiration for her family is non-negotiable. She holds dear the relationship commitments modelled by her parents and is determined to create long term relationships in her own life.

"I come from a really tight, loving family, and am the youngest of three siblings. I've learnt a lot from my mum. She's been with my dad since they were teenagers; they've been strong for our whānau throughout the years. There's so much aroha in our family."

I've come to know Tania through Te Waipuna Puawai Young Mothers Support Group. To sit alongside these young women is a privilege; they invite me in, to share in their learning, laughter, loss and frustration as they negotiate the often stormy waters of adolescence and parenthood.

Over a number of conversations, as I talk further with Tania, she offers snippets of the bigger picture of her life. She invites me into her home and into her family; a family that includes a collection of friends who, like her, are originally from Gisborne, or Gizzy, as they affectionately call it.

"I'm Ngāti Porou," she shares, over chitchat biscuits and coffee, while sitting at her kitchen table. Ryland, her 18-month-old son, is playing with puzzles nearby.

"I moved to Auckland to be with my partner and to start our family," she continues. My partner's family is from here [Auckland]. Living so close to Ryland's paternal grandparents in ELLerslie has meant lots of contact with them. They pick him up once a week for the night to give me and my partner a break."

Today, Tania is self-reflective as she talks about why she became involved in the group.

"I realise throughout my life I've held back on myself and that it takes me a while to open up to people. While it was hard for me to put myself out there to make new friends, I was ready to branch out. I'd just had a new baby and was stuck at home; I wanted to make a change and start socialising again. I never finished school and so I also wanted to complete credits and eventually become qualified."

A Parents as First Teachers (PAFT) worker introduced Tania to Te Waipuna Puawai. Receiving a follow-up text from a facilitator of the Young Mothers Support Group sparked a realisation for her that it was time to embrace a new challenge.

"It gets quite tough, being at home; you sort of feel like you're caved in and locked in. I saw that I wanted to be more than a stay-at-home mum. I wanted to get out and meet more people like me, especially other young women who had just had a baby."

As our relationship grows, we're able to explore what it is about Te Waipuna Puawai that has made a difference in her life. For the other girls, Te Waipuna Puawai offers a sense of whānau. For Tania, it's simple – Te Waipuna Puawai offers connections, support and options that enable her to grow socially and academically.

“I was surprised that the group facilitators were so young and energetic; and that they understood me. It excited me to be joining a group with people like this. At Te Waipuna Puawai, I feel like everyone is so supportive and no one is judging me; so I can just be myself. There are no expectations and no assumptions about how I should act. The staff are calm and relaxed, encouraging everyone to talk; it's a good supportive community. It's those connections that make me feel so supported with my decisions. I would talk and they would listen; this interaction was important to me. I trust the staff; they've opened my eyes to a lot and I see them helping other young mums. The staff opened doors for me and encouraged me to look at new things.”

At Te Waipuna Puawai, wrap-around support occurs in relationship and partnership with the young mothers and their families whānau. This approach helps to create the supportive environment that has enabled Tania to feel accepted and to explore options for higher learning. It nourished her confidence and encouraged her to enrol in the Foundation Studies Certificate (Head Start Programme) offered at Te Waipuna Puawai in partnership with Manukau Institute of Technology.

“While I was the youngest in my class, I enjoyed the mixture of age and learning from other people's points of view and experiences. There was a good learning environment, a good teacher and a good class. This learning environment helped me to grow and achieve my goals. I passed the Head Start Programme and graduated. Achieving this goal has left me feeling really awesome and inspired me to continue my studies. I learnt a whole set of new skills that will be useful when I continue studying in the future.”

“I recognise the need to continue learning and am now enrolled to do my learner licence; that's a must. Not having a licence is the one thing that's holding me back. Getting my licence means I will be independent; I'll be able to drive myself and Ryland to wherever we need to go, and we'll be sweet. I'll be able to go to work.”

Tania's goals are captured in a collage on the collective dream wall at Te Waipuna Puawai. The dream wall seeks to embody a vision of 'Whakamana te oranga wairua o te tangata me te whenua – the restoration of women, children and the earth'. Acting as the pou, this vision strengthens and enables Tania to aspire to reach her goals. This vision also ensures Ryland's health and wellbeing are at the forefront of the journey they are making together.

“While I was in class, bubba was just down the hall in the childcare centre. I didn't get the heebie jeebies at all about leaving him there because I felt so comfortable. While it took him a little longer to get used to childcare, once he settled, he loved it! Having quality childcare on site makes it a safe place for him and for me. I enjoy my time away from Ryland, and knowing he's down the corridor from my classroom helps me to focus on my studies.”

I share my thoughts with Tania about my participation in the Young Mothers Support Group over two terms. I reflect on the compliments paid to her by the various external facilitators. They valued her ability to massage baby and engage with Ryland in a way that attends to his every whim. They were also impressed to learn that Tania had received an award for attending the most group sessions. When I pass these compliments on to her, Tania responds with the humility of a much older and wiser woman.

“I take it in my stride and see myself doing the best I can to enhance my abilities, to make my life easier and to be a good mum to my son. I want us to live a fulfilling life.”

The holistic approach of Te Whare Tapa Whā (Durie, 1994) is embedded in the fabric of the Young Mothers Support Group. Each week the facilitators refer back to this Māori model of health and development, encouraging the women to reflect on the way in which they apply its four dimensions of wellbeing – Taha Tinana, Taha Wairua, Taha Whānau, Taha Hinengaro – in their lives. When I explore this holistic model with Tania, I find she has a working knowledge of its concepts and these ideas shape her lived reality.

“I know when I’m going through a good period or a low period, and not just for myself but also for my family, Te Whare Tapa Whā comes into all aspects of my life. I can identify what the triggers are and, while I may not have the answer, I know that both my partner and I need to go through it together, to grow as a family.”

We talk further, about where she wants to be in the future; her aspirations and her dreams.

“I’ve thought about it a lot and I want to be able to connect with, and to inspire, other young mums. I want to be able to continue to support and help other young mums from the basis of my lived experience. I also want to achieve the goals that I set out on my dream wall. I’ve been accepted to be a volunteer on the Young Mothers Support Group and, when the time is right, I’m also planning to go to university or take up further studies elsewhere.”



Being in relationship: noticing the difference that makes the difference in achieving effective outcomes

Notice that Tania was ready and waiting to branch out. Te Waipuna Puawai staff noticed this too, immediately tapping into ‘where Tania was at in her life’ and working collaboratively with her so that she could move towards naming and achieving her aspirations and *her* dreams for *her* life, based on *her* vision of a strong family whānau.

Notice the way Te Waipuna Puawai wrapped services around Tania and her family, encouraging a commitment on both sides to ongoing and intense work. Tania is hungry to learn and her learning is supported in a number of ways: a good environment, a good teacher, a good class. Of equal significance, bubba is being cared for ‘just down the hall’ and his needs are being met.

Notice what youth need to flourish and thrive: a solid foundation, strong connections to family whānau and to community, positive role models and supportive environments, which are also the hallmarks of the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa (2002). At Te Waipuna Puawai, these principles are grounded in values of aroha, manaaki and whanaungatanga, which resonate in Tania’s life because they characterised and shaped her upbringing.

Halie's Story: 'Don't judge me... relate to me'

Oh no! Had I got the day wrong? Does she still want to see me? Had I assumed too much about what I thought was a pretty solid relationship, only to find she's ditching me? I knock again on the front door, making a note to self to praise Halie on her freshly weeded flower beds.

I recall the last time I saw Halie, which was at the breakup of Te Waipuna Puawai Young Mothers Support Group. She and the other girls expressed anxiety about how they would stay together now that the group was coming to an end after two terms.

Halie was a core member of this group. Consistent, house proud, caring and independent, she didn't fit any of the labels often associated with being a young person choosing to have babies early.

Sitting in the car outside her home, I text her to say I had visited. Almost immediately she replies, apologising profusely for sleeping in and saying that if I'm not far away, to come back.

It's been a couple of months since we've seen one another and, now sitting in her lounge, I learn that a lot has changed in Halie's world.

"I'm pregnant!" she exclaims.

After the congratulatory niceties, we get down to what this news means for her, her whānau and her two-year-old son, Jack. She tells me that she's thought long and hard about having a second child and is still working through the complexities of what is the best option. With the support of her whānau, and the services based in her local community of Glen Innes, she believes she can confidently make an informed decision for the best possible outcome for her future. Halie's upbringing has taught her a lot about the importance of support.

"Support is so important 'coz it's an emotional ride," she explains. "I was raised in Kupe Street, Orākei, and went to primary and high school here. While not together, both my parents live in Auckland. My mum is a nurse who lives just down the road, near my nana. We're a tight unit on my mum's side. Orākei is such a small community; everyone knows everyone, and they're all kind of my family, so I call them all aunty and uncle."

When Jack was first born, Halie was introduced to Te Waipuna Puawai by the Plunket Nurse. "Why don't you check them out," she suggested. "The Plunket nurse gave Te Waipuna Puawai my phone number and they followed up with a phone call, but I wasn't ready to go at first. Then, about a year later, one of the facilitators of the Young Mothers Support Group rang again, to invite me to attend. The timing felt right, so I jumped on board.

Over time, Halie built a deep and trusted relationship with the staff of Te Waipuna Puawai, enabling staff to work more intensively with her, where and when she needed it. Staff opened doors for Halie, offering her the practical support she needed, such as advocacy, budgeting advice and community networking.

"The staff don't judge me. They relate well to youth; you feel that from them, like, they've dealt with us before. The staff would listen to me and support me with things; like when I had to appear in court to sort out my fines. They would come over and we would have these big talks, and they'd be straight up with me. They always helped if I was struggling and, even if they couldn't help directly, they would find someone who could. All the support I received left me feeling lighter, and because I was able to get this heaviness

off my chest, I felt heaps better. My relationship with Te Waipuna Puawai was never just about supporting me with stuff around my baby; I could ring the staff for advice on anything, for myself or for my friends.”

As I listen to Halie, I am reminded of the multiple layers and complexities that make up family life. The family whānau centred approach of Te Waipuna Puawai enables youth who have families early to navigate their way through some of the tides of change they encounter. Halie’s determination to make conscious decisions shows her growing maturity and assists her transition into parenthood while still negotiating adolescence.

I also recall that when I first met Halie, she had her own car and was always making plans to transport mums and babes to and from Te Waipuna Puawai, appointments, shopping centres and the beach. Her independence, her initiative and her yearning to awhi people served as a marked contrast to the negative stereotypes often associated with youth. Access to transport also allowed the young mums to connect socially, for peer support, away from Te Waipuna Puawai. The tight dynamics of the group will help to sustain relationships long after the course is over.

“I would pick up another mum to go do our shopping, and then take our kids up to Bastion Point or to the playground, so they could have a play and we could have a catch up. These catch-ups were important ‘coz if I missed a support session, I felt like I was really missing out on something.”

During our regular conversations, Halie shared her insights on parenting, the challenges she faces, and the lessons she’s learnt at the Young Mothers Support Group that will help her to parent differently with Jack.

“Everyone brought their kids to the Young Mothers Support Group and we’d talk about totally different things, not just about our labour, but things like how to deal with our children when they were misbehaving, or our plans for studying for a future career path. We also kept journals, so we could see how we were doing. The group facilitators gave us opportunities to be involved in the community and feel a part of it, like taking us down to get a library card. I love reading books, and even though I could have done this on my own, it felt better going with the group.”

Halie shared the intimate letters that she and her partner had written to their son when he was a newborn. These letters, and the photos of each parent holding Jack, are lovingly placed as the centerpiece in Halie’s journal. This precious book holds all her new learning, reflections on parenting and time-tested recipes.

“I used the recipes from the cooking session when I cooked for my whānau, and all the recipes turned out good.”

On one occasion, I question the significance of the concepts of Te Whare Tapa Whā² in her everyday life. Halie looks at me with a puzzled look. “What do you mean?” she asks. She understood the concepts of holistic wellbeing intrinsic to this approach, but she thought it was strange for me to isolate this notion. For Halie, Te Whare Tapa Whā is not so much an idea, but rather a lived reality.

“I’m Cook Island Pākehā. I was raised with the influence of Māori culture and doing kapa haka; so it feels natural to be at Te Waipuna Puawai. I used to love it there, because I never felt out of place. It feels different when things aren’t ‘Māorified’. I’ve been to other courses and like them, but it’s just different at Te Waipuna Puawai; it’s a feeling, I feel really comfortable there. Our course was based a lot on the concepts of Te Whare Tapa Whā, and the Wahine Pou, and in Glen Innes, there’s lots of places like my doctor’s office at Ngāti Whātua ō Orākei Health Service that makes me feel comfortable because of that.”

² According to Mason Durie (1994, p. 70), Te Whare Tapa Whā is a Māori model of health, which recognises four dimensions of wellbeing: Taha Tinana (physical health), Taha Wairua (spiritual health), Taha Whānau (family health) and Taha Hinengaro (mental health).

Another time, I ask Halie about her plans for the future. I recall that, as a member of the Young Mothers Support Group, Halie was encouraged to identify aspirations and goals for her life, and add these to a collective dream wall. Halie was also asked to think about how her aspirations and goals would be more achievable with the support of whānau and others.

“I still want to be living in Auckland in five years time, in this house; it’s comfortable, it’s in the neighborhood where I was born and raised; I know everyone and I feel safe at night to walk around. My other goal is to get an education. I got kicked out of school at 13 and then couldn’t get accepted into any other schools. I just jumped from course to course to course, till I was 18. I was planning to go to university this year, but after talking with my mum, I decided to put it on hold, so as to focus on Jack. I want to continue studying and I know Te Waipuna Puawai will support me to continue studying in the future.

Being in relationship: noticing the difference that makes the difference in achieving effective outcomes

Notice networking and how Te Waipuna Puawai staff connect Halie into local services that are responsive to her needs. Te Waipuna Puawai cultivates and maintains collaborative relationships with local agencies that share a family whānau centred approach, so Halie and other young mums can reap the benefits. A collaborative relationship enables Halie to experience a seamless transition from one agency to another.

Notice that the holistic approach of Te Waipuna Puawai supports Halie to navigate her way through the challenges she faces, assisting her to make the kind of decisions that are likely to have long term positive outcomes. A deep and trusted relationship enables staff to respectfully challenge Halie while keeping her self-determination at the heart of decision-making now and in the future.

Notice how Te Waipuna Puawai staff keep the door open for a new life. Halie knows she is always able to call on its staff for help, for herself or for her friends. She is also encouraged to aspire to achieve goals for higher learning by an organisation which understands and accepts her as a young adult who has chosen to raise her child early. She is neither deemed to be troublesome nor judged for her decisions, but rather treated as someone capable of shaping her own path.

Te Whānau o Tupuranga: Tūturu ki te kaupapa

Ka ruia te kakano kei nga rangatahi, kia tipu ai nga hua, whangaia ki nga tupuranga
Plant the seed in the young, it will flourish and bear fruit to nourish future generations

Every morning before class
We recite this creed:

Me tū hei Māori tūturu
I can't experience success in anything else
Until I experience success in being Māori

For us students, being Māori is about
Knowing your true identity
 Your maunga, your awa, your marae
Knowing who you are
 Your iwi, your hapū, your whakapapa
Knowing the ground on which you stand
 Your tūrangawaewae
We won't know ourselves
Until we know how to be Māori

I would be lost if I didn't know who I was

As Principal
I'm constantly thinking about the bigger picture
How to nurture Warrior Scholars to become leaders of the future
To succeed, our kids have to know who they are
 Culture matters whānau matters
If identity and relationships are strong
Our young people will flourish
 And achieve academically

This is a political message
We're saying this:
Stand up
Stand up for your language
Stand up for your right to be Māori
Make sure our history doesn't die

*'Coz our children are really important
They need to know who they are
That's why I care.*

*Yeah, we have to pass down our knowledge
What we've learnt from this school
Send our kids here*

For us teachers
Tupuranga is a place that breeds leaders
 We say to our students
We will help you to become leaders
To acknowledge that you have skills
 We will nurture those skills
Because you are the leaders of the future

Our Tupuranga creed says:
'Teach and be teachable'

Being Māori, it's not just physical, it's spiritual
It's social, it's a whole lot of things
It connects us to where we're from
Like if it wasn't for our tupuna
We wouldn't be here; we're privileged to be here
Our tupuna fought for us
Died for this land
Think about the struggle they went through
The struggle hasn't ended
We're doing it for them
And whānau to come

We're about whānau
Whether it's your whānau kura
Or your whānau at home
Your up north whānau
Or the whānau you never met
When you're together, that's whānau
That's the connection

When you first start here
You meet people
You connect you click
You make heaps of friends
You start knowing the whole whānau
The teachers, they're like your second Mum or Dad
Another whole whānau
At Tupuranga, we're treated like people.
This kura is our haven; here, we feel safe

*I leave my house walk down the road
And I'm home again
If I ever have trouble at home I know
I can always lean on the teachers to help me
And the teachers will help every way they can
It's 'coz of aroha*

Yeah aroha

Here, we encourage teachers
To treat students as if they were nieces or nephews

*As an Aunty, I don't care
Whether my nieces and nephews like me
Because I love them*

The kids know no matter what they do
We won't give up on them
At Tupuranga, that's where it's at
In terms of an authentic relationship

Sometimes we get up to no good
This is Ōtara and we roam the streets
But with kapahaka, we can't do any of that stuff
Kapahaka gives us an extra kick

*Come to kapas, the Year 13s told us
Keep you out of trouble, keep you motivated*

Kapahaka keeps us disciplined having fun
We achieve something have goals to win
There's a buzz in being on the stage
Doing all the actions
Keeping the audience entertained showing form
Getting our school name out there

*New people would come in
And they wouldn't know anything
They would do stuff
And end up getting good at it
You just help them along
They bring their knowledge into the singing
Yeah It's mean*

Yeah! You're proud of yourself

Here we can show what we can do
We can express ourselves
Be who we want to be
We've bonded because of kapahaka
It brings us together

We all have roles to play
Every morning after karakia
One of the boys will stand up and mihi
Acknowledge everybody for being here
Acknowledge our whare and all that we have
That's just one role, the role of tautoko

Over the past few years, our roopu tautoko
have gone to regionals, Polyfest, Ahurea
To perform haka
They may be a small group
But when they stand up
And start doing 'Ko te waka'
Around the edges you begin to see
A whole heap of former students
Stand up
To haka tautoko

*This kaupapa has been going for 25 years
It's important that our kids realise
They're part of a bigger picture
It's not just about them*

The school has high expectations
Yeah teachers expect us to work and study
Everyday everywhere
To put in the time and the effort
To aim for the very best in all things

*We work hard it's so disciplined here
But there's always awahi*

*When I was in mainstream
There were hardly any teachers helping you
This school gives you a clear understanding
Of what you're doing
And if you don't get it, you can go to another teacher
Who will simplify it for you
So that you understand fully
What you're supposed to be doing*

*There's always at least two teachers to help you
Even the ones on release*

We don't consider it a job
We have a role to play in the whānau
That's what it is
It's about being there for our kids
Having high expectations for excellence in learning
Culturally, socially *and* academically
So our kids have choices for their future
We just want our kids to be awesome

Looking to the future
We will know who we are as Māori
We will identify ourselves as Warrior Scholars
We will be articulate thinkers speakers activists
We will take ownership of our physical and spiritual wellbeing
We will make decisions about what feels okay for us
We will demonstrate a strong work ethic
We will go on to achieve

When we leave school
Our future pathway will be clear
We will have left our mark on Te Whānau o Tupuranga
And the door will be open for our return
At this place of learning
Commitment to the kaupapa is everything
Tūturu ki te kaupapa

Being in relationship: noticing the difference that makes the difference in achieving effective outcomes

Notice a shared vision focused on developing warrior scholars to be leaders for the future. Tupuranga fosters a commitment to standing up and standing strong, knowing your identity, knowing who you are, knowing the ground on which you stand, enabling youth to experience success in being Māori.

Notice the emphasis placed on the interconnectedness of relationship. In this school, teachers treat students as if they were their nieces or nephews and students regard teachers like their second mum or dad. A 'pedagogy of whānau' (Smith 1995; Milne 2011) creates a conducive learning environment in which students can succeed and parents can participate actively in their child's learning.

Notice the impact of kapahaka and how the principles of 'kapas' transfer to the classroom, enabling relationships, connectedness, learning, discipline, motivation to succeed, achievement of goals and pride. Kapahaka supports Tupuranga youth to express who they are and be who they want to be, so they can succeed socially, culturally *and* academically.

In relationship – on reflection

In relationship and on reflection, Tania said:

I shared the story with my whānau
And they were blown away
It's beautiful; it resonates
I can hear my voice
Talking with you, having these conversations
Thank you for doing that
I love it.

In relationship and on reflection, Halie said:

I can hear myself
Especially in the places that talk about being 'Māorified'
It's all good.

In relationship and on reflection, students, staff and principal of Kia Aroha College, Te Whānau o Tupuranga said:

This poem captures so much
Every line is a really important line
Others have come to write our story
But they've missed it and lost it.
It's awesome to hear korero that is ours
This poem actually sounds like us
All the different facets of it
Show our whole way of doing things
It's what's said and what's not said
The feeling and wairua is there
It's real; it has the pretty bits and the not so pretty bits
This poem explains our kura, Kia Aroha College
And shows the whanaungatanga, manaakitanga,
Aroha, awhi and tikanga that we experience here.

in and on reflection



Thriving in practice

We introduced this resource with a principle-based approach to family whānau centred practice. This approach puts family whānau at the centre of everything, every day. Building on this approach, we then presented family whānau stories to illuminate ‘what is the difference that makes the difference’ in working with families whānau to achieve effective outcomes.

Te Waipuna Puawai is a thriving community development initiative, improving the lives of families whānau living in Glen Innes and surrounding areas. Among other initiatives, Te Waipuna Puawai has developed a Young Mothers Support Group that offers second chance education opportunities to young mothers and early childhood care and education for their children.

Kia Aroha College is situated in South Auckland. Within this College sits Te Whānau o Tupuranga, a whānau-based, Māori-centred education unit with a strong emphasis on a whole systems collaborative approach. Centred on relationships and excellence, grounded in a critical pedagogy and a social justice foundation, Te Whānau o Tupuranga shapes and nurtures ‘Warrior Scholars’.

Here we reflect on a selection of questions posed at the beginning of this resource, to further illuminate what a family whānau centred approach looks like, feels like, works like in practice, and for whom, in these two settings.



At Te Waipuna Puawai, what does authentic collaborative practice look like, feel like, work like – and for whom?

Te Waipuna Puawai staff cultivate relationships and forge partnerships with key organisations in the community. These partnerships are grounded in a commitment to mutuality, reciprocity and collaboration. All parts contribute to the whole in a relationship in which no one holds more power than the other, and each engages in a process of shared power, based on respect, humility, trust and transparency.

They are like a sister organisation to us, I feel comfortable to make myself a cup of tea and help myself in the kitchen when I come here and when they come to our office, they feel the same. (From a conversation with the Breastfeeding Coordinator from Ngāti Whātua ō Orākei Health Services)

In it for the 'long haul,' Te Waipuna Puawai and its partners work to maximise the benefits of a collaborative approach by focusing on long term positive outcomes for families whānau and the communities in which they live. When delivering workshops in the community, partners not only contribute resources, (such as transportation for young mums and babies, workshop venues and kai) but also negotiate among themselves how to best utilise and manage these, to ensure the wellbeing of young mums and their children.

Since we don't have a van and you do, how about you [Te Waipuna Puawai] do pick ups and drop offs and we [Ngāti Whātua ō Orākei Health Services and Birthcare] take turns to buy, bake and prepare the kai for our weekly workshops? (From a conversation between, Young Mums Facilitator, Breastfeeding Coordinator and Child Birth Educator.)

Striving to evolve a respectful relationship with Ruapotaka Marae has led Te Waipuna Puawai to embrace its manaaki. This centrally located marae offers a unique setting that is not only accessible to and comfortable for family whānau engaging with Te Waipuna Puawai services but also more appropriate for certain workshops. For example holding childbirth learning workshops on the marae allows the young mums to explore questions most on their minds and reflect on their own many and varied lived realities. Through its relationship with Ruapotaka Marae, Te Waipuna Puawai can deliver childbirth learning that recognises, and is inclusive of, various forms of knowledge such as health and wellbeing, tikanga-based practices, and participant experiences and worldviews. Creating an environment in which young mums feel respected and safe enables them to become active participants in a journey of change focussed on *their* aspirations for *their* family whānau.

This work thrives on values that are shared by Te Waipuna Puawai practitioners and partner organisations. They are passionate about educating and assisting young mums to become active and informed decision makers. They also recognise the importance of youth development and its interconnectedness with a community development approach.

How does Te Waipuna Puawai position and keep family whānau at the centre of everything, everyday?

Practice

Locally, Te Waipuna Puawai is known for its careful listening to the aspirations and needs of the community. It knows it cannot be all things to all people who seek its assistance. It therefore works hard to establish and maintain community connectedness that will open doors to new futures for families whānau engaging with its services. Staff align to the vision, mission and values of Nga Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand to support a holistic stepping stone approach that wraps services around families whānau. Te Waipuna Puawai invests in the professional development of its staff, building in both internal and external supervision, annual team reflection days, and time to enable staff to participate actively in network meetings. Staff use various communication tools (including texts and emails), taking their cue from families whānau who determine which of these best suit them at any given time.

Funding

Before pursuing funding opportunities Te Waipuna Puawai considers whether or not there is a fit with its core philosophies and values, and in particular whether the funding allows for a family whānau centred approach. At the same time, it generates its own income so as to provide funding with no strings attached. It currently operates a recycled clothing shop and is on track to launch a second one in another part of town. Te Waipuna Puawai is not afraid to challenge competitive funding models that run counter to a family whānau centred approach and does so through on-going discussions with government agencies and its contributions to policy forums.

Accountability

When it comes to accountability, Te Waipuna Puawai puts families whānau at the centre: their experience, their knowledge, their outcomes and their assessment of service delivery. A dual concern is to honour the vision and mission entrusted in its care by the Sisters of Mercy and by the Glen Innes community as well as to maximise the funding dollar so it is used to best effect.

By means of a multi-layered approach, Te Waipuna Puawai exercises accountability:

- **back to families whānau** (through ongoing feedback and robust evaluation)
- **back to communities** (through community hui and presentations)
- **back to organisational partners** (through reports and the annual Gratitude Cafe)
- **back to the leadership of Nga Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand** (through Annual General Meetings and board reports)
- **back to funders** (through financial reports and statistical information).

How does Te Waipuna Puawai create the organisational will and dedication to develop and support authentic collaboration to be intrinsically woven through its organisational fabric?

Integral to the organisational fabric of Te Waipuna Puawai are its commitments to Papatūānuku, Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Tikanga Atawhai. Woven together, these commitments challenge staff and volunteers to support and build relationships that connect whānau to whānau, whānau into local community, whānau to place. These commitments are grounded in a legacy of Mercy that spans over 150 years and also responds to an invitation from the community of Glen Innes to forge a place-based community development initiative.

In working with families whānau, Te Waipuna Puawai takes the long view and expects to be around for as long as it is needed. Relationships endure over time, adapting to changing circumstances, needs and aspirations. For some families whānau, this may mean a 'five plus' year relationship, for others a brief engagement. Doing "what it takes" (Boulden 2010), staff seek to strengthen their capacity to be self-determining and to make decisions that promote family whānau wellbeing and prosperity.

Te Waipuna Puawai also invests time and expertise in community-led initiatives. Exercising will and dedication, Te Waipuna Puawai staff work with others in the community to develop and implement processes that support the active engagement of whānau, groups, organisations and communities in Tāmaki initiatives, such as the community-led Tāmaki Inclusive Engagement Strategy (TIES Team 2010) and the Tāmaki Alliance, and the Government-led Tāmaki Transformation Programme.



How does Kia Aroha College develop and support authentic collaborative practice?

The history of Kia Aroha College spans 25 years and during this time its principal has worked with board members, staff, students, whānau and community to shape and build the kaupapa of the school. Here, authentic collaboration is based on ongoing, reciprocal and mutually beneficial engagements at all levels.

Teachers seeking a position at Kia Aroha are expected to embrace a family whānau centred approach in their work. The college employs culturally responsive teachers who are focused on developing the intellectual, social, emotional and political learning of students. To nurture well rounded teachers, the college actively fosters a commitment to, and invests in, ongoing professional development.

Kia Aroha busts the myths and stigma often associated with 'sitting outside the principal's office'. Instead of youth slumped in straight back chairs contemplating their demise, at Kia Aroha College the look and feel of life outside the principal's office is very different.

“There's a lively hustle and bustle; it's like Grand Central Station.”

Teachers, students and former students relax in comfy couches and chairs, in and outside offices, engrossed in conversation. Entering into this space, whānau and visitors experience first-hand what this College is known for: its aroha, manaaki and whanaungatanga. As students pass by manuhiri, they welcome them to the College and ensure that they have what they need until teachers and/or students are free.

“Whaea, are you okay? Does Whaea Haley know you're here? Can I get you a cup of tea while you wait?”

This school believes in its students – past and present. When students leave the college their relationship with it does not end.

“Once you're here, you're always part of Tupuranga.”

Kia Aroha College encourages former students to continue their involvement with and in the school, acting in a 'tuakana teina' relationship (Bishop and Glynn 1999, p. 79) that allows them to become part of the process of handing over its mauri to senior students so the kaupapa may continue to grow and flourish. The college also harnesses the expertise and skills of former students in other ways, such as, inviting some to take up the role of kaiāwhina.



At Kia Aroha College, what do the webs and interconnections of systems thinking look like, feel like, work like – and for whom?

Negotiating its way through the intricate webs and interconnections of systems thinking, Kia Aroha College redefines the educational landscape to invite, enable and challenge students to become and be 'warrior scholars'. If Māori are to succeed as Māori in the context of mainstream education, then whānau and identity must be at the centre of academic achievement.

To thrive, Kia Aroha College recognises the significance of the marae and its wharekai to the whole school system. The marae breathes life into the school, energising the vitality and commitments of its people. Its life and life-force are interconnected with the life and life-force of the college.

Kia Aroha Marae, Kia Aroha College.

The wellbeing and achievement of students is nurtured by the aroha, manaakitanga and whanaungatanga underpinning the marae and permeating the college. Whānau who live by these values invest hours and weekends of their time to support the kaupapa and learning that happens on the marae, long after the conch is blown to tell students that the school day is now over.

To enter into the wharekai is to enter into the very heart of Kia Aroha College. Everything is meticulous, organised and has a home. Cupboard corners are clean, shelves labelled and tidily stacked roasting dishes await their calling at the next noho. With the support of the whole school community, time-tested roles and responsibilities are exercised with clockwork precision and high levels of professionalism. Whānau work in sync, fulfilling the responsibilities of manaakitanga.

As the arms of manaakitanga stretch out to embrace and hold the manuhiri, so too the arms of the social worker/head chef wrap around and hold the students. Arriving on time for their appointments, these youth know that there are jobs to be done. Without prompting, dishes are dried and cake mix is beaten as meaningful dialogue picks up from where it last left off. Such tasks offer a welcome distraction as the social worker/head chef strategises with students to support their plans for wellbeing. Experienced ringawera know the drill and honour the confidentiality of these conversations. They move their workstations or take up jobs out of earshot, continuing their mahi with that deep bellied laughter that characterises a bustling wharekai. At Kia Aroha College, former students become the ringawera, returning to help and support Whaea when she needs someone to lend a hand.



Power-With: How does Kia Aroha College identify and respectfully engage everyone who needs to be in the room?

In the boardroom, at the governance level

At Kia Aroha College nothing is hidden. Award-winning architectural design supports transparency and accessibility. The boardroom is located on the ground floor of the main administration block and is adjacent to a main thoroughfare. Wall length, floor to ceiling windows invite students and other passers-by to observe the board at work. The tangible transparency of this bright open space communicates to all that decisions are not made behind closed doors or in isolation, but rather in full view of the school community. This space is not the exclusive domain of the board; at Kia Aroha College, staff, students, parents and visitors can use this room for meetings.

Board meetings start with karakia and whakawhanaungatanga, then move to the day's business, which at Kia Aroha College inevitably leads to discussion on the academic success and wellbeing of students. Whānau contributors sit forward in their chairs, making notes as issues arise and questioning what this or that means for the students and family whānau in this school community.

At the governance table, a 'power-with' approach redistributes power, enabling a mutually beneficial relationship in which whānau are no longer positioned 'at the periphery' but rather 'at the centre.' When it comes to decision-making, the priorities and aspirations of whānau are located front and centre. Kia Aroha College creates the space for family whānau to engage in decision making on a more equal footing. The board has representatives of each of the predominant ethnic groups in the College. These representatives bring wider family whānau issues from their regular parent meetings to board discussions, enabling parent voices to be heard.

Ann Milne Principal of Kia Aroha College holds the view that if our whānau play an active role in decision-making, they are more likely to feel ownership of College decisions.

Working together around the governance table, whānau and staff discuss and decide how best to deliver the curriculum, organise classes and invest in resources so as to facilitate student learning, foster wellbeing and realise future plans. Here, knowledge is power, and everyone shares it. Whānau and community knowledge are valued alongside professional and academic knowledge. Whānau come to the board table to share knowledge and, when necessary, respectfully challenge the school. The school welcomes their knowledge and rises to the challenge, knowing that everyone is committed to shaping and ensuring the development of 'warrior scholars'.

In the classroom, at the learner level

In the classroom, power doesn't sit with the teacher. Instead, power lies in a two way learning relationship, an exchange characterised by self-determination and knowledge-sharing space. Rather than being a repository of 'expert' knowledge, the teacher takes a facilitative and explorative role, offering students checkpoints as they negotiate the twists and turns of their learning journey, and assisting them to plan a pathway of success.

In the classroom, teachers establish positive long term relationships so, "You know us, we know you." Having students stay with the same teacher for as long as possible, and maintain relationships over time, builds their sense of manaaki and whanaungatanga, and nourishes the relationship between home and school.

“We work like a whānau. We learn from whānau. We say to them, ‘What do you do at home, maybe we can learn from that?’ This kind of approach is completely different from the, ‘Your kids are terrible’ type of approach. I think we have to learn how to interact with parents and kids. If kids come to appreciate that home and school are working together, then more often than not, they will change their behaviours because they realise that acting inappropriately is not acceptable. Testing boundaries is part of growing up; and as teachers we keep a check on the boundaries so as to guide students along a good path.” (From a conversation between two teachers in Te Whānau o Tupuranga)

For their part, students recoil at the thought of being handed a detention from a peer. “I would prefer to have consequences from a teacher, rather than my peers... That’s just shames!”

Here, teachers strongly encourage students to be responsible for their own learning, plan their time constructively, and monitor their own academic achievements. Unit standards and NCEA credits are posted on classroom walls so that students can review their progress and determine the credits they need to achieve within the framework of the curriculum.

At Kia Aroha College, learning is shared – you receive it, you share it, you give back to other learners remarks Kue from Clubhouse 274.

Everything as Milne (2011) states in A Pedagogy of Whānau is grounded in a collective, cooperative, collaborative and reciprocal approach, including teaching and learning.



'Humanising the work'

The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes. (Marcel Proust 1871-1922)

In taking this relational journey, I was invited into the life of two exemplar organisations – Te Waipuna Puawai and Kia Aroha College. These exemplars are nestled within the optimism and resilience of their communities (Blum 1998). I was also invited into the lives of the families whānau with whom they work.

People at Te Waipuna Puawai and Kia Aroha College work in a manner that is non-judgmental, compassionate, generous and hope-full. They have the willingness and the humility to step into someone else's shoes. Taking a long term view, all involved 'uprise the positives and downsize the negatives' to build and strengthen the social, economic and cultural fabric of families whānau and community wellbeing (New Economics Foundation 2004).

"We need to do more of what works," says Sam Chapman, Ōtara Community Leader and 2010 recipient of the New Zealander of the Year Local Hero Award. According to Tāmaki Community Leader Alfred Ngaro, 2009 recipient of the Sir Peter Blake Emerging Leaders Award, "If you want a meaningful relationship with [families whānau and community] then you have to invest time and show [them] that you genuinely care about their interests and seek to act with integrity of purpose" (TIES Team 2010, p.105).

Let us "humanise the work" says Bruce Maden, Chief Executive of Te Aroha Noa in Palmerston North.

To find out what works, listen to the voices of families whānau and to those exemplars who have worked with them over time. Create a space to hold and value the stories and knowledges of communities, and treat these with the same regard that professional and academic knowledges are treated. Reject deficit and blaming explanations that label and stigmatise families, whānau and communities (Shields, Bishop & Mazawi 2005; Bishop 2007). Engage in authentic collaboration with families whānau. Focus on achieving sustainable outcomes for wellbeing and work to illuminate and harness the resilience, agency, determination and aspirations of families whānau and communities (SECPHO et al 2009; Inspiring Communities 2010).

To humanise the work, and recognise we are all in it together, exemplars like Te Waipuna Puawai and Kia Aroha College, position families whānau as "knowledge equals" (Flood 1999), at the centre of everything, every day. They create the space for families whānau to speak for themselves. They take the time to listen to families whānau, learning from their journeys and paying attention to their aspirations.

To humanise the work, people here work intentionally, and pause often; to reflect on, learn from and act on what families whānau experience and name as 'the difference that makes the difference.'

Looking through these new eyes opens up the possibility of seeing new perspectives and new approaches. Instead of 'looking at' and 'doing to' families whānau, it's time to follow the lead of exemplars like Te Waipuna Puawai and Kia Aroha College, who consistently demonstrate 'being respectful, earning respect; being trustworthy, earning trust' through 'responsive relational practice over time.' These exemplars show how a principle-based, family whānau centered approach grounded in authentic collaboration works to achieve sustainable outcomes for family whānau wellbeing over time.

“What’s the difference that’s made the difference for your learning?” I asked two boys at Kia Aroha College during my final conversation with them.

“It’s ‘coz of aroha,” one said, and the other agreed.

“Yeah... aroha.”





**references, appendix, and
glossary of Māori terms**

A decorative graphic consisting of several overlapping, curved bands in shades of purple, lavender, and light green, positioned in the lower right quadrant of the page.

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Previous 'Innovative Practice' work in the Families Commission–A Summary

For a number of years the Families Commission has supported studies from independent researchers on new ways to improve the effectiveness of family services. On the 7 May 2009 the Commission hosted a workshop called '*Innovative Practice in Family Services*' that brought together six services supported by the Commission to explore their innovative practices and share their findings more widely.

- Te Aroha Noa Community Services, Highbury, Palmerston North.
- SECPHO South East and City Primary Health Organisation, Newtown, Wellington.
- Victory Primary School and Victory Community Health Centre, Nelson.
- School Connections Programme, Presbyterian Support Upper South Island.
- Kia Whakakotahi, the Taita College Project.
- Focusing on Families – Family Inclusion in Mental Health Services, Nelson Marlborough District Health Board.

Eight key characteristics of innovative practice in family services emerged from this workshop. These were subsequently worked into an '**Eight plus Eight**' framework that informed the beginning of the action inquiry journey recounted in this resource.

1. **Family and community centred**–Families and communities were at the centre, not the systems or programmes on offer. Services took 'whole family' approaches, looking beyond presenting problems and individual circumstances. Services recognised the importance and potential of seeing families in a wider ecological context. Services invested in understanding their community and seeing opportunities.
2. **Relationships**–Relationships were fundamental to the way these services worked with families and other providers and communities. The quality of the relationship was inseparable from the task at hand. As one participant noted: *Build it and they won't come; Build relationships and they will come*. Relationships allowed the services to be adaptive because they were much more aware of family and community strengths and needs. Solid relationships also suited the often long term focus of these participants. Three specific elements of relationships were commonly mentioned – trust, respect and listening.
3. **Intensive commitment**–In striving to do more for families and communities, services showed the following characteristics: taking time, being preventative, courage, honesty, listening, intimacy, immersion and warmth. Services were in it for the 'long haul' with individual families and communities as a whole. Services saw their work as intensively investing in people through a preventative approach, rather than fixing problems later.
4. **Leadership**–Services saw themselves as centres for families and communities. This included being a broker between families and services and as a conduit for the physical integration of services. Family and community needs were matched with resources and opportunities and services focused on this coordinating and *value adding* role rather than necessarily taking on a service delivery role themselves.

5. **Strengths-based**–Services saw families and communities as holding the capabilities to lead their own change. Services were there to assist families and communities to recognise and activate these capabilities. Interventions should be focused on building on families' strengths and aspirations rather than focusing exclusively on fixing problems. These services leveraged community resources, skills and experience by investing in relationships with community leaders and brokers. Finding out what communities and families actually wanted, and being led by these discoveries was a common strategy.
6. **Flexibility and creativity**–Services embraced the uncertainty and complexity by choosing to be led by family and community aspirations and needs. Services adapted as family and community needs and aspirations evolved. Being flexible sometimes meant starting slowly, testing and refining, and being continually sensitive to change and opportunities rather than becoming fixed into a set approach or programme. Creativity included thinking outside the box, risk-taking and learning from failure, having the courage to change what was not effective, valuing recreational activities as opportunities to start family and community change, embracing uncertainty, and finding opportunity in chaos.
7. **Hope-full** (*ie full of hope*)–Services were working with families and communities for whom many interventions had not worked. There was a driving optimism and commitment to change entrenched patterns of poor outcomes and old ways of understanding and addressing needs. This sometimes involved working at multiple levels and across different agencies to promote a stronger environment for families and communities.
8. **Way of being**–Services noted that that their approach intuitively felt right. They had a guiding vision which had real currency. Services had experienced major changes in practice in response to seeing that existing ways of working were not effective. Reflection was common including critical analysis of what was and was not working. Walking the talk was important – organisational relationships operated by the same principles as those with families and communities.

Eight Elements of Organisational Sustainability

Adapted from Michael Fullan's (2005) Frameworks for Implementing Systemic and Sustainable Organisational Change³

1. Family-centred services with a moral purpose

Purpose that must transcend individuals to become a system and organization quality in which collectivities are committed to:

- Raising the bar and working effectively to provide improved family-centred services and outcomes.
- Treating people with demanding respect (moral purpose is supportive, responsive and demanding depending on the circumstances).
- Altering the social environment for the better.

2. Commitment to changing to a family-centred context at all levels

Changing whole systems means changing the entire context within which people work.

3. Lateral capacity building through networks

Developing new network strategies and relationships across all levels of the system.

4. Intelligent accountability and vertical relationships (capacity building and accountability)

Requires both local ownership and external accountability in the entire system. An accountability framework, which puts a premium on ensuring effective and ongoing self-evaluation in every facet of an organisation's work combined with more focused external accountability and feedback loops linked closely to effective improvements for families (this means family voices are at the centre of service/ programme evaluations).

5. Deep learning

Trusting and collaborative learning cultures of inquiry that enable deep and consequential changes in organisational practices. A culture which encourages innovation and risk taking, in which failure is given a different meaning as a necessary element in making progress.

6. Dual commitment to short-term and long-term results

Achieving tangible results in a timely way, while maintaining a focus on, and building commitment to long-term goals.

7. Cyclical energising

Cycles of push and recovery and the ability to work effectively without burning out. Must be a capacity of both the individual and the system.

8. The long lever of leadership

- Strategic leadership
- Content and process leadership
- Joined-up and distributed leadership
- 'Leaderful' (Raelin, 2003) practice to build individual, interpersonal and organisational capacities and learning communities, (Concurrent, Collective, Collaborative and Compassionate practice)

³ Full explanations and examples of these constructs in action can be found in Fullan (2005), Leadership and Sustainability: System Thinkers in Action, Corwin Press. See Also Raelin, J (2003) Creating Leaderful Organisations, Berrett-Koeler Publishers

Aroha	To love, feel concern for, feel compassion, empathise
Awhi	To embrace, cherish
Haka tautoko	Acknowledgement of an achievement, by the expression of a haka
Hapū	Kinship group, subtribe. Be pregnant
Hui	To gather, congregate, assemble, meet
Iwi	Tribe
Kai	Food, meal
Kaiāwhina	Helper, assistant, contributor
Kaihono	Liaison role in the Families Commission
Karakia	Say grace, pray, recite a prayer, chant
Kapa haka	Māori performing group
Kaupapa	Topic, matter for discussion, proposal, programme, philosophy
Kaumātua	A respected elder
Kuhu mai	Enter, come in
Kura	School
Kōrero	Speak, talk
Koro	grandfather
Korowai	Cloak
Mahi	To work, do, perform
Manaakitanga	Showing respect and consideration towards others; generosity and fulfilling reciprocal obligations
Mana whenua	Territorial rights, power associated with possession and occupation of tribal land
Manuhiri	Visitors / guests
Mauri	Life principle, special nature, a material symbol of a life principle, source of emotions
Papatūānuku	Earth mother. All living things on earth originate from her
Pono	Be true, valid, honest
Poutama	Represent the steps which Tāne-o-te-wānanga ascended to the top most realm in his quest for superior knowledge
Ruapotaka Marae	A community marae for local Māori and people living in Glen Innes, Point England and Panmure. As a community marae it is an urban, place-based marae, rather than being tribally-based
Ringawera	Kitchen worker, kitchen hand
Tāmaki	Relates to the history and tupuna of this area and to the estuarial river that nestles Glen Innes, Point England and Panmure
Taonga	Something prized, treasure
Tapu	Be sacred, set apart
Tautoko	To support,
Te Ao Māori	The world of Māori
Teina	Younger brother (of a male), younger sister (of a female)
Te Whare Tapa Whā	The four corners of a house. Māori model of holistic health, development and wellbeing

GLOSSARY OF MĀORI TERMS

Te Tiriti o Waitangi	The Treaty of Waitangi
Tika	Be correct, true, fair, appropriate
Tikanga	Correct procedure, custom, habit, lore, method, manner
Tikanga Atawhai	The practice of Mercy values
Tuakana	Elder brother (of a male), elder sister (of a female)
Wahine Pou	Female support, pole, pillar
Wairua	The spirit that resides in the heart or mind of someone or something
Waka ama	Outrigger canoe
Wānanga	Learning time, conference, forum
Whāngai	Foster child, adopted child - this is a customary practice
Whakawhanaungatanga	Process of establishing relationships, relating well to others
Whare	House, home
Whānau	Family group
Whanaungatanga	A relationship through shared experiences and working together which provides people with a sense of belonging
Wharekai	Dining hall





