

Summary of Community Consultation: Dolina Wehipeihana, Aotearoa New Zealand

Introduction

This is a summary of community consultations with artists or artist-led organisations or projects that use arts practice to work with communities primarily of Māori or Pasifika descent in Aotearoa New Zealand. The consultations were undertaken with individuals of Māori and Pasifika descent in July and August 2023. I also consulted with one organisation in Aotearoa New Zealand that works with former refugee youth.

The purpose of meeting with these groups was to explore an Indigenous, Māori or Pasifika worldview in creating arts projects with community, and contribute this back to the wider global conversation about art and the ethics of care.

I was interested to hear about the relationship of tangata Māori (people of Māori descent) and tagata Pasifika (people of Pacific descent) to “art practice”, what aspects of cultural understanding and an Indigenous worldview underpinned their artistic practice and their work with communities, and what these artists and organisations prioritised in the enactment of “care”.

This summary shares some of the key themes and insights that emerged from our kōrerorero (shared discussions).

It is important to note that in an Aotearoa New Zealand context, the Indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand are Māori. New Zealand was colonised by the British, and in 1840 Te Tiriti o Waitangi was signed between the Crown and Māori. The ill-effects of colonisation have affected both Māori and non-Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand, however it has disproportionately affected Māori, as evident in significant land-loss for Māori, disconnection from culture, and over-representation in negative health and justice statistics.

This is the context that sits behind the community conversations I had. Arts projects with communities in Aotearoa, play a significant part in the restoration of cultural knowledge, provide an opportunity to grapple with current issues affecting communities, and contribute to the strengthening of community and increased health and well-being of participants and their communities.

*“It was really nice for me to see other creatives coming through and speaking about loss – almost on our behalf sort of thing? Our stories were really rooted in the heart of Roskill, the loss of home. Gentrification is such an intergenerational thing, especially for our elders who were sort of shoved out of Ponsonby and Grey Lynn – so to have those same feelings that our elders felt here, although different...I’m very grateful that there are resources now and a theatre company where we can come to and be like “I’m angry” but I’m going to make you cry and laugh with the same sentence. I think that’s where a lot of the care came in – having my story acknowledged, supported, celebrated and then our ability to acknowledge, support and celebrate.” Jonjon Cowley-Lupo
No. 3 Roskill Theatre*

Dates and locations of the consultation

3 July 2023 No.3 Roskill Theatre space, Mt Roskill with Netane Taukiuvea, Nimeti Akatere, Jonjon Cowley-Lupo of No.3 Roskill Theatre and Tanya Muagututi'a of Pacific Underground

6 July 2023 & 10 August 2023 Te Awamutu with Margaret Aull – Toi is Rongoā

10 July: Ellen Melville Centre, Auckland with Cathy Livermore, Toi Hauora Hub

13 July 2023 Mixit, New Lynn with Wendy Preston, Mixit

19 July: Josy's Café, Grey Lynn, with Huia O'Sullivan and Olivia Pickering, Ngā Rangatahi Toa

18 August: Online, with Fonoti Pati Umaga

Community contributors

- Netane Taukiuvea, Nimeti Akatere, Jonjon Cowley-Lupo, Co-directors, emerging artists of No.3 Roskill Theatre and Tanya Muagututi'a (Samoan), Theatre-maker, Director, Producer - Pacific Underground. Live and work in Mt Roskill, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. Tanya commutes between both Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, North Island of New Zealand and Ōtautahi, Christchurch, South Island of New Zealand. No.3 Roskill Theatre was created in 2020 as a creative project to respond to the housing redevelopment in Mt Roskill Auckland, and to tell local stories, staged in backyards, free for the people of the neighbourhood. No 3 Mt Roskill's ongoing purpose is to nurture the artistic and cultural capital of youth in Mount Roskill.
- Huia O'Sullivan (Te Āti Awa) – Executive Director, Olivia Pickering (Ngā Puhī) Team Member, Ngā Rangatahi Toa. Live and work in Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland. Ngā Rangatahi Toa is a creative youth development community arts organisation, that facilitates creative arts and wellbeing programmes in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand.
- Margaret Aull (Te Rarawa, Tuuwharetoa, Fiji), Curator – Toi is Rongoā, Visual Artist, Curator, Arts Manager. Lives in Te Awamutu, Waikato in the North Island of New Zealand. Toi is Rōngoa is a project that has included a large-scale exhibition that celebrated fourteen contemporary Māori artists who believe in the importance of creative practice to their wellbeing.
- Wendy Preston MNZM, Director Mixit Refugee Arts Project. Lives & works in Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland in the North Island of New Zealand. Mixit is a multicultural youth project in New Zealand that uses the arts as a platform for empowerment, connection and for young people with refugee backgrounds to “mix it up” with migrant and local youth.
- Cathy Livermore (Kai Tahu), Choreographer, Healer Director Toi Hauora Hub. Lives and works in Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland. Toi Hauora Hub was launched in June 2023 as a pilot project to strengthen the link between art and hauora/wellbeing that was highlighted during covid 19 and the role of arts and creativity play in mental health in Aotearoa, NZ.
- Fonotī Pati Peni Umaga QSM (Samoan) – Composer & musician, advocate for people with disabilities, trustee of the Pacific Music Awards and Co- Chair of Mana Pasefika Disabled Persons Organization (DPO). Lives and works in Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Wellington New Zealand. Pati is a project lead for Te Rōpū Mana Toi, an arts project working with survivors

responding to the Royal Commission Enquiry into the Abuse in State Care and Faith Based Organisations in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Questions that the contributors responded to:

- Introductions/who are you and where are you from?
- Tell me about your organisation or project.
- What constitutes care as part of your practice or work?
- What practices, values or principles are important to how care is enacted in your work?
- What ethical considerations do you keep in mind when working with people and in places where care is needed?
- What care do *you* need to sustain you in your work?
- What would your advice be to an artist going to work with community?

Considerations

- **What considerations were named (or would you name after your conversation) as being important regarding the care for artists?**

The conversations allowed for some reflections on the processes undertaken by the artists and organisations in their projects. There were many insights into important considerations for the care of artists, and the following key themes emerged:

- Connectivity and strong relationships support artists working with community.
- Cultural Values-Led Processes create safe spaces.
- Enabling self-care ensures sustainable ways of working.

Connectivity and strong relationships support artists working with community.

Artists and project leaders talked about having a support network to access for support, guidance and advice. Connections with trusted colleagues, board members, team-members, mentors, pou arahi (cultural mentors) allowed them to develop their practice, create the perimeters for projects with community, and be supported throughout the project. It was noted the value of having a mentor, especially to help during times of challenge or change. Strong peer relationships built through the process of creating and working together, create a feeling of solidarity and confidence.

Opportunities for connection to other artists, organisations, community groups and institutions was also important. This enabled the exchange of ideas, being connected to the current thinking in the industry and community, and sharing passion and purpose with others.

It was also important for artists to have relevant training and experience when working with specific communities – this could include trauma-informed approaches, first aid, cultural competency – in order to address potential community issues and honour the intersections of community needs with creativity.

“I have a lot of admiration for them, about their care for each other and their fellowship. As much as they can, they work things out between them – it’s a unique bringing together of a project. They just approached it as something new that they can learn together – they’ve done it together, they strengthened each other” Tanya Muagututi’a No.3 Roskill Theatre

“Its essential to have that sort of Mum essence, somebody who can be calm in the space & let things flow, but also be a little bit mean! Its nice to know there is a safe person in our creative spaces, and someone we can always go back to”.

JonJon Cowley-Tupu, No. 3 Roskill Theatre

“What we want to do is work with a community of pou ārahi (title refers in this context to experienced cultural collaborators) that want to deepen their work, have that pou and access to te ao Māori in a safe way, and also have meaningful engagement with young people. It’s manaaki and how we all care for each other, outside the mahi (work) as well.” Huia O’Sullivan, Ngā Rangatahi Toa

“The value and support of the board, or the people around me is absolutely crucial. It has to be people who really understand the core purpose of the mahi, but they’re not too close – so they’re a little bit removed - who I can go to and I can problem solve with, or vent, or try and figure things out with, or they can keep me in check. I also need to have a really strong inner team around me that I can really trust & that I can let go of stuff.” Wendy Preston, Mixit

Cultural Values-Led Processes create safe spaces.

Many of the artists and organisations spoken to use cultural values as a foundation for their work. Some of these values were consciously used in the work or captured values of the organisation, and some were simply values that were instilled in them from their cultural background.

A core value referred to by most of the artists I spoke to is:

Whanaungatanga

Whanaungatanga means relationship, kinship, and a sense of family connection. The Māori word “whānau” means family. Whanaungatanga refers to a relationship built through shared experiences and working together, which provides people with a sense of belonging.

Taking the time to build strong relationships was a crucial element in working with community and building trust. An example of a kaupapa Māori process that supports the development of whanaungatanga is mihimihi – where participants introduce themselves, and their tribal affiliations at the start of a project. This process allows people to make connections to each other.

Manaakitanga

Manaakitanga is a Māori concept that refers to the process of showing respect, generosity and care for others. Fostering a culture of care and mutual support emerged as a crucial consideration, and emphasising the significance of looking out for one another.

Samoa principles - Tautua and The Vā

Tautua is a word in Samoan that expresses the cultural tradition of service to the family or aiga. It comes from the Samoan proverb 'o le ala i le pule o le tautua' (the pathway to leadership is through

service). This principle is important to artists working with community – the sense that you are serving your people, they are not serving you.

The Vā is an important Pacific principle. “The va/va'a/vaha is a pan-Pacific notion that describes the spatial and relational context within which secular and spiritual relationships unfold. Social, spiritual, and relational contexts allow for personal and collective well-being and growth through knowledge generation, social action, and cultural transformation. In Teu Le Va, relationships are given space and valued so that all involved may benefit” (Anae, 2007)

Building an honourable space between people is a value – maintaining the Vā builds relationships and keeps the integrity of those relationships.

Te Whare Tapa Whā

Te Whare Tapa Whā is a wellbeing model developed by leading Māori health advocate Sir Mason Durie in 1984. It describes health and wellbeing as a wharenui with four walls:

- Te Taha Wairua: Spiritual
- Te Taha Hinengaro: Mental
- Te Taha Tinana: Physical
- Te Taha Whānau: Family & Social

This model can be employed by artists to reflect on their well-being in a holistic way, and set goals or intentions that encompass all the aspects of themselves to ensure a sense of overall health.

“That whole family aspect- a bunch of us from different backgrounds, we didn’t really know each other. By end of the process, we became a real tight knit family that constantly looked out for each other and made sure everyone was ok.” Netane Taukiuvea, No. 3 Roskill Theatre

“We’re very intentional about why and how we do it, and our safeguards of how we do it. We work with people..... who hold me accountable, and help set the kaupapa, so we can move across Tāmaki and into spaces safely, and that the path is clear for us. That’s what keeps us safe as well as our relationships in the community around duty of care, so we can go into spaces and be safe – keep safe ā-wairua (on a spiritual level) and do what we do, and play, and be curious”. Huia O’Sullivan, Ngā Rangatahi Toa

“For us in the Pacific, especially in my Faa Samoa culture there is a whole thing about the Vā - that space between people and maintaining that space. We’re building an honourable space between people. That is a value for us that is always embedded. There is always a sense of how you maintain that vā that allows you to build that whole integrity, keeping the integrity of the space between everyone and building it.” Fonoti Pati Umaga.

“Tautua -that’s another value that I always carry with me. I give guidance and provide leadership when I need to – but when they need to be served and that’s

my role, I provide that service for my people– that is part of whole community work ethic". Fonoti Pati Umaga

"We're a mix of people, and our processes are really different. When I think about care, I think about the cultural capacity that we have in our organisations and how to make the most of our identities and how their values are heard amongst the mix..... I know that these guys take care of their own way of expressing their customs & the values that are important to their own cultures. So they do that really well, and overall, I just make sure that's taken care of and there is some level of protection there". Tanya Muagututi'a, No.3 Roskill Theatre

Enabling self-care ensures sustainable ways of working.

Many artists tend to prioritise their work over their own wellbeing, underscoring the importance of addressing this tendency to ensure holistic self-care. Knowing your own boundaries and capabilities as an artist is vital when you are engaging in work with community.

Acknowledging the demanding nature of artistic projects, it was recommended that artists prioritise their health through proper nutrition, rest, and exercise, recognising the energy and commitment required.

Artists suggested taking regular leave and time out is vital, to replenish and reflect.

Adequate compensation was also emphasised, that artists should be remunerated for their contribution. Sometimes artists put themselves last in the budget.

Self-care processes, such as debriefing, practicing "whakanoa" (a Māori concept of cleansing), setting goals and intentions, and utilising the tapawha model (a holistic approach to well-being mentioned above) were advised.

Institutions and organisations who are wanting to work with Māori and Pasifika communities and/or artists need to have a level of cultural competency to be able to hold the space of projects. If they lack this, this puts more stress and pressure on the artists who need to deliver this.

"We're really intentional about that. Its not using "busy" as a badge of honour. We have a proper debrief – we use a debrief model of the 3 D's – deepening, diffusing and discovering. You're making new discoveries of your mahi, you're deepening your learning and you're diffusing any situations..... we do evaluation, we rest, we wānanga..... Looking after each other, understanding that we're all invested in the mahi, and life is a part of that." Huia O'Sullivan, Ngā Rangatahi Toa

"Every week we set tapa whā goals, our own personal ones, on a Monday – we post up on our group chat when we've achieved each of our goals. You*

can't help other people until you're able to help yourself, or get yourself in a space where you are tau (calm)." Olivia Pickering, Ngā Rangatahi Toa

"That's what tikanga is for, its for caring, its for knowing how to care for things, its receiving our tupuna's guidance how do we care for each other, for ourselves for the wana, for the atea, across wā, or within the wā. What's been exciting is how it has evolved me as a creative, but the constant is the tikanga of care and listening to that wana space and not allowing the ego of our artistry and the projection of ourselves and our expression – to not allow that to override the listening and the receptivity that can then shape me – so that then I'm not the creator I'm a co-creator in everything". Cathy Livermore – Toi Hauora Hub

What considerations were named (or would you name after your conversation) as being important for artists to keep in mind when working with communities?

There were some key themes that emerged from the conversation about what are important aspects of care when working with a community.

These included:

- Building Trust and Strong Relationships creates long term impacts.
- Co-Design – creating with, by, and for community ensures community self-determination.
- Clear Intentional Processes that are led by cultural values allow creativity to flourish.

Building Trust and Strong Relationships creates long term impacts.

The consultation conversations emphasise the significance of forming authentic connections to establish trust and build lasting relationships with the community. Building strong relationships allows the work to happen.

It was noted that it is important to take a long-game perspective – a holistic and long-term view of engagement, focussing on sustained involvement rather than short-term interactions. Bouncing into the community for a one-off project with no follow-up care was regarded as having a potentially negative impact on communities.

Additionally, accountability to the community first was a priority. Serving the needs and aspirations of the community, with a deep sense of responsibility and responsiveness. In this regard, knowing the "kaupapa" or purpose of a project and understanding the true essence of what the project is hoping to achieve is important. Actively listening to the community ensures alignment and a meaningful engagement. Finding the right balance between serving the needs of the community and sharing the community's experiences with others who benefit from hearing about those experiences was discussed.

Ways to build trust that were discussed included whakawhānaungatanga as an important concept to build connections. Holding wānanga (workshop space that is guided by te ao Māori values) was another way mentioned. Identifying the different needs of individual participants and tailoring the process to ensure their needs are met was also noted.

At all times, good communication is imperative. Placing communication at the centre of community engagement, ensures clarity and transparency, and builds trust.

“Care is about relationships, it’s about engagement, it’s about culture & I guess for me too, that whole kind of whānau concept. When I’m working with what is considered a vulnerable community, when you start working with vulnerable groups one of the biggest things that I’ve found that’s powerful for them is using whānaungatanga to build that safe environment. At the first hui it took nearly the whole day just for whanaungatanga but that was crucial” Fonoti Pati Umaga, Te Rōpū Toi Ora

“When we work with other organisations, we’re very intentional about our duty of care and that there is a transition of care. If we’re looking at engaging with a new artist, we sit down and say this is how we work.....it’s less about ego and more about heart, we need you to first hononga or connect to our babies through your story and through who you are..... You share space, you share narrative and you connect first and foremost through heart, that there’s a heart connection. Once that’s there – anything else can happen. It’s important that our thread of connection, through relationship, is strong” Huia O’Sullivan, Ngā Rangatahi Toa

“You have to retain truly your sense of purpose and self, and the core kaupapa that’s at the heart of your organisation..... but also being able to morph and wrap around and keep safe and reassure the people with their different faiths, but also their own cultural heritages – so we’ve been really clear from the get-go that we are a contemporary arts interdisciplinary project. That’s what we use, that’s our language, that’s our activity base.” Wendy Preston, Mixit

“I think that we look after the creatives here in Roskill.... We’re fortunate to have No.3 and this space to explore our creativity. I was one of the residents going through the housing redevelopment and ‘I Love to Say Goodbye’ was my medium to really explore how angry I was - or to celebrate everything – all the memories I had in that neighbourhood, in that house. It was great that they community supports us as well – we were all there together, crying, laughing, such a beautiful moment, and that’s what ‘care’ is for me”. Nimeti Akatere No.3 Roskill Theatre

“We will be accountable for what we can do with you and the family that we work with, and for us it’s a long-term investment into whānau. When we talk about disrupting space, it’s about how we disrupt space through creativity, but not just running an arts project, a one off – everything has whakapapa like we

do. My biggest KPI is that I can look a Nanny in the face, in her eyes, and let her know that I've got her moko (grandchild) and that we have cared and we have done everything in duty of care to look after her moko. ” Huia O'Sullivan, Ngā Rangatahi Toa

Co-Design – creating with, by, and for community ensures community self-determination.

Collaboratively developing projects with the community, ensures their active participation and self-determination throughout the creative process.

Research with the community was an important component of developing a community arts project.

Creative ideas may emerge from wānanga process with the wider community or evolve from development of previous projects.

Co-design with community, ensures the project is relevant to, and serves the needs of the community. Self-determination in a process is impactful for communities with long-lasting positive benefits and results.

*“Through noho wānanga - We sit down to set the theme for this year, its always scaffolding from previous years. In wānanga we elicited beautiful kōrero about haumaru and safety. As a kaiwhakahaere and with our pou arahi we explored and critiqued and interrogated what safe space looks like, what does shelter look like? We likened it to a whare tangata, the womb, there is a safety that occurs in there and a care that happens in there – that's precious.”
Huia O'Sullivan, Ngā Rangatahi Toa*

*“When you're working with other cultures you need to be mindful the needs of everybody, and how that has to have the right balance” Tanya Muagutut'ia, No.3
Roskill Theatre*

“If you're providing a creative space that's about community, you have to understand the context that you're working in and that the people that you're working with and factor in how to use creativity towards a positive outcome for everybody. One of the things we do in this organisation, we have a total commitment to being really informed – we have to be trauma informed because we're working with people that could have some pretty deep trauma. We have to really understand why we're doing what we're doing, we have to be constantly adapting and looking at new information and looking at new communities - but then we have to deliver it with the lightest and most playful touches”. Wendy Preston, Mixit

Clear Intentional Processes that are led by cultural values allows creativity to flourish.

Implementing well-defined processes ensures the creation of safe spaces, which allows the work to take place with care for participants. Guiding values included cultural values such as like aroha (love), whānaungatanga (relationships) and manaakitanga (the act of caring for each other).

Processes used by artists and organisations in the consultation include cultural rituals (such as mihi whakatau and karakia), daily check-ins, project debriefs, and inductions.

Care is an ongoing process, which involved highly efficient background organisation, and responsive support mechanisms. Being highly organised in the lead up to a project allows the work to flow and gives space for any extra support that might be needed.

Often projects with community involving creativity mean that people open up emotionally, share their stories and it can be quite vulnerable. It was important to ensure care so that spaces are safe for people to share.

It was noted that it was important for artists to know where their professional boundaries stop, and where external networks need to be accessed. Therefore, it is an essential aspect of care to have a network of external expertise surrounding the creative engagement.

Reducing barriers to access was a key theme. Acknowledging and addressing inequities faced by the community that prevent participation and mitigating these factors – for some projects this includes providing practical support like transportation and food.

“When we first started the process I didn’t know what to expect, I didn’t realise how through-out the whole process how vulnerable it would be..... not all of us know what is like to go through the housing crisis, but I think we can all relate to loss – whether its your home or people – so it got real vulnerable real quick. ‘Care’ showed up when someone that I’d never even really talked to – I’d put up something and they would come up to me and say “that was great – I know what that’s like”. That was ‘care’. Every time before we do a session we do a check in, where we’re checking in with everyone, and then afterwards as well, after each session we’re checking up – its just our way of taking care of each other, making sure everyone’s safe before they go home”. Netane Taukiuvea, No. 3 Roskill Theatre

“We have some very important core values and foundations, and a lot of them are about care. They’re about keeping people safe while making sure creativity is accessible and inclusive – to do that you’ve got to ensure that it’s a very safe space and that each individual within that safe place is cared for, seen and heard.” Wendy Preston, Mixit

TOP TIPS

When asked what advice to give to an artist going to work with community here were some of the

- Be humble
- *Listen* and be willing to step out of the way
- Get to know the community – do your research and build relationships
- Let the community dress you – let the community define your role within the project and the community
- Let the community lead – give them the platform and freedom to be creative
- Create a safe space – ensure people know what they are walking into and take responsibility for the space
- Know your own boundaries and capabilities

In summary, successful collaboration between artists and communities necessitates deep respect, genuine engagement, intentional processes, and a nurturing approach that is culturally informed, fosters trust, inclusivity, and meaningful relationships.

*Te Whare Tapa Whā is a wellbeing model developed by leading Māori health advocate Sir Mason Durie in 1984, describing health and wellbeing as a whareniui/ meeting house with 4 walls.