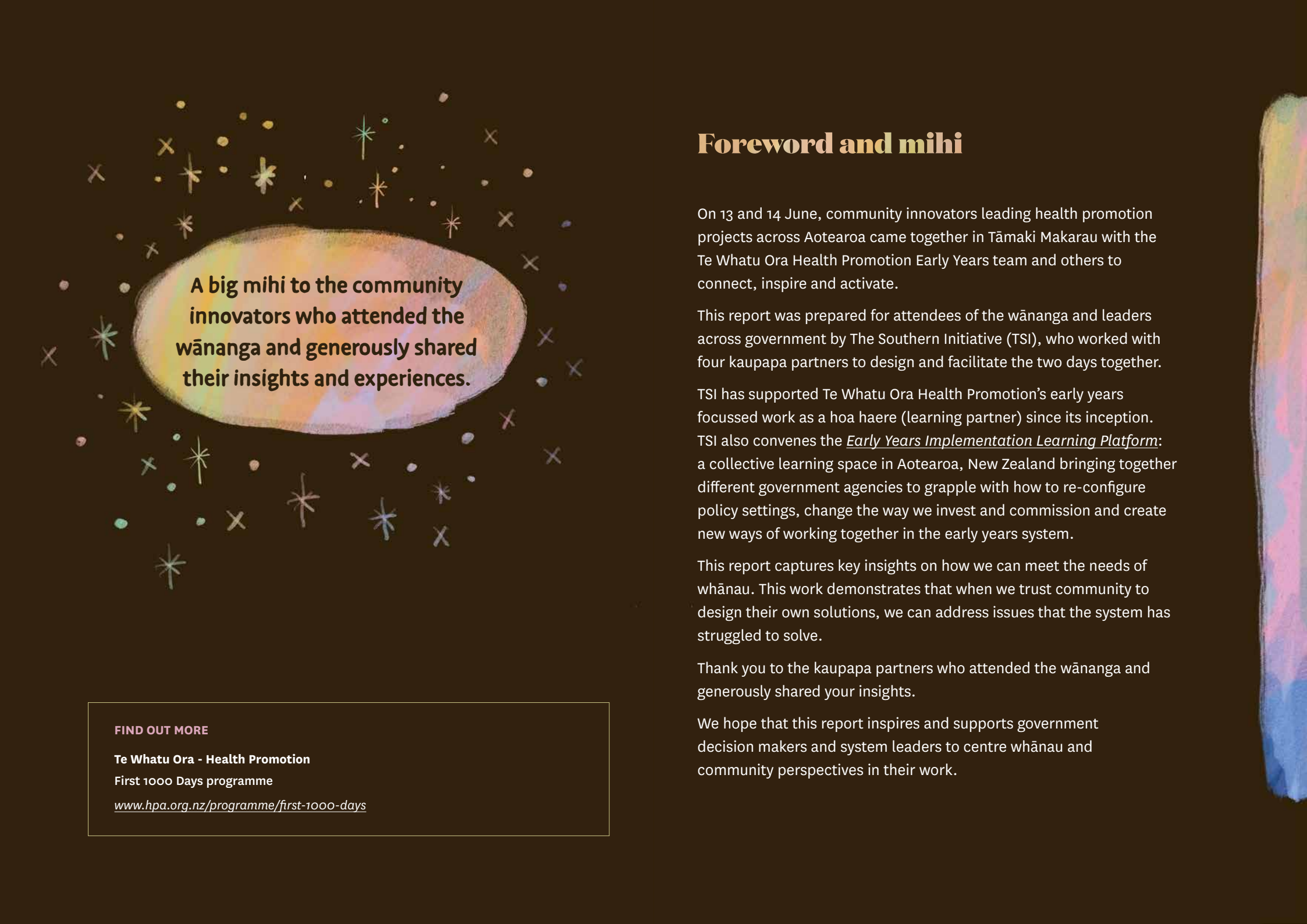




REPORT

# Early Years Wellbeing Wānanga

June 13-14 2024



**A big mihi to the community innovators who attended the wānanga and generously shared their insights and experiences.**

**FIND OUT MORE**

**Te Whatu Ora - Health Promotion**

First 1000 Days programme

[www.hpa.org.nz/programme/first-1000-days](http://www.hpa.org.nz/programme/first-1000-days)

## Foreword and mihi

On 13 and 14 June, community innovators leading health promotion projects across Aotearoa came together in Tāmaki Makarau with the Te Whatu Ora Health Promotion Early Years team and others to connect, inspire and activate.

This report was prepared for attendees of the wānanga and leaders across government by The Southern Initiative (TSI), who worked with four kaupapa partners to design and facilitate the two days together.

TSI has supported Te Whatu Ora Health Promotion's early years focussed work as a *hoa haere* (learning partner) since its inception. TSI also convenes the *Early Years Implementation Learning Platform*: a collective learning space in Aotearoa, New Zealand bringing together different government agencies to grapple with how to re-configure policy settings, change the way we invest and commission and create new ways of working together in the early years system.

This report captures key insights on how we can meet the needs of whānau. This work demonstrates that when we trust community to design their own solutions, we can address issues that the system has struggled to solve.

Thank you to the kaupapa partners who attended the wānanga and generously shared your insights.

We hope that this report inspires and supports government decision makers and system leaders to centre whānau and community perspectives in their work.

**Tū mai e moko.  
Te whakaata o ō mātua.  
Te moko o ō tīpuna.**

**Stand strong, child.  
The reflection of your parents.  
The blueprint of your ancestors.**

## **Inside**

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## Purpose of the wānanga

Communities know what they need. Te Whatu Ora Health Promotion believe that supporting community action in the early years is vital, and people closest to the problem are often closest to the solution.

Their community innovation fund has supported locally led initiatives (kaupapa partners) that support māmā, pēpi, and whānau in the first 1,000 days of a child's life. These initiatives demonstrate compelling alternatives to status quo, by investing in and amplifying on the ground excellence that is led from Māori or Pacific world views.

The wānanga created an opportunity for over 60 community innovators across 17 kaupapa partners to come together over two days to strengthen connections with each other, share learnings, and articulate how the system might better support māmā, pēpi and whānau in the early years. Outcomes from the wānanga will be used to influence system change programmes, and to support Health Promotion to think into the future.

### Purpose

A planning rūpū comprising members from four kaupapa partners set the purpose for the wānanga by sharing their collective aspirations for their time together:

- \* **Share our experiences** with each other
- \* **Learn from each other** - our successes, innovations and challenges
- \* **Form connections** with each other
- \* **Make collective plans** that result in actions for the whānau we serve
- \* **Nourish ourselves** - tinana, wairua, hinengaro and whānau

### Opportunity to influence government's approach to the first 2000 days

The timing of the wānanga offered a unique strategic system influencing opportunity as it coincided with consultation for the refresh of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy.

Members of the Child Wellbeing and Poverty Reduction Group working on the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy refresh attended some of the wānanga to hear the experiences of those working in communities.

In addition to the reflections taken away by the members of the Group after their attendance at the wānanga, the insights captured in this report can help inform this work going forward.

A senior member of the Kahu Taurima team in Health Promotion, who is redesigning health services spanning maternity and early years, also attended. This provided an important opportunity for reflecting on how the vision for Kahu Taurima aligns with and can support the on the ground experiences of community partners.

## Attendees

### The wānanga was attended by:

Community innovators from 17 kaupapa partners (see image to the right for names and locations)

Tamariki and pēpi of the community innovators (igniting the spark in the next generation)

Members of the Early Years Health Promotion Team in Te Whatu Ora - Health Promotion

A member of the Kahu Taurima Team from Te Whatu Ora.

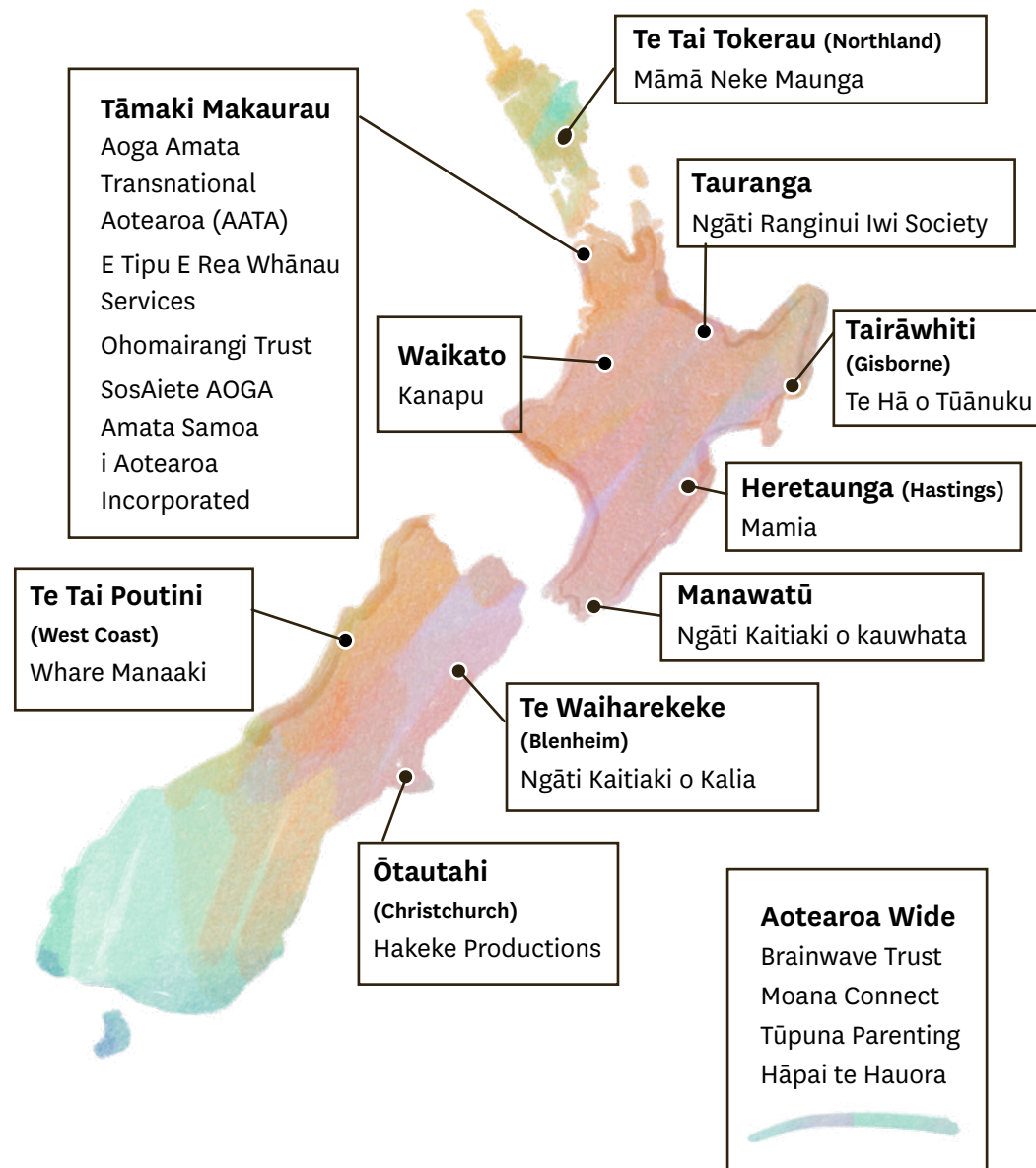
Members of the Child Wellbeing and Poverty Reduction Group in the Ministry for Social Development

Funding partners from the Tindall Foundation

An independent developmental evaluator

Facilitators from TSI

Live illustrators from the League of Live Illustrators



## Structure of the Two Days Together

### Day One

The focus of the first day together was whanaungatanga, offering opportunities for people to make connections across their shared kaupapa.

Time was spent collectively looking back at the journey of this work over the past two years. Kaupapa partners shared with each other their strengths, innovations that work for their whānau, and the insights and learnings they are taking forward in their mahi. Many similar experiences emerged and attendees reflected that it was uplifting and validating to witness a collective robust practice base. Shared system challenges were also revealed through the kōrerō.

Everything shared across the day was scribed, wherever possible creating a verbatim record of whakaaro, and themes were identified through collective sense-making.

Live illustrators lifted those kupu and themes into images reflecting the wairua of celebration and optimism in the room.

## Kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua

‘I walk backwards into  
the future with my eyes  
fixed on my past’

### Day Two

The focus of the second day was dreaming big, spending time imagining the future we aspire to for our hāpori and tamariki mokopuna.

The design of this day drew from te ao Māori incorporating concepts from *Hautū Waka* (a navigational framework developed by TSI under the guidance of Matua Rereata Makiha) and te ao Pākehā using the futures triangle.

Kaupapa partners spent time in small groups describing their Te Rawenga - the preferred future they are calling to them. Using visual elements - motu (islands), winds, and other aspects of te taiao - they then articulated the collective journey they see ahead. Each group shared back, with cohesion across the wider rōpū around both what the future aspirations looked like and what was needed to arrive there. Strategies for community and challenges back to government were clearly articulated.

From these ideas, an image of the journey was created by the live illustrators, which serves as a beautiful invitation to anyone called to join (*see page 28*).

SHINE  
YOUR  
BEAM IEST



LIGHT  
OF YOUR  
TŪPUNA

This generation  
is GOING to  
CHANGE the  
NARRATIVE

BY

LOOKING  
BACK INTO the  
GREATNESS of OUR  
WHAKAPAPA

WE TOTALLY  
HAVE the POWER  
Within US \* OUR OWN  
WAY OF DOING

SCIENCE IS A SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE  
BUT IT IS NOT THE SOURCE





INSIGHTS

**What makes  
the mahi magic**





## **We're not a service; we're whānau**

Not being funded and/or constrained as a 'service' is a huge benefit. It enables kaupapa partners to enter into relationships with whānau as whānau themselves and this creates powerful levers for change.

It means the relationship is shaped by aroha, awhi, manaaki and is seen by both sides as being boundless in potential. This is the foundation for true whānau led practice.

**Whānau don't need to whakaiti themselves through assessment and referral processes.** They step into the relationship without damage to their mana, which is essential when parents often have feelings of doubt and overwhelm coupled with their optimism and excitement.

**Kaupapa partners don't need to focus on deficits (as often directed in government contracts) they can focus on hauora,** responding to whatever whānau need. This has led to constantly adapting and evolving offerings, including māra kai and rongoā practices.



**We are whānau  
so we are there.**

**We don't bound our role.  
"Anything you need  
us to be, we can be".**

**We're not a service. There's no  
judgement. People don't have to  
be labelled or tick a box to come  
into our space.**

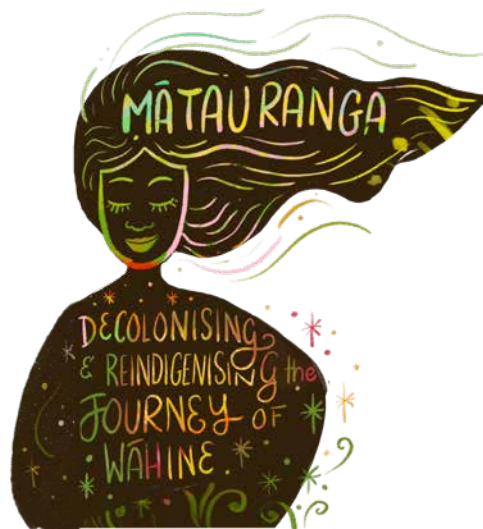


## We create inclusive spaces for connection

A message that many kaupapa partners share with whānau coming into their spaces is that wisdom already resides within them. They are not coming to learn from experts; they are coming to reawaken what they already know and what is their ancestral birthright.

**Kaupapa partners share their mātauranga**, inviting whānau to contribute. Pūrākau, waiata, whakatauki, karakia are shared as well as practices of karakia, oriori, mirimiri and other forms of rongoā. For Pacific partners connection and building a village of support are pivotal components to revitalising knowledge and traditional practices. Partners take a strengths-based approach, using narrative and story telling to surface knowledge whānau already hold and help them connect this to their parenting practices. The approach helps people to connect to their culture and to others in their whānau and aiga. It fosters sense of belonging and connection to place, as well as building confidence in themselves as parents.

**Indigenous mātauranga is elevated.** As one partner described: “We don’t mix mātauranga into Western science. Each body of knowledge stands in it’s own mana. Whānau chose what they draw from”.



“We are reawakening ourselves - we forget who we are.”

“We are decolonising the way that Samoan people see themselves.”

“We remember observing the practice of weaving when we were little. By remembering we’re able to bring it back.”

“We have inherited the mātauranga of pre-colonial times. All pēpi are born with tapu and mana. When we speak to this people know it.”



## We're truly whānau led

Kaupapa partners expressed that “whānau led” is a phrase that’s been co-opted by many government funded services, but is often not fully embraced. It is often reduced to asking whānau for input into the support they receive rather than recognising that being whānau led means orienting around what whānau say matters to them, and a fundamental shift in traditional dynamics between practitioner and whānau.

Again and again throughout the wānanga, kaupapa partners described supporting whānau to lead as being the magic within their approach. There was a sense of frustration that there is such a simplicity in what is needed and yet it can be very difficult to communicate to government, and difficult for government to invest in.

Part of the challenge lies with government seeing communities as places that need investment to do something (services, programmes, courses) to “fix” people. Within this frame, it becomes impossible to see that whānau themselves hold the solutions.



**Whānau-led is on shared terms. We're here to walk alongside whānau.**

**The magic is what whānau share when standing in their own mana.**

**Our magic is holding space to enable things to be totally whānau led. Run by whānau is the main magic.**



## We heal together through reciprocity

Kaupapa partners hold huge passion for their mahi. It energised the wairua in the room throughout the wānanga, as well as being evident as people spoke of long hours into evenings and weekends (often unpaid) and creatively hustling (with limited financial resource) to help seed the dreams of whānau.

**This passion was fueled by seeing the transformative effects of their efforts.** With the right foundations (authentic connections, grounded in indigenous knowledge and whānau led), health promotion activities move beyond education-driven behavior change activities to transformative experiences that ignite healing and self actualisation (mana motuhake).

**An integral element of the healing was reciprocity.** Whānau draw on knowledge and support but they also offer it in return. Kaupapa partners shared how this showed up between whānau (māmā offering to share budgeting tools they'd created with each other), giving back to the kaupapa by stepping into their leadership (bringing in other therapies) or helping with practicalities (social media marketing).



**We watch the mauri of people shift. From being hunched over to sitting upright.**

**We see whānau as already capable. We are just there to hold the space. Parents interview each other to reveal their strengths - what they can share into the group.**

**The whānau we work with are now creating business (toi Māori, mirimiri etc). We all benefit and get enrichment. We're doing it together. That's what gives us the strength to continue.**



## We make mokopuna decisions

There is a future orientation across the work of the kaupapa partners. One of the ideas that surfaced many times across the two days was thinking five generations into the future and letting this guide the direction of the kaupapa.

Mokopuna decisions are about having a collective vision for our future where all mokopuna are thriving and asking ourselves how are the decisions we're making today benefiting our mokopuna's mokopuna.

It is also about kindling and harnessing the energy of kohanga generation coming through to realise the aspirations of their tūpuna.

“ Our healing is through planning our futures. ”

“ It's about whakaaro. We want our children to have a different mindset. If we don't make the change, it will carry on. ”

“ We keep our babies in wānanga. They'll remember it and it will spark in them. We're helping children to be ready to teach the next generation. ”

IT'S ABOUT THE TAPU & MANA OUR  
PĒPI ARE BORN WITH & HOLD  
THROUGHOUT THEIR LIVES

BUT WE ARE STILL  
THRIVING



WE CAN'T LET  
PŪTEA BE A BARRIER BUT  
MORE PŪTEA WOULD MAKE US  
UNSTOPPABLE

MAGIC  
IS THE  
WE

SPACE  
WORK  
IN

WE HAVE  
MAGIC SPACE

AT THE MARAE

OUR BIRTHING SPACES  
+ HOSPITALS NEED TO  
DO THE SAME

@LIVEILLUSTRATORS

THE  
SYSTEMS  
ARE NOT DESIGNED  
FOR US



MĀTAURANGA

EACH BODY  
OF KNOWLEDGE -  
STANDS ON ITS  
OWN MANA

DECOLONISING  
& REINDIGENISING  
THE JOURNEY OF  
WĀHINE



1ST 1000 DAYS

KAUPAPA  
PARTNERS  
WĀNANGA



WE DON'T  
GET TO  
COME AND  
GO. IT'S NOT  
9-5 MAHI.



WHĀNAU  
ENTER  
LIKE  
THIS...



AND THEY  
LEAVE LIKE  
THIS...

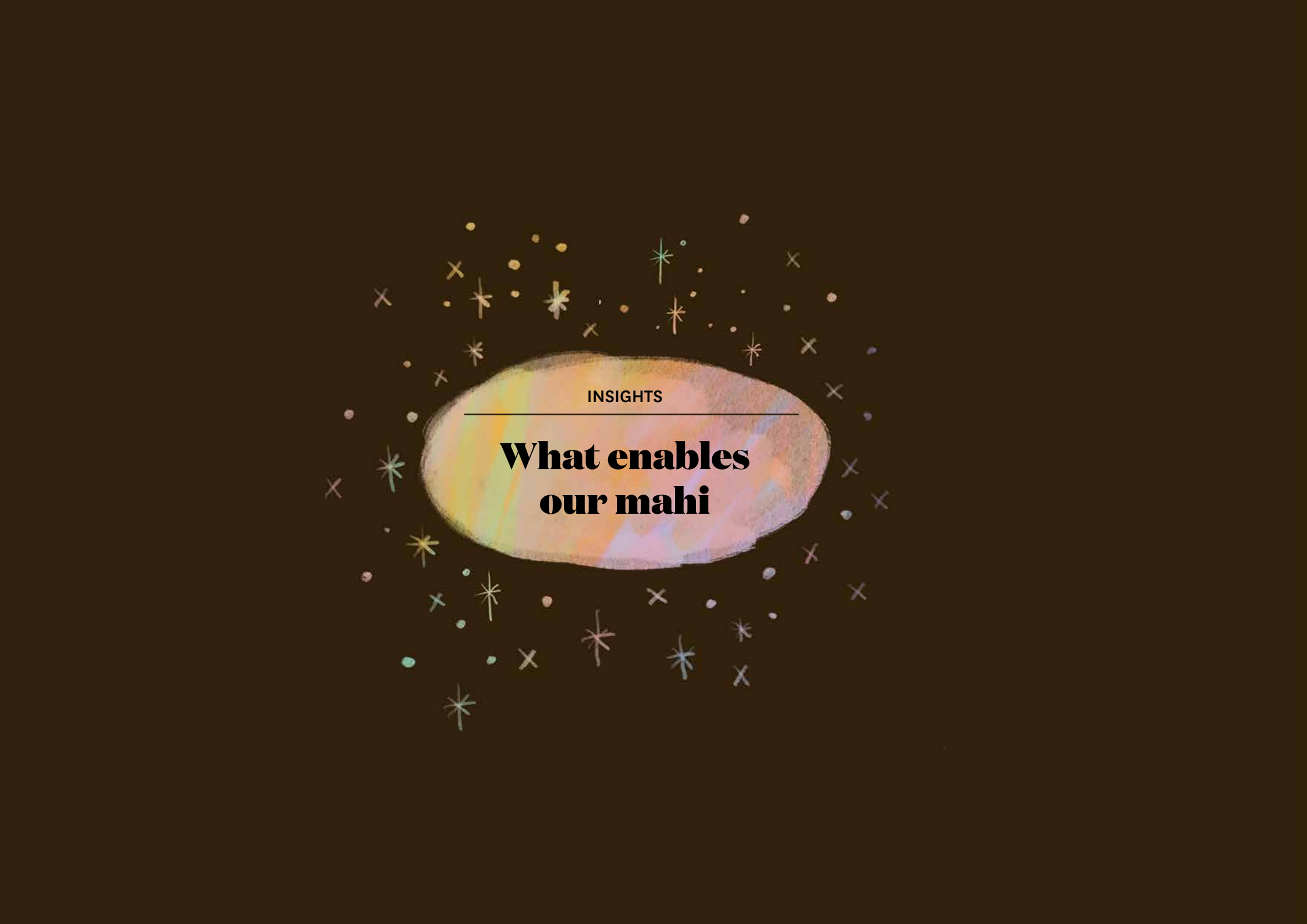


WE ARE  
BOUNDLESS.  
WE ARE MORE  
LIKE WHĀNAU  
THAN A SERVICE

WE KNOW  
WHAT WORKS IN  
TAIRĀWHITI  
BECAUSE WE  
LIVE THERE!



@LIVEILLUSTRATORS



INSIGHTS

**What enables  
our mahi**





## Freedom to shape locally led solutions

When government contracts in a way that enables flexibility to shape solutions to a local context this is a significant enabler.

This starts with not asking for pre-defined solutions in the procurement or grant process. Even solutions that appear broad to those inside government agencies often require community organisations to contort what they know is needed to fit within prescribed constraints.

It also includes expecting ongoing change and iteration as this is a natural consequence of whānau led ways of working. Too often, community organisations sense funders have a misinformed perception that adaptation means they “didn’t get it right the first time”.

Kaupapa partners also acknowledged the importance of funding in ways that enable partners to determine their own geographic scope and definition of the community they serve. This might place more of a burden on commissioners and challenge the idea of “efficiency” but is essential to building resilient self-determining communities. In recognition of this, national-level kaupapa partners shared that they see their role not as delivering into communities but helping build capability for local solutions.

“ We need as many approaches as possible. ”

“ We should rely on the people who live in the rohe to design what it looks like. ”

“ When people say “we want hapū wānanga in our community, can you come?”, we respond “well who do you have here?”. It’s about building community capability. ”



## Our funders partnering with us

The dynamics that underpin a relationship shape it. A shift from contracting to partnering means working towards more equal power dynamics. Kaupapa partners shared what it looked like when funders meaningfully attempted to partner and what this meant for them.

**A partnership starts with looking for aligned interests** - a shared kaupapa. Taking time to explore whether this exists is powerful as it offers a common place to return. For kaupapa partners, alignment in intent with their funder is the foundation that provides the trust for them to shape and iterate services. The best grant/procurement processes are designed in ways that allow the capabilities of community innovators to shine through (their deep local connections, passion and aroha, mātauranga), not their ability to write funding applications.

**A shared kaupapa gives confidence to tell their story** around what the funding supported in a way that honours their mahi and whānau. Reporting becomes about shared celebration of the partnership; a stark contrast to the typical reliance on compliance focussed throughput metrics.

“  
Health Promotion  
has trusted us to shape it.”

“  
Health Promotion has made it effortless -  
they have the same intention.”

“  
Letting us decide how  
we tell the story of our work.”

I GUESS THIS  
IS WHAT  
PARTNERSHIP  
ACTUALLY FEELS LIKE



## Connecting with each other

Throughout the wānanga, kaupapa partners shared their joy in being able to come together. Sharing their experiences was uplifting as it offered an opportunity to mihi to each other in acknowledgement of their hard mahi and achievements.

It also allowed people to witness, through the similarities and coherence, that they share a robust practice base. This was validating and exciting because it confirmed the potential to share and draw from each other's ways of working. People identified the opportunity to compile their practices into a collective kete.

Kaupapa partners were also excited at the potential to advocate collectively for system change, recognising the power of "their different songs being aligned with one rhythm".

“ Collective action! When we stand alone we fall. ”

“ Being here feeds the collective energy and abundance. ”

“ It's about seeing whanaungatanga as creating an ecosystem. ”



## Practising hauora

The wānanga created space for reflection not often possible in the hustle and busyness working in service of communities. One attendee shared that only by coming to the wānanga had she been able to notice within herself how exhausted she was.

A common theme emerged around how challenging it was for community innovators to “practice what they preach” and prioritise their own hauora, yet how essential it was for the mahi to be sustainable. The following section (What Makes it Hard) identifies the system failings that create the tension.

Those who had been in the game for longer challenged the group to reframe prioritising themselves as “self-full” rather than selfish and to recognise that they need to awhi and manaaki others from a place of being fully resourced themselves (through rongoā, connection with te taiao, quiet practices, spaciousness) otherwise burnout was inevitable.



“ Value yourself and the mahi. ”

“ Use the mahi that drives you most and direct it towards yourself. ”

“ We have to model looking after ourselves. ”

IF YOU WANT  
TO DO THE BEST FOR  
OUR MĀMĀ- GIVE  
US THE PEN!



WHAT ARE  
the TAILWINDS  
we can HARNESS?



USING THE WORD  
'LOVING'  
IN CERTAIN CONTEXTS  
MIGHT BE UNPROFESSIONAL  
...BUT THIS IS WHAT WE ARE

Thank you  
FOR  
TRUSTING  
WHĀNAU

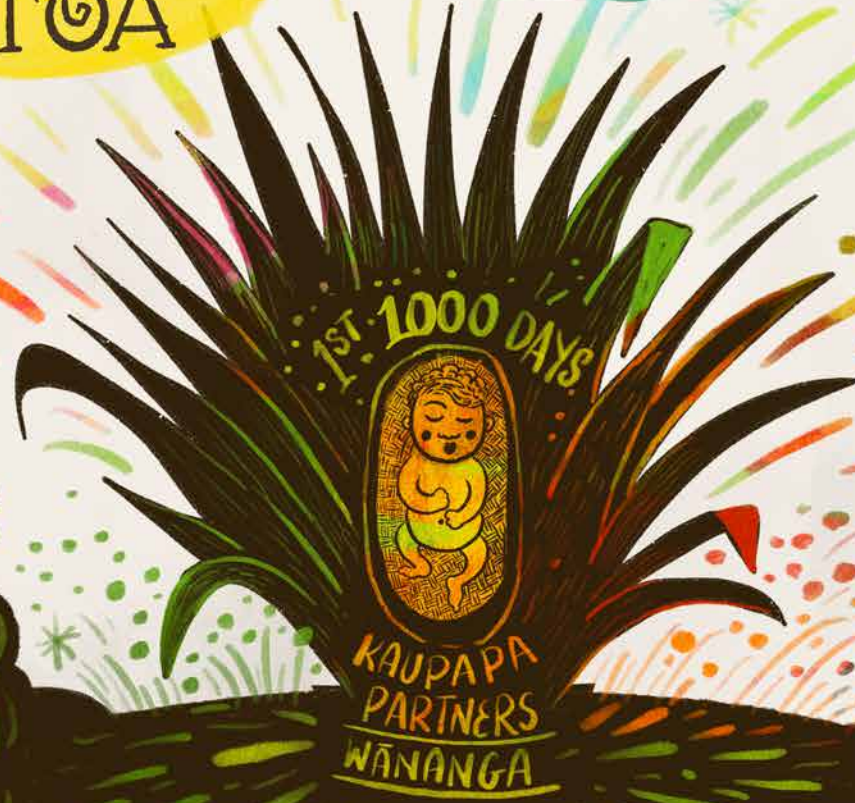
WĀHINE  
TOĀ

THIS IS THE WAY  
TE TIRITI WAS  
SUPPOSED TO  
BE



YOU GUYS  
HAVE MADE US  
feel Really

SAFE



1ST 1000 DAYS

KAUPAPA  
PARTNERS  
WĀNANGA



I GUESS THIS  
IS WHAT  
PARTNERSHIP  
ACTUALLY FEELS LIKE



INSIGHTS

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**What makes  
it hard**



## Inadequate funding

The number one challenge that emerged over the course of the two days was funding. The mahi kaupapa partners do in their communities isn't adequately funded. This is either at breadth (not fully funding all the scope of activities) or at depth (not recognising what it truly takes to do this mahi given the challenges and complexities in the lives of whānau) or more often, both.

This means that often people aren't able to be paid for their contribution meaning they have to juggle work commitments around serving their communities.

We have to work day jobs on top of what we do for whānau. It means we can't dedicate the time we'd really love to.

We love that māmā and whānau keep coming back. It's a great tohu. The challenge is keeping up within the funding we have.



## Picking up the pieces for failing services

Kaupapa partners shared the implications of building a trusted relationship with whānau, as whānau, in the context of failing government systems and services.

People were called at all hours in evenings and weekends. They were needed to help navigate the complexity of government processes, be an advocate during assessments, case reviews or health appointments, or collate evidence to challenge discriminatory practices. The failings belong to government but people working in service of their community are paying the price (literally, with hours and hours of unpaid work).

Despite this, there was still generosity extended, offering to share practices (such as bringing rongoā into birthing units in hospital), building cultural capability to improve the experience for whānau and work with local government leaders to challenge system barriers.

**The exhaustion of working in this system means we compromise oranga for ourselves as hauora kaimahi. We don't practice what we preach.**

**We are having to reach into other non-Māori organisations to try and lift their capability. We need to do this so there's a chance they can meet the needs of whānau.**

**There are big ethical issues in the status quo system. The system isn't just failing Māori, it's failing tauwiwi too. So we end up picking up those families too. It means that the limited funding we have dedicated for Māori solutions is being stretched.**





## Poorly designed commissioning practices

Health Promotion’s commissioning practices are a notable exception, but in the main government commissioning practices place unnecessary burden on community partners and tie up valuable resources.

Funding comes in multiple streams and responsibility rests with community partners to integrate it to deliver the holistic responses whānau want. Completing multiple funding applications and then managing those relationships is laborious and time consuming. It also creates complexity for reporting where funders want to know, specifically, what their funding has been used for.

Kaupapa partners also shared their frustration that government commissioning processes value competition over collaboration. This damages relationships within communities and means a lost opportunity to coordinate and align based on shared kaupapa.

“There is no trust from funders. We ask “how many hoops are you going to make us jump through?””

“We are having to reach into other non-Māori organisations to try and lift their capability. We need to do this so there’s a chance they can meet the needs of whānau.”

“What if it was the responsibility of the funder to navigate their system? You make sense of what we’re doing, work out who within government should fund us and you carry that burden.”

YOU MAY NOT  
KNOW YOUR MAUNGA  
BUT YOUR MAUNGA  
KNOWS YOU

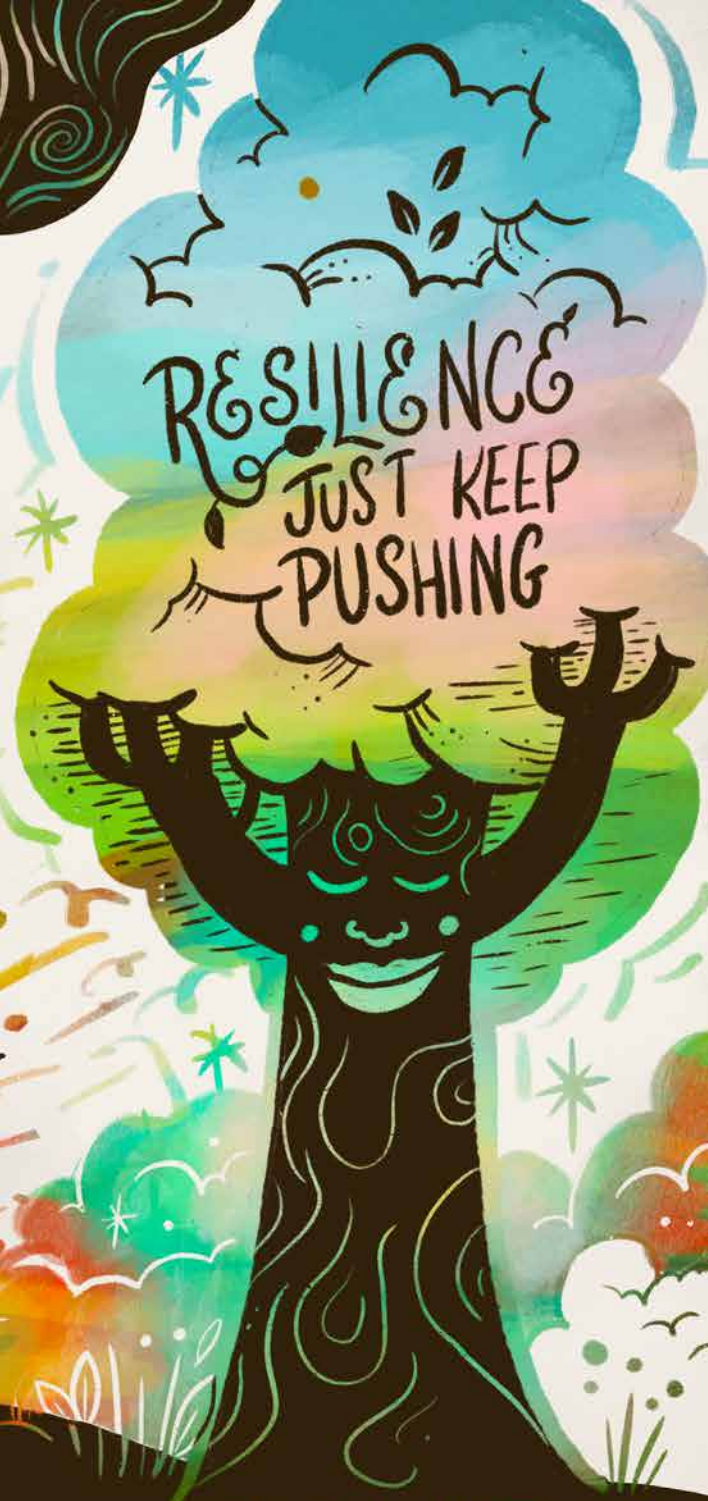


WE NEED  
TO CHANGE  
OUR MINDSET  
OUT OF A  
DEFICIT  
SPACE

IT JUST TAKES ONE  
GENERATION TO HEAL  
FROM TRAUMA  
SO WE HAVE TO PRIORITISE IT



RESILIENCE  
JUST KEEP  
PUSHING



MANY  
PEOPLE DON'T  
HAVE ACCESS TO  
THE LAND OF THEIR TOPUNA

1st 1000 DAYS




KAUPAPA  
PARTNERS  
WANANGA

A hand-drawn illustration of a galaxy or nebula. The central focus is a large, irregular oval shape filled with a soft, multi-colored gradient of yellow, orange, pink, and purple. A thin horizontal line is drawn across the middle of this oval. Surrounding the oval is a field of stars, represented by various symbols: small dots, simple 'x' marks, and multi-pointed starburst shapes in colors like yellow, green, and blue. The entire scene is set against a dark, textured background that resembles a night sky.

**Imagining  
our future**





IMAGINING  
OUR FUTURE

# Te Rawenga

OUR COLLECTIVE VISION FOR THE FUTURE

## Whānau are thriving

All pēpi experience a trauma free first 1000 days.

Whānau are supported to heal and transform their lives.

Whānau love themselves unconditionally.

We nurture the potential of all our tamariki before they are born.

## Indigenous mātauranga is everywhere

Mātauranga is passed on and on and on.

Ways of being Māori - it just is.

Validity of mātauranga gives sovereignty to whānau. They stand and move in their own mana motuhake.

## We recognise everything is connected

Intergenerational connection and wellbeing.

Living in balance with te taiao.

We are a sisterhood, who know each other's potential, connected with awareness, authenticity and reciprocity.

## There is abundance, collective action and infinite potential

Collective decision making for funding.

We look after each other based on generosity and abundance.

We believe we are limitless and boundless.

IMAGINING  
OUR FUTURE

## Our journey ahead

### **Whakariterite & ngā hau**

We begin our journey taking a collective approach, aligned in values drawing on our tūpuna wisdom. The journey ahead is powered by winds of change: the kohanga generation coming through, unburdening ourselves from colonial thinking and the increasing proportion of Māori and Pacific in Aotearoa.

### **Motu: Create a collective narrative**

By creating a shared collective narrative, we can land small messages over and over, ultimately shifting mindsets and creating systemic change.

### **Motu: Disrupt the status quo**

By using our tino rangatiratanga we can influence the influencers (leaders within community and government) to cut bureaucratic strings, and demonstrate that the future exists right now.

### **Motu: Centralised power devolved to community**

Resources and funding decisions remain within communities. We stop funding in silos and create cohesive locally led solutions.

WHEN YOU KNOW the STAR  
YOU ARE BORN FROM  
YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE

》》》 BABIES KNOW!

WE CAN HEAL INTERGENERATIONAL  
TRAUMA  
BY MAKING SURE OUR BABIES  
HAVE A SAFE NOURISHING

1ST 1,000 DAYS



WE NEED to REMIND PEOPLE  
WHO they ARE AND WHO THEY WERE BORN TO BE!!!



## Acknowledgements

TSI would like to thank Te Whatu Ora and the kaupapa partners for the opportunity to support this mahi and bring the insights from the wānanga to life through this report. We are hugely grateful for the efforts of the four kaupapa partners (from Mamia, Māmā Neke Maunga, Whare Manaaki and E Tipu E Rea Whānau Services) who were part of the design team for the wānanga and who helped review and shape this document to ensure it was tika to what participants shared and the insights that emerged. A huge thank you also to the League of Live Illustrators for bringing the report to life. Ka nui te mihi ki a koutou katoa.

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