

# ‘Just tourism’ or Justice tourism?

Analysis of the experience and outcomes of the first Native Nations cultural exchange in 2023

Regina Scheyvens & Terina Kaire-Gataulu



*Source: Native Nations on Facebook, 2023*

*Institute of Development Studies Working Paper 2024/1*

September 2024



*IDS Working Paper 2024/1*

*Institute of Development Studies Working Paper Series 2024/1*

'Just tourism' or Justice tourism? Analysis of the experience and outcomes of the first Native Nations cultural exchange in 2023

*Regina Scheyvens and Terina Kaire-Gataulu*

*ISSN 1179-2973*

---

**Massey Research Online**  
**Massey University's Institutional Repository**

Massey authors:  
Scheyvens, Regina  
Kaire-Gataulu, Terina

<https://mro.massey.ac.nz/handle/10179/71470>



## Acknowledgements

*Sincere thanks to members of the Murupara and wider communities, including some of the rangatahi who participated in the first Native Nations exchange, along with whānau, kaumatua and industry representatives, who gathered to share their views during a Research Hui at Kohutapu Lodge in June 2024. Special thanks to those who graciously agreed to help with interviewing others during that day, and to Karl, Taz and the team for keeping us all fully fuelled with the beautiful kai.*

*After this Hui, Laiaha Kiel was especially helpful, reaching out to her ‘Original’ Native Nations friends in Australia and interviewing them online to ensure we were able to gain insights into their experiences as well.*

*This research was made possible by the openness and generosity of Nadine and Karl ToeToe, directors of Kohutapu Lodge, who welcomed the opportunity for a researcher from outside the community to come and analyse the first Native Nations exchange. It was an honour to be given permission to conduct this research, and I (Regina) am humbled by the trust you have placed in me.*

*Terina Kaire-Gataulu has assisted greatly with the transcription of interviews and the writing of this report. We both wish to thank everyone who so willingly shared their views with our research team and hope that we have represented your viewpoints accurately. Our desire is that this research will be able to be used to support other initiatives in the tourism and community development space, particularly to provide opportunities for empowerment of Indigenous youths and to enhance the wellbeing of your communities.*

*Ngā mihi nui ki a tātou!*

## Table of Contents

<b>List of those interviewed who are cited in this report .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Glossary.....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Origins of Native Nations .....</b>	<b>2</b>
1. Description of origins .....	2
2. The Kaupapa behind NN .....	3
3. Brief description of the first Native Nations exchange.....	3
<b>Young people’s experiences of the Native Nations exchange.....</b>	<b>4</b>
4. Cultural connections .....	4
4.1. A cultural welcome and instant bonds .....	4
4.2. Experiencing the rituals and meaning behind them .....	6
5. Learning from one another’s cultures.....	7
5.1. Learning language and dance or music .....	7
5.2. Originals being inspired by rangatahi to practice their culture publicly .....	7
5.3. Pride in hosting: sharing their place and culture.....	8
6. Truth telling .....	9
6.1. Authentic sharing of history .....	9
6.2. Recognising and reconciling intergenerational trauma.....	11
7. Spiritual experiences.....	11
7.1. Sacred moments .....	11
7.2. Rain and rainbows .....	12
7.3. The presence of ancestors and sacred items.....	13
<b>Outcomes .....</b>	<b>15</b>
8. Connection/re-connection to culture.....	15
8.1. Identity affirming .....	15
8.2. Growth of confidence in themselves and their cultural practices.....	16
8.3. Through travel, building international bonds with other Indigenous people and also recognising what opportunities they have as Indigenous people .....	17
9. Empowerment of rangatahi .....	18
9.1. Changes mindsets of rangatahi .....	18
9.2. Commitment to doing something meaningful with their lives.....	19
9.3. NN sets up rangatahi as leaders .....	20
10. Ripple effects beyond those rangatahi who took part in the exchange .....	20
10.1. Effects on rangatahi who stayed behind .....	20
10.2. Effects on the wider community ‘back home’ .....	21
10.3. Older generations are learning key cultural skills.....	22
<b>Is this (Native Nations) tourism? .....</b>	<b>22</b>
11. It’s nothing like tourism .....	22
12. Maybe, but it’s also using tourism is a vehicle for something far more meaningful .....	23
13. Reflections on what tourism in general can learn from Native Nations .....	24
14. The broader impacts of Native Nations through building Indigenous tourism trails.....	25
15. Final word .....	26
<b>References.....</b>	<b>27</b>

## List of those interviewed who are cited in this report

### Māori rangatahi (young people) who participated in the first Native Nations exchange

- Lahaina Kiel<sup>1</sup>
- Manaia Hall
- Kiritahanga Mierriman-Mitai
- Tyshaun Delamere
- Hunter-lushanye Mellon
- Eraia Kiel

### Originals<sup>2</sup> (young Indigenous Australians) who participated in the first Native Nations exchange

- Madeleine Luez
- Johnny Terrick
- Elvis Carter

### Others

#### Kaumatua (elders)

- Whaea Maria
- Kaumatua A<sup>3</sup>
- Maurice ToeToe

#### Whānau

- Jamie Delamere
- Mel Craddock
- Erinah Cecelia Waiariki
- Whānau A

#### Industry Partners

- Jason Wright – Kaitiaki Adventures
- Mary Tolley – Head of Destination Management, Tourism Bay of Plenty

---

<sup>1</sup> Note that all youths who took part in the first Native Nations exchange gave permission for their names to be used in any write-up of the research, thus they are listed in full here. They are cited frequently in the report to follow, using just their first names.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this document, 'Originals' will be used to denote the Indigenous Australian young people taking part in the exchange, because as they explained during the exchange, the prefix 'Ab' has a negative connotation – it can mean 'away from' or 'not' - yet they *are* 'original' because they are from the oldest living culture in the world. 'Originals' was thus how all Māori participants involved in Native Nations referred to their Indigenous Australian counterparts.

<sup>3</sup> Note that some research participants chose to be identified via a descriptor in any write-up, that is why their full names will not appear.

## Glossary

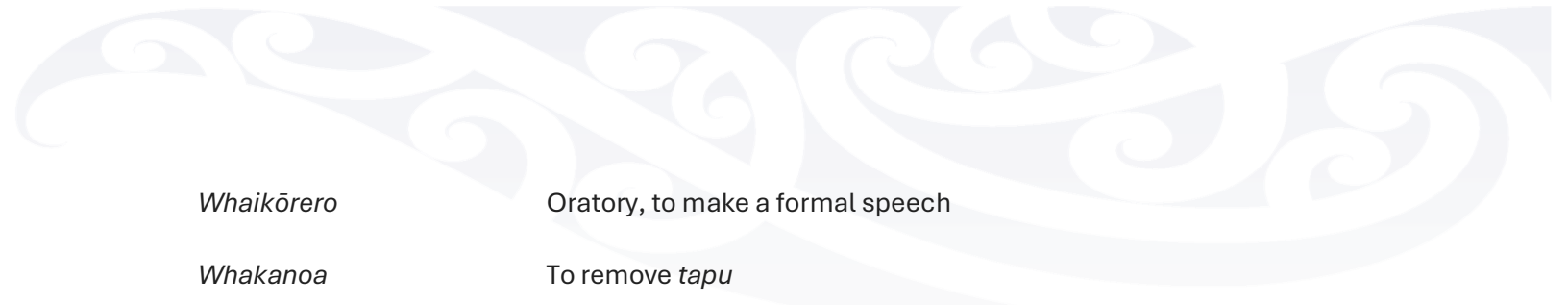
### Te reo Māori terms<sup>4</sup>

<i>Awhi</i>	To embrace, hug, surround, cuddle, cherish
<i>Ahurea</i>	Culture
<i>Haka</i>	Vigorous dance with actions and rhythmically shouted words. A general term for several types of such dances.
<i>Hōhā</i>	Tiresome, bored
<i>Ihi</i>	Essential force, psychic force as opposed to spiritual power
<i>Kaikaranga</i>	Caller – the woman (or women) who has the role of making the ceremonial call to visitors onto a marae
<i>Kaitiakitanga</i>	Guardianship, stewardship, trusteeship
<i>Kapa haka</i>	Māori cultural group
<i>Koroua</i>	Elderly man, elder
<i>Kuia</i>	Elderly woman, female elder
<i>Mamae</i>	Be painful, sore, hurt
<i>Manaakitanga</i>	Hospitality, kindness, generosity
<i>Marae</i>	Courtyard in front of <i>wharenuī</i> but often a term used to include the complex of buildings around the courtyard
<i>Mauri</i>	Life principle, life force, vital essence – the essential quality and vitality of a being or entity
<i>Mere</i>	A short, flat weapon of stone, often greenstone

---

<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all definitions are from Te Aka Māori Dictionary (n.d.) – note that while a term might have several meanings, the one most appropriate for explaining the context referred to in a particular quote is used here.

<i>Papatūānuku</i>	Earth, Earth mother and wife of Rangi-nui - all living things originate from them.
<i>Patu</i>	Club
<i>Pōhiri (or Pōwhiri)</i>	Welcome ceremony on a marae
<i>Poi</i>	A light ball on a string of varying length which is swung or twirled rhythmically to a sung accompaniment
<i>Pou</i>	To erect, establish, fix, elevate on poles (verb); pole, pillar (noun)
<i>Rangatahi</i>	Younger generation, youth
<i>Reo</i>	Language, voice, sound
<i>Rohe</i>	Boundary, district, territory
<i>Taiaha</i>	Long wooden weapon of hard wood with one end carved and often decorated with dog's hair
<i>Taiao</i>	world, Earth, natural world, environment, nature, country.
<i>Taonga</i>	Treasure, anything prized
<i>Tautoko</i>	To support, prop up, verify, advocate
<i>Tapu</i>	Sacred, prohibited, restricted
<i>Te Ao Marama</i>	The world of light (Mead, 2003)
<i>Tikanga</i>	Correct procedure
<i>Wai</i>	Water
<i>Waiata</i>	Song
<i>Wana</i>	Excitement, thrill, exhilaration
<i>Wānanga</i>	To meet and discuss (verb); educational seminar (noun)
<i>Wehi</i>	To be awesome
<i>Wero</i>	Challenge



<i>Whaikōrero</i>	Oratory, to make a formal speech
<i>Whakanoa</i>	To remove <i>tapu</i>
<i>Whakawhanaungatanga</i>	Process of establishing relationships, relating well to others
<i>Whānau</i>	Extended family, family group

### **‘Original’ terms**

<i>Clap sticks</i>	Traditional Australian Aboriginal instrument that are a type of drumstick or percussion mallet.
<i>Country</i>	“Country is the term often used by Aboriginal peoples to describe the lands, waterways and seas to which they are connected. The term contains complex ideas about law, place, custom, language, spiritual belief, cultural practice, material sustenance, family and identity” ( <a href="https://aiatsis.gov.au/">https://aiatsis.gov.au/</a> )
<i>Dardi</i>	Abbreviation of ‘Dardi Munwurro’ – a specialist Aboriginal organisation that seeks to break cycles of inter-generational trauma in Aboriginal families and communities.
<i>Didgeridoo</i>	Aboriginal Australian wind instrument
<i>Mob</i>	Term used to identify a group of Aboriginal people (family, clan or wider group) that are associated with a specific place or ‘country’.

# Introduction

## Purpose of this research

This report discusses the findings of independent research conducted to analyse the impacts of the first Indigenous youth exchange programme organised under the programme, Native Nations: Tracing Indigenous Footsteps. Of note, the name of this programme was devised by the first group of rangatahi (Māori youth) to take part in this exchange.

## Research methodology

In January 2024 the lead author (Regina Scheyvens) contacted Nadine ToeToe (see below) to appraise her interest in taking part in this study. Following her approval and prior to data being collected, an ethics review process was undertaken at Massey University and the research was peer reviewed as being of low risk.<sup>5</sup> All of those approached to take part in the research after this date were made fully aware that the research would only progress with their consent, that they had the right to withdraw at any time, they could review transcripts from their interviews prior to approval being granted for them to be used in the research, and they were told how the research data would be used.

Most data was collected during a Research Hui held at Kohutapu Lodge in June 2024. During the Hui, interviews were conducted by Regina along with Lahaina Kiel (one of the rangatahi who had participated in Native Nations), Atamira Tumarae-Nuku and Huia Waller (two women closely involved with community development around Murupara). Lahaina followed up with online interviews of Indigenous youth from Australia, and Regina did the same with a tourism industry representative. All of the interviews were transcribed by Terina Kaire-Gataulu, and checked for accuracy with any research participants who requested this. Regina and Terina analysed the data, separately identifying key themes that had emerged and then devising a structure for this report, which they wrote together. Please note that the report purposefully privileges the voices of the research participants, especially the youths, rather than the voice of the researchers.

## Report structure

The report begins by briefing discussing the origins of Native Nations: Tracing Indigenous Footsteps, and describes what took place on the first cross-cultural exchange. Following this are the two most substantial sections of the report, focusing on youth experiences of the exchange, and the outcomes of this. Finally, the report reflects on whether Native Nations constitutes a type of tourism, or something more meaningful.

---

<sup>5</sup> Massey University ethics notification 4000028815 for the project, 'Just' tourism, or Justice Tourism? Understanding tourism's role in achieving emancipatory Development.

## Origins of Native Nations

### 1. Description of origins

**Nadine ToeToe** is a director of Kohutapu Lodge, a Māori tourism business which has won national awards for Māori tourism, community engagement, industry collaboration and alignment, regenerative tourism, and it won the Supreme NZ Tourism Award in 2022. However, beyond the accolades, to Nadine and husband Karl tourism is a vehicle to achieving a wide range of benefits: they set up Kohutapu Lodge after moving from Rotorua back to Karl's tribal lands near Murupara in 2013, with a plan to 'save a town through tourism' (Hutchison, 2021). Murupara was a town that had struggled after the government privatised forestry operations in the 1980s, and there were a range of challenging socio-economic issues related to unemployment (Lockhart, 2023).

Native Nations emerged a few years after the successful development of Kohutapu Lodge:

**Nadine** I guess for us, the Native Nations was always bubbling in the back of my head and in the middle of my heart, it just didn't have a name. So pre COVID, obviously, with Kohutapu Lodge, we'd always harness tourism, to give back to our community, to make positive change and work with our youth in our community. And I had always aspired to take a group of *rangatahi* overseas for international travel. The reality is a lot of our kids, particularly our indigenous youth from remote communities, do not get the chance to travel the world like other people do. It is just simply not a level playing field. And I've always wanted to level it out.

**Nadine** explains how Native Nations was initiated, and got off the ground very quickly, after she and other Indigenous tourism operators connected during the World Indigenous Tourism Summit (WITS) in Perth in March 2023:

...it was just a bunch of small indigenous operators in the middle of nowhere, joining forces for good and creating this beautiful plan, and then going out and inspiring the industry to get them behind us, to partner, to support us, so that we could take our youth from both Australia and New Zealand into each other's countries for this beautiful cross-cultural exchange and journey of healing, reconnection, connection to cultural identity, to make them proud, and to really change the trajectory of their lives.

## 2. The Kaupapa behind NN

Native Nations provided a first opportunity for many Indigenous youths to travel and immerse themselves in another culture. This is something which the founder believes should be an opportunity, and a right, for all young Indigenous people:

**Nadine** ...at the end of the day, all of our kids have just as much right to stand. They are global citizens. And they have just as much right to travel and to understand their place in the world.

Furthermore, Nadine's hope was that the Native Nations exchange would provide an opportunity for these young people to feel strengthened in their cultural identities and be ready to step up as leaders, whether in their communities or in the tourism sector or beyond, in future:

**Nadine** Our kids... have important things to say, they are our future leaders, but in some instances, they are our leaders now. And it's our job to build them a stage and flip the lights on and hand them the microphone...



*("Native Nations" on Facebook, 2023)*

## 3. Brief description of the first Native Nations exchange

In mid-August 2023, 9 Māori rangatahi were selected to participate in the inaugural 'Native Nations – Tracing Indigenous Footsteps' cross-cultural exchange between Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. These rangatahi spent 8 days travelling across Victoria, Australia visiting sites like the Narana Aboriginal Cultural Centre where they had the opportunity to try Aboriginal cuisine, and Lake Condah Mission, the site of one of the first massacres of Indigenous people by colonial forces on Australian soil. The Māori rangatahi were joined on the trip by 10 'Original' youths who were also provided an opportunity to learn about their culture through this cross-cultural exchange.

In early September 2023, the Original youths who hosted in Australia visited Aotearoa New Zealand as part of this cross-cultural exchange. 10 of them visited the Bay of Plenty area, visiting sites like Te Puia, Wai Ariki Hot Springs and Spa and Kohutapu Lodge. The Māori rangatahi joined their Original whanau on this portion of the trip, where some of the Māori rangatahi visited their whānau lands, like the Whirinaki Forest, for the first time as part of this exchange.

A particularly strong connection that was a component of the first Native Nations exchange was that the two cultures coming together were both strongly connected to tuna [eels]. As **Whaea Maria** noted, “So we’re a tuna culture you see and so that was a vehicle that brought our two cultures together through the tuna”.

## Young people’s experiences of the Native Nations exchange

### 4. Cultural connections

#### 4.1. A cultural welcome and instant bonds

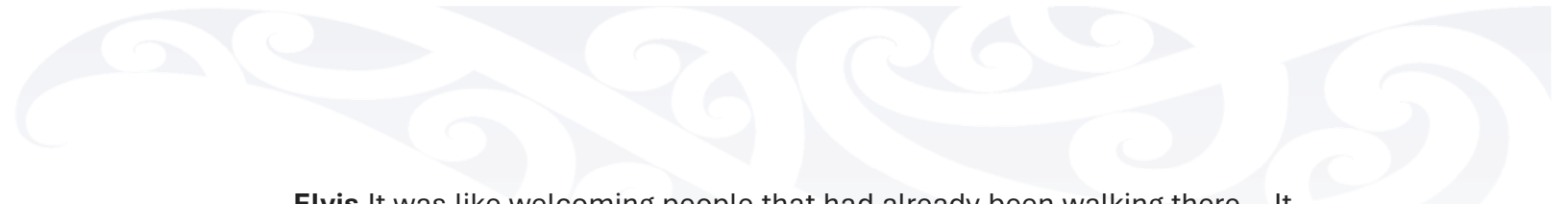
When the Aotearoa rangatahi landed in Melbourne and came into the city late in the evening, a very special welcome was awaiting them. Johnny Terrick, one of the Originals who were waiting in a central city park surrounded by skyscrapers to perform a traditional welcome, reflected that it meant so much to him that the ceremony was respected and understood by their Indigenous neighbours from across the ocean:

**Johnny** I felt very honored to be able to be the one to welcome you on to the Country<sup>6</sup> of my beautiful people, my beautiful ancestors that we've cared for, for so long. To share abundances with you.... When we say *Wominjeka*, to welcome someone on to Country, it has two meanings. *Womin* means to come and *Jeka* means with purpose... you really feel like you really did take it in and really feel it and feel all the spirits and feel the ancestors gather and just welcome you into Country, and [we could] do what we could do to cleanse you. It's just a great honour.

Furthermore, another of the Originals welcoming rangatahi onto Country, **Elvis Carter**, poignantly shared that there seemed to almost be a familial bond between the two Indigenous groups:

---

<sup>6</sup> “Country is the term often used by Aboriginal peoples to describe the lands, waterways and seas to which they are connected. The term contains complex ideas about law, place, custom, language, spiritual belief, cultural practice, material sustenance, family and identity” (<https://aiatsis.gov.au/> 2024).



**Elvis** It was like welcoming people that had already been walking there... It wasn't like meeting strangers, it's like meeting family, you know?

**Madeleine Luez**, an Original from another part of Australia who travelled to Melbourne to join the exchange, also had to be welcomed onto Country. She reflected that,

**Madeleine** There was like magic in the air... It's almost like our two cultures, or the essence of our two cultures, combined when we [were] welcomed.

The rangatahi from Aotearoa, in turn, felt warmly welcomed.

**Lahaina** Dardi Munwurro boys [were] just all waiting for us in this park. With their gears, with their gum tree, their didgeridoos, their clapping sticks...and we stand there and they and they went around and smoked us out. Wow. [They had] this wooden bark, and they put it inside gum tree, and they light it up and...they get the smoke going. And they brought it around to us. And one by one, we lathered ourselves with the smoke. And this ceremony is so you're welcoming your physical form. But you actually leave the smell of it on you so that the elders and the ancestors know that you'd been welcomed to that territory. And so that was one of the first cultural practices that they introduced us to. And we felt welcomed...we felt at home, at peace.

The welcome was significant as some of the rangatahi were very nervous at first:

**Manaia** We got there and yeah, [I was] instantly nervous. But once the boys did a welcome to Country for us, it was so like, all of my homesickness, all my anxiety around everything was just gone. I felt totally safe. I think the big thing was being vulnerable in a completely different country. Different *whenua*. Yeah, I think the welcome to Country was — it was definitely a welcome to Country and it rained, which is our version of a cleanse/blessing.

Despite their initial nervousness, the visitors from Aotearoa formed instant connections with their hosts, as **Lahaina** noted:

The first time we all met up... I remember, [I worried] do they think we're cool? Then the next day, we were all just brothers and sisters!



*("Native Nations" on Facebook, 2023)*

#### 4.2. Experiencing the rituals and meaning behind them

In response to what their most memorable experience was, several of the research participants, including **Eraia Kiel**, mentioned the first smoke ceremony when they arrived in Melbourne:

**Eraia** The first smoke ceremony [and] going through that smoke ceremony was like, wow, this is really how they do it over here...

**Hunter Iushanye Mellon** said there was a type of transformation associated with the smoke ceremony, because afterwards,

I felt like the air was a little bit easier to breathe. It started to rain, but it wasn't rain that made you feel wet and yuck, it was a welcoming rain.

Meanwhile, when the 'Original' whānau visited Aotearoa they felt honoured to take part in *pōhiri* and to experience first-hand a welcoming ceremony from another culture. This had a profound impact on some of them:

**Elvis** Going through someone else's tradition— [I'd] never experienced [the pōhiri] before and getting to experience it first-hand, [I] can't write that into

words.... I think that was special for all of us. Going through someone else's traditions...

## 5. Learning from one another's cultures

### 5.1. Learning language and dance or music

Exchanging knowledge and exchanging cultural traditions was an important part of Native Nations. **Elvis** said that “teaching the boys how to dance... teaching all the boys how to play didgeridoo” was one of his most memorable experiences and that “everyone [was] being so open minded to learning each other's culture!”.

The young people were clearly energised by these experiences of sharing their language, dance and music, sometimes spontaneously starting to perform, as two of the Originals reflected:

**Hunter-lushanye** Playing with the clap sticks, just having a good time. And then, like, just somehow everyone started doing—all the girls started coming out with the *poi* and the *meres*. The Aussie boys, the *Dardi* boys, came out with their clap sticks and the *didgeridoo* and just danced, it was buzzy. Like...

**Madeleine** Most memorable was definitely just when we were being unapologetically us and just, but being so strong in our culture, and just showing pride, and it was those moments where, you know, we danced together, and it was just free.

### 5.2. Originals being inspired by rangatahi to practice their culture publicly

The Native Nations experience created an environment in which the Original young people felt comfortable to fully embrace their culture in a public way that many remarked that they had not done prior to this exchange.

**Johnny** stated “we thought we were like very proud, we thought we were very strong,” but after seeing the *rangatahi* perform *waiata*, *haka* and other Māori rituals proudly in public on the Native Nations exchange, he reflected in an interview with one of them several months later that,

**Johnny** Seeing all you fellas doing your thing really humbled us... We need to be a lot stronger, look stauncher and a lot more proud in everything that we

do. Before that trip, we would have never got up in public and just dance for the fun of ourselves and that was something very wrong that we should have been doing. And then ever since that trip, you inspired us to do that.

**Lahaina** And it wasn't just the Māori boys holding the *taiaha*, it was the Dardi boys, our Original *whanau*, they were holding on to the *taiaha*, to the *poi*. And we were sharing—this was our sharing and culture moment... And I think it impacted all of us... the elders told us that we woke up the ancestors in that moment.



("Native Nations" on Facebook, 2023)

### 5.3. Pride in hosting: sharing their place and culture

On both sides, the hosting was just as meaningful to the young people as the visiting. Welcoming the 'Original' contingent had a profound impact on the *rangatahi* as they were excited to host and show off their *rohe* to their new found *whanau*.

**Kiritahanga** I was excited to come home, show them our beautiful country, [show] our *rohe*, showing them what I get to see every day when I wake up. I felt proud to be from here.

**Hunter-lushanye** I just felt stoked... to be part of the *wero* and bring them onto our marae... to show them how we are and how proud we are to be who we are.

**Manaia** Well I think a big thing for me was taking them up to the Whirinaki forest. Because that was, well, I haven't even been up there much myself. So being able to go up there with everybody and like kind of see it, like as a *whānau*. Yeah, that was pretty cool. That was pretty special.

**Eraia** It felt so cool to bring them back to our lands, our culture and for them to see our people and go through our customs and traditions.

**Tyshaun** My experience was — it was choice as. Meeting them, missing them, [then] welcoming them on to our land, on our *whenua*.

**Lahaina** It was beautiful hosting them back at home and watching them buzz out at how much we actually had — buzzing out that our McDonald's had carvings inside of there. Buzzing out at Māori street names.

Similarly, it meant a great deal to the young people when their visitors showed genuine interest in hearing the background, stories and significance of the things they were experiencing for the first time. This includes **Elvis Carter's** experience of learning the *haka* for the first time:

I think that was like — you know — you're always watching it on [TV] rugby and you know I've ever learned the story behind it. But I reckon, like, learning that story behind that — I think that makes it just little bit more special. Learning the language and you know, learning it there [in their place] too.

## 6. Truth telling

### 6.1. Authentic sharing of history

**Nadine ToeToe** clearly articulated that authentic sharing of history was always going to be central to the Native Nations experience.

It was really important for us. To include that in our itineraries, wherever we go globally, is to absolutely share the truthful history with our Indigenous kids from the Indigenous people of the lands that that history belongs to. So,

we're not going to go into the library and read it out of the book, we're not going to try and tell those stories, or we don't want to hear it from anybody else. That we find the truth and the honesty and integrity of that history. And some of it is really traumatic throughout colonization.... By sharing those stories — and it's absolutely not about finger pointing, it's not about racial disharmony — but by sharing those truthful stories, it brings a sense of, of healing...and in that safe space, it provides a place where our Indigenous people and youth are able to mourn. It also provides a space of really gentle conversation and connection and synergy and collectiveness and wraparound and *awhi* and *tautoko* and healing, and to be able to come out the other side.

Thus first Native Nations exchange was not at all focused on ‘mainstream’ tourist experiences in Melbourne city or the state of Victoria. Rather, for part of it they stayed at Lake Condah mission, a site associated with trauma for some Indigenous Australians, and visited the location of the first massacre of Original people on Victorian soil. As Nadine ToeToe continues,

**Nadine** We went to loads of loads of places with history and some of it pretty traumatic, and [we] sat in those spaces of *mamae* and healing with our indigenous youth and wrapped around them and came out the other side, into the light, *Te Ao Marama*.

In reference to visiting Lake Condah mission in Gunditjmara Country, two of the rangatahi explained their sadness at hearing about experience of Indigenous Australians at the site nearby where massacres had occurred:

**Manaia** Our original whanau, [Mission stations were] historically the only place that they could like live safely in the barriers. And there were barriers, you know — that's your spot we'll have the rest of your country. And then if they could leave — they told us that they were considered flora and fauna.

**Lahaina** continued Manaia's explanation, noting how when they heard these stories, “the spirits were heavy. The elders were there”:

**Lahaina** Yeah, so [they were treated] the same as a pig. Yeah, they could be hunted, they could be enslaved. Inside the mission, though, is where they were safe. [But] They were not allowed to speak language, practice songs, practice any traditions, dance, but [if] they jumped over the fence. Boom....

**Elvis** reflected on his experience there as an Original who was not directly connected to that place, but who was nonetheless moved by what he learned:

That's not my family land but my nieces and nephews come from there... I've heard of missions... but then actually going there, and actually learning it from them... I think that was important, hearing the stories and being there, where the place it happened, and it was a very emotional... surreal experience.

When asked how they would sum up Native Nations in a few words, **Elvis Carter** and **Lahaina** both agreed that “storytelling, truth telling” encapsulate the experience. Johnny concurs:

**Johnny** In those two, three weeks...I feel like it was also like the time of truth. Now I feel like that was the beginning to the time of truth.

## 6.2. Recognising and reconciling intergenerational trauma

The authentic cultural sharing and hearing stories of past trauma did not leave the Indigenous youths bereft, however, rather, some of them reflected that this allowed for deeper understanding, and a sense of reconciliation:

**Madeleine** There's a lot of young crime, there's this dense layer of negative energy over the town and it's all because of all of this intergenerational trauma. I feel like we broke a part of that trauma. I feel like Native Nations broke that cycle for me. Native Nations broke, generational, intergenerational trauma.

After Native Nations, **Elvis** took his nieces and nephews to the places where their family is from. He told them, “...stories about our culture and stuff... It was surreal.”

## 7. Spiritual experiences

### 7.1. Sacred moments

While in some ways what the young Indigenous people experienced during their Native Nations exchange is what you might expect from bringing young people from different places together anywhere in the world — a mix of nervousness, then sharing and fun — it seems there was a deeper level of connection and experience on this exchange. Particularly pertinent are the sacred or spiritual experiences they shared.

**Madeleine** The welcoming ceremony on Gunditjmarra Country is different to my Country. We don't usually do smoking ceremonies and just being welcomed onto the land in their way I felt very — I felt very powerful and very safe. And yeah, it just felt very sacred.

## 7.2. Rain and rainbows

Before they left Aotearoa to travel to Australia, the rangatahi recalled hearing about the Rainbow Serpent which, as the protector of life and giver of water, has great significance as part of Aboriginal creation stories:

**Kiritahanga** It was our last *wananga* the week before we went [to Australia]... Aunty Nads [Nadine] and Uncle were telling us we've been contacted by some of our whānau over there — some of the elders are telling them the Rainbow Serpent — I'm getting chills! — is going to guide, guide you and guide us throughout this whole journey.

When they then turned up at Auckland airport, cleared immigration and were looking out for their plane, they were moved to see a rainbow sitting over it. Rainbows then followed the rangatahi across Australia. **Lahaina** noted that this provided another link to the place the rangatahi had come from: “rainbow serpent is what paved the way for the waterways and all of that, and you know, we're from Lake Aniwhenua”.

**Kiritahanga** noted that they did not see a rainbow every day. However, whenever they left somewhere a rainbow would appear. For example, after swimming she observed, “when we were leaving the beach there was this rainbow as we left and this was the most amazing swim I've ever had”.

Overall, the rainbows were yet another sign of a higher force supporting the objective of this Indigenous youth exchange:

**Madeleine** The little things, that was good. Little rainbows that, we got little signs that we got along the way that just yeah, there was just a lot of magic, so much stuff happening.

Rain was another important part of their experience, which took on great significance. After being welcomed onto Country by the Indigenous youth during the smoking ceremony in the centre of Melbourne, it started to rain. Many of the Māori rangatahi reflected on the spiritual experience and the cleansing nature of rain:

**Lahaina** I think that was the most memorable thing, especially when the rain came.... We just continued, we just kept going, because we're Native Nations, we don't care. Rain is a part of cleansing for us.

**Hunter-lushanye** The sky — even though there was a lot of light pollution [in Melbourne city] — still looked beautiful, just welcoming. And then it started

to rain, but it wasn't rain that made you feel wet and yuck. It was a quite a welcoming rain as well.

**Lahaina** I just felt what I call *ihi, wehi, wana*, which is all of the different energies all at once. And I stood there and sang, and everyone else came in for our *waiata* and the rain just started falling.

Lahaina noted that rain came at several significant moments during their time on Country, and she saw this rain as intentional, not as mere coincidence:

**Lahaina Wai** is one of our things that we use to *whakanoa* or to cleanse. So every time our Original whanau had their smoke that to cleanse us all, we also brought on the rain. And it wasn't until, aye, we had this exchange where we're appreciative of what our ancestors have already left here for us.



(“Native Nations” on Facebook, 2023)

### 7.3. The presence of ancestors and sacred items

**Lahaina** observed that “it wasn't until, aye, we had this exchange where we're appreciative of what our ancestors have already left here for us”. Along with this, some of those on the exchange had unique experiences linked to the ancestors of specific places they visited.

**Kiritahanga** Me, Manaia and one of the Gunditjmara girls, Jessie, we could hear the sound of clap sticks and chants... [Jessie] said to us “no one else was awake... [but] those are my ancestors [in] a cemetery over there”. We

didn't feel scared, we just felt honoured to be able to hear that and experience it.

**Johnny** All the people that we got to connect with, all the ghosts of the ancestors that were walking with us whether we were here whether we were in Gunditjmara Country or whether we were in Aotearoa, we were walking with some great old chiefs every step of the way, in the spiritual realm...

Madeleine and Lahaina also had a memorable experience during an unexpected 'pit stop' on their way to the Mission station. When stopping for refreshments, the owners of an establishment learned about who they were and why they were in the area and decided to share with them that there was an upstairs room where there was a collection of Indigenous 'artifacts' which they had inherited from previous owners and kept covered up while they figured out what to do with them. Madeleine and Lahaina went to check these out, and were confronted by what they experienced when in the presence of the 'tapu taonga' (sacred treasures):

**Lahaina** So they were in this dark room at the top of the stairs, under covers, kind of hidden things like...clapping sticks...boomerangs...what looked to be, like, old weapons. And, straight away, we could feel kind of, like this energy kind of came over us. Yeah. [I said] "Maddie, let's go. We've got to go. No, no, no, we've got to go...". I know that [with] some of our *taonga Māori*, you know, you can't cover them or leave them in the dark. They actually have spirit to them and *mauri* or energy. So straight away that I informed Maddie about that. And she was like, "yeah, they're not meant to be there".

We leave the last word in this section on spiritual experiences to **Johnny**, who reflected on the whole experience, across the two countries, and the profound change that ensued:

To me, it felt like it was kind of the shift in energy in, like, the whole — the whole world.

## Outcomes

### 8. Connection/re-connection to culture

#### 8.1. Identity affirming

So many of the Indigenous youths stated how proud they had become of their cultural identity, sometimes through performing their culture for others, and other times because Native Nations encouraged them to reconnect with their culture, history, and values:

**Hunter-lushanye** It wasn't a big change but it helped me to realise... how proud I am to be Māori. Helped me pretty much revitalize the Māori in myself, brought about me speaking the *reo* more often. After not saying — not speaking — much. And just going through *tikanga* without feeling like it was a need.

**Kiritahanga** [Native Nations] sort of reminded me of all things, it reminded me that I already knew most of these things [*tikanga, reo, Te Ao Māori*]. It was just re learning these things.

There was a certain freedom that some young people spoke of that came from feeling they could be their authentic selves:

**Madeleine Luez** [Native Nations was] completely life changing... kind of showed us the light in the world. And I do see a lot of great things coming out of the whole exchange.... Most memorable was definitely just when we were being unapologetically us and just...being so strong in our culture, and just showing pride, and it was those moments where, you know, we danced together, and it was just free.... I feel like Native Nations brought out a side of me that allowed me to be my true self. And like, just 100% true.

The families and communities of Native Nations participants definitely noticed how the experience led to cultural a type of cultural renaissance for them:

**Whānau A** Native Nations is probably one of those very special things, where there's nothing like it out in the country, not that I'm aware of, it's unique. And just - it's a whole other sphere of cultural revitalization and enhancement for youth.

## 8.2. Growth of confidence in themselves and their cultural practices

An adult in the Aotearoa community, **Mel**, noted how “we are building cultural capacity and capability within our own babies”. The Native Nations participants could see they were at the forefront of this. Participating in Native Nations heightened the sense of pride rangatahi had in being Māori, and performing or practising their culture.

Having grown up embedded in Māori language culture to a greater extent than many others who took part in Native Nations, Lahaina and Eraia used their existing cultural skills to help prepare other rangatahi to prepare for their trip to Australia:

**Lahaina** Me and my brother, we grew up in Te Awara in the *kapa haka* realm. So, me and my brother took it upon ourselves to help our whānau or our cousins learn a bit of *poi*, learn a bit of *haka*, *patu*... it was actually seeing the growth within like, two weeks of my whanau who hadn't picked up a *poi* or a *patu* since they were in primary... And then boom, we're stage ready.

This is significant, because those taking part in Native Nations did not necessarily have a great sense of confidence in their cultural skills or knowledge prior to this exchange. Some of the Indigenous youths were interviewed in twos or threes, and as seen in the following conversation which took place during one such interview, they responded to a question on cultural connection by referring to changes they had recognised in each other:

**Tyshaun** [Native Nations] helped change my attitude, my actions towards my parents and my siblings.

**Lahaina** You became much more loving.

**Hunter** It also gave you a sense of pride in yourself, I would say too.

**Tyshaun** [Native Nations] gave me way more confidence, to be more confident in stepping up 'cause I was shy as<sup>7</sup> [previously]. ... Just to meet new people...and all of this stuff. Now I can just do that freely...

Interestingly, it was the experience of leaving home and travelling abroad to share their culture with another Indigenous group which helped rangatahi value their own culture more:

**Lahaina** Us Māori kids we can take our *ahurea* for granted [at home]. But you take the Māori kid out of the home environment, they gotta be proud. They got to know who they are... And until you take the Māori kid out of the Māori environment, they just can't see it.

**Hunter** We're in a place where growing up around Māori you sort of feel shame if you can't do it [engage in cultural practices or performances], so

---

<sup>7</sup> 'shy as' – colloquial way of saying 'very shy'.

you start to not want to do it... but when you leave [home and perform your culture for others], you understand [its value].

**Lahaina** We came home with this newfound appreciation. Like yeah man, I'm Māori... We all are, we can all do this!

**Kiritahanga** It's in my blood!

Similarly, the Native Nations experience helped **Johnny** to feel passionate about moving forward with living his culture in Australia in future. Interactions with rangatahi helped to bring this about:

[Native Nations] instilled a lot strength and a lot of pride that I didn't even know that I needed within myself... you opened our eyes up to realise, we're not as strong as we really need to be.... We need to be a lot stronger, look stauncher and a lot more proud in everything that we do. Before that trip, we would have never got up in public and just danced for the fun of ourselves and that was something very wrong that we should have been doing.

Some elders also noted that there was a reigniting of traditional cultural practices because the exchange took place between two Indigenous groups whose people had close connections to *tuna*:

**Whaea Maria** I think...they really reignited the traditions, some of the traditions from what I heard...they used to smoke the tuna in a hollow tree. And so when they knew that our kids were going over there, they did that, you know, right through to smoking the *tuna*. And so I think it reignited their traditions that they hadn't done for a while.

### **8.3. Through travel, building international bonds with other Indigenous people and also recognising what opportunities they have as Indigenous people**

Building bonds with other Indigenous people around the world through travel was seen as immensely valuable and empowering by several participants.

**Eraia** ...it just made [me] more open minded to other cultures... [Native Nations] just opened my eyes to everything.

Furthermore, when asked about the potential of Native Nations expanding to include other groups in other places, and the benefit of Indigenous connection, **Johnny** stated,

...I guess the more that Native Nations expands, goes to other ones, we'll just get even more understanding and we'll all grow as indigenous people... I feel

like that's what [Native Nations] was. It's just as simple as teaching each other, how to be strong, teaching each other law, teaching each other the right way.

Family members of rangatahi who took part in Native Nations saw how it allowed for useful introspection as well, as to what they *did* have that was positive compared with Indigenous people elsewhere:

**Whānau A** It's showing our own people, our own young people, how great or how lucky we are. How, you know, how fortunate we are to have a Treaty with the government, what that has meant for us today...and for our young people to see the struggles or hardships of other young people, in the hope that they appreciate and are grateful for what we have here, today, you know, so it's not looked upon as just another day in Murupara, but actually, it's like, this is a really special place. And we're really lucky to be here.

## 9. Empowerment of rangatahi

### 9.1. Changes mindsets of rangatahi

Associated with the growth of confidence in their cultural identities, as discussed above, the Native Nations experience led to a significant mindset shift for many of the young participants where they realized their future was not pre-determined, that they could direct the next phase of their lives:

**Madeleine** Having Native Nations prove to me that anything's possible. Like it's that whole experience and the fact that somehow I was able to come along onto that trip, and it just came into my reality at a time that I needed it.... Yeah. So I think the whole experience just allowed me to be more true to myself and just live truthfully... showing me that I'm not just small and insignificant...I'm not just gonna be up in the cycle that we're all stuck in.... it opened my eyes so much, and showed me different possibilities — *a way to break out the cycle.*

Relatives of the rangatahi who took part in the cultural exchange also noticed this:

**Whānau A:** [Native Nations has] helped them open their horizons or widen their horizons to who they want to be and what they want to do in the future. And it's made them realize that they can do anything they put their mind to, given the time and focus... I guess, it just made the fire inside of them burn stronger.

## 9.2. Commitment to doing something meaningful with their lives

Rangatahi undertaking a NN exchange told us they returned home feeling a strong calling to work in roles that would make a difference to their people or the natural environment, for example, in social or cultural development (especially, in working with children), or in environmental protection.

**Kiritahanga** Native Nations also helped me to find my purpose. I always had my life goals and it sort of helped me to get on my path.

**Manaia** The confidence grew...because I didn't really know what I was gonna do for *mahi* [prior to Native Nations]. I was gonna go into the Navy, but then there was just a *hōhā*. Hmm. And so that's why I went on the [Native Nations] trip... [Now my work is] based in Rotorua...we look after our birds of prey. You like our karearea, kāhu, and things like that — [the work is] big on that conservation side of things, which is something that I've always wanted to do. I feel more responsible for looking after *Papatuanuku*, our *taiao*, everything like that. I feel more empowered.... I just feel a responsibility to share our culture and to look after our planet. And that's just, yeah, way stronger now than it was before the trip. Or fully thanks to the trip. Oh, it was the reconnecting to the Whirinaki [forest] for sure.

For some of the rangatahi, Native Nations did not change their life goals. Instead, it confirmed the direction they wanted their lives to take, with many of the rangatahi wanting to work within their community and celebrating their Indigenous histories, traditions and values

**Lahaina** I felt like I didn't change my plans. It cleared everything that I didn't need out of the way.

**Madeleine** No, it hasn't changed my purpose. Native Nations was a part of my plan. It was — it's a part of the purpose.

**Kiritahanga** My biggest goal life since I can remember has always been to give back to my whanau, to my people, to my community, in any way that I can. But I sort of before the trip, I didn't know how I was going to do that... But literally, like, straightaway, you know, doing it now I'm living the life that I said I was going to, or doing what I said I was going to be doing, so that was sort of a big change for me, I guess... So I'm a *rangatahi* faacilitator, working on one of our *rangatahi* programs, our organization is called Te Ika Whenua counseling services. And the team that I work for within that organization is Rangatahi Oraki ki Murupara.

Native Nations didn't change **Elvis's** goals to work with his community either, rather, "it made [me] clear on [goals] that [I] already had... [I thought, I] may as well just drive this, dive in [for] the foreseeable future." And what drives him is,

**Elvis** ...working within my community, not in as just make money doing this and that. But like, always being there for the kids and that. I think that's been important for me. Storytelling to these kids, the Next Generation, so we never lose that history. I think that's most important.

### 9.3. NN sets up rangatahi as leaders

Building on the growth in confidence, the strong sense of cultural identity and the commitment to leading futures based around giving back to their people and/or their ancestral lands, the possibility for the youths to be leaders emerged as another outcome of the Native Nations exchange.

**Johnny** The trip really inspired me to learn my chiefs, learn our chiefs' customs, and I really found true conviction in myself now to carry myself with that always, as I've always envisioned, as I want to use this to make myself a strong, great man, like the men that I look up to.

**Madeleine** When you think about it, it's like we're building an army of, like, truth-seekers and, like, freedom walkers, and like, leaders...young indigenous leaders...this was like the first stage and that's had such a big impact. This next stage is going to have an even huger impact.

## 10. Ripple effects beyond those rangatahi who took part in the exchange

### 10.1. Effects on rangatahi who stayed behind

Local rangatahi who did not have the opportunity to participate in the Native Nations exchange gained insights into the experience via social media posts and dialogue with friends or whānau members who did go on the exchange. Through this, new possibilities were opened to them, as an adult from the Murupara community shared:

**Erinah** Kids or our *rangatahi* — their goals, dreams, and aspirations have definitely evolved a lot and when they get put into spaces like this [a Native Nations exchange], they all of a sudden go "oh my God, it's actually easier to go over to Australia than what it's made out to be, it's actually not that scary you know". I think changes in mindsets, perspective, futures, goals, I think that's where tourism... you know, like, that was really beautiful because it

just brings the community together to actually pick our *rangatahi* up and... [say to them] look "get up off your arse babe and get start doing something."

Those who went on the Native Nations exchange directly or indirectly inspired their peers who stayed behind and were unemployed, or unmotivated in school:

**Jamie** My son, when he...came back [he] actually wants to make a change, to let even kids that are disengaged in *kura* (school) know that hey, you know, this is for you as well.

## 10.2. Effects on the wider community 'back home'

Family and elders in the community heard the stories from those who returned home, and felt more informed and connected to Indigenous groups abroad too:

**Jamie** It was a whole different world of learning that [my son] brought home with him. And [this was] embraced not just by us, but his friends... our *kuia*, *koroua* [elders] you know, they, they were all thriving off the stories that were being told, because the stories were connected with our Māori stories, but from two different worlds, two different, totally different cultures.

Elders said they felt a special sense of connection too when they had roles in welcoming and hosting the Native Nations contingent from Australia:

**Whaea Maria**...the indigenous cultures that we've had here.... It's just been amazing...it made a big impact on me at the *pōhiri*. When they [the Originals] did their dance, it just made my hair stand up on end. It's just such an emotional *pōhiri* that I've never experienced before... [I] sort of felt that our values as Māori and beliefs are very similar, but they portray it in different ways.

The community in Aotearoa NZ also said that felt a lot of pride when international visitors – both regular tourists and those on NN – came to visit their special places, like Lake Aniwhenua, their marae, and Whirinaki Forest:

**Koro Maurice** [Tourists] tell us if we just take things for granted. When people come into this valley with this, they can't believe how beautiful this is.

Similarly, one of the elders from Aotearoa reflected on how meaningful it was for him to be part of the group welcoming the Native Nations youths from Australia:

**Kaumatua B** To me, to me it's awesome.... For them to come here. And for us to see them come here. Two different [cultures] connect.... If you could

see the connect, you know, it's not [about] money. Yeah... [Usually] I only see them [Aboriginal people] on TV or whatever. I...think they came into my heart to say something. Yeah, yeah.

The ripple effects on the broader community also came through in comments from a community member who feels like initiatives like Native Nations are generating positive vibes in the whole community. **Mel** spoke about *wairua*, and about how physical changes were now happening that were impacting on rangatahi: “It’s humming, it’s rumbling”.

### 10.3. Older generations are learning key cultural skills

Elders reflected on the way in which hosting tourists encouraged them to practice the cultural roles that are central to welcoming visitors in the *marae* setting. They refer to skills that are central to cultural protocols and rituals on the *marae*, but which could be lost if there is no prompt for the emerging generation of elders to learn them and practice them:

**Whaea Maria** Kohutapu [Lodge] has also been a platform for our *kaikaranga*, our *whaikōrero* for our for our *waiata*. So we've built a little group of us, we're a little group of us that we...always go to Kohutapu in practice our craft. Just to build confidence. And we always support each other.

**Lavanaia** ...tourism in this community has made an absolute positive impact on me myself when I'm down at the Marae, just helping out with the *pōwhiri*. Sometimes I'm sitting there talking to the tourists that are there as well.

## Is this (Native Nations) tourism?

### 11. It's nothing like tourism

Most research participants in this study were asked to reflect on whether they thought Native Nations was a form of tourism, or something else. This evoked a range of answers. For those who equated tourism with mass produced, commercialised experiences of commodified culture, Native Nations was not like tourism at all. Two of their responses were as follows:

**Madeleine** No way. No way, it is the furthest thing from tourism ever! I think, it's being able to travel to different countries and be able to connect with the tribal people, go into their villages and understand their ways of life and get passed down knowledge. That's not your usual tourism at all. But it's in a way

that, the way that Indigenous people, I think, run businesses — [it] isn't in a way that's about money and tourism.

## 12. Maybe, but it's also using tourism is a vehicle for something far more meaningful

When asked, 'Is Native Nations tourism, or something else?', the following response came from Mary, of Tourism Bay of Plenty:

**Mary:** [It is] Something else, but it has the ability to inform tourism. So, I think it's, it's something else...yeah. I don't look at it as tourism, but I know that tourism is the vehicle behind it, that can then take it to the world, and allow us to build enough support around it. Because then you've got lots of voices involved now

Others, both rangatahi and community members, concurred that tourism a vehicle to achieving something much more meaningful:

**Kiritahanga** [It was a] once in a lifetime experience. It's like Aunty [Nadine] was saying before, tourism is the vehicle that drives these things, but Native Nations is — there's still not a word for it, for any of these things.... [It was a] once in a time life experience. It was an opportunity that most people have never gotten...

**Lahaina:** tourism was the vehicle that helped us to get, to get to all the places. Yeah, but when we experienced it, it wasn't tourism we were experiencing, it was culture, it was truth telling, all of that stuff that we experienced....because of tourism, we got the experience. But for us, it wasn't *about* tourism.

**Elvis** It was maybe more cultural [than regular tourism] — and I wanted to learn your [Māori] history a little bit more, [and to] teach mine. It was more cultural.

One of the 'Originals' from Australia reflected that his mob had certainly profited in economic terms from tourism in the past, but that diminished in significance when compared with what he gained from the NN exchange, indicating that this was much more meaningful than regular tourism:

**Johnny** We've made a lot of money from our dance and our cultural businesses, all this stuff that I do, but that will never, ever, compare to the feeling that I got, the honour that I got, to stand in front of everybody and lead

them onto the marae and receive a token be recognized as a chief, as a warrior and such, by not only my own people, but other great people that I know.

The sentiment that this was something more than ‘just’ tourism, resonated with many of our research participants.

### 13. Reflections on what tourism in general can learn from Native Nations

Some of the research participants reflected that Native Nations could be considered as a very special type of tourism. Mary’s extensive experience working in the tourism sector in Rotorua and Bay of Plenty, led her to note that while talk of regenerative tourism has escalated in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic in Aotearoa, with the industry seemingly committed to delivering a better form of tourism, the focus is mainly on regenerating nature. What she believes Native Nations does brilliantly is regenerating people:

**Mary:** ...from an industry perspective, everybody talks about regenerative tourism, everyone talks about sustainability, everyone talks about all of these things that are going on, but you'll find very little content or initiatives out there that focus on *people*.

Mary also believes regenerative tourism is strongly aligned with Indigenous values:

**Mary:** Regenerative tourism...can be created into a buzzword. [But] in its simplest form it is Te Ao Māori. I think in terms of how Māori businesses...create their businesses, it's more than just running an experience for a visitor. It's about telling the right stories from the right people, and providing employment, thinking about the next generation, and how that experience will look well beyond them running it, you know. It's giving back to iwi, giving back to community and ensuring that [during] whole journey, they [elevate] their whole...whanau, iwi, hapu.

The rangatahi, specifically **Kiritahanga**, **Lahaina** and **Hunter**, all agreed that Indigenous tourism and regenerative tourism is beneficial for enhancing the people, their well-being and the natural environment. They do not want to partake in ‘colonised tourism’, rather, they want to see the development of cultural tourism, prioritising Māori-led tourism. Their views aligned with those of many of the Māori tourism operators who offered their services when hosting Originals on the first Native Nations exchange. This includes Jason, from Kaitiaki Adventures, who reflects on why Indigenous tourism operators have so much to offer the sector:

**Jason:** So, when we talk about positive change, we’re the perfect vehicle for change for tourism operators, and I guess for Māori tourism operators that’s

who we are, that's our *pou*, that's what stands us up: *manaakitanga*, *kaitiakitanga*, *whakawhanaungatanga* — whatever that may be that's already woven into our business structure and the foundation of our business.... So, I guess we strive every day to live up to the [Māori tourism] name and to be honest, not only to ourselves, but to our wider community and yeah! I think, I think, a lot of the answers in terms of tourism live within, or lie within, the Māori operators, for us to stand up and take the lead and others will follow.

#### 14. The broader impacts of Native Nations through building Indigenous tourism trails

Native Nations is inspiring new forms of tourism led by Indigenous communities and operators and centred on justice.

The experiences that Indigenous youths have on their exchanges are the foundation for novel Indigenous and regenerative tourism trails that are being developed around the globe. These trails, based on the actual experiences that the youth exchanges are built around, can show the tourism trade the vast array of different types of Indigenous tourism experiences on offer, to enable them to build more Indigenous tourism experiences into their itineraries.

**Nadine:** When we build out regenerative tourism trails, after our youth go through these itineraries, we will decide what to include and what they're going to look like and what thematic angles we can take, based on our young people's journey of healing. We absolutely intend to include elements of truth-telling and real history and real life for our visitors because ultimately...one of the only ways we're ever going to create racial harmony in this world is by bringing people closer together through education. And the only place racial discord or disharmony comes from is fear. And the only place fear comes from is lack of education. So if we can use tourism to provide that really gentle vehicle we can start a ripple effect and start an awareness and like I said, it's about humanity... It's about providing a platform and a voice for people who perhaps have never had it in the past.

Native Nations encourages Indigenous tourism operators to connect with one another in providing experiences for Indigenous youths across a tourism trail. Building national and global networks of indigenous tourism operators and associated tourism trails could provide the unique, immersive experience that visitors have been requesting. Visitors are asking for real, authentic, truthful, spiritual and transformative experiences, based on connection to nature and host communities, delivered by the Indigenous people of the land (Choe & Mahyuni, 2023; Holst, 2023; Hutchison et al., 2021).

This was emphasised by Mary Tolley, head of destination management at Tourism Bay of Plenty:

**Mary** ...visitors [are] really looking for regenerative tourism experiences now. Well, they shouldn't be asking for anything less to be fair, because for me, tourism experiences should be based on giving back to people in [their] place, because if they're not at the stage, then they're in the wrong game. And tourism really needs to shift into that. And I think even you and I...if we're going to experience something, [but] we don't know the story behind that business [or] the place, or there's no context around that, then it's a very disconnected experience, right?

Through such Indigenous tourism trails, more visitors will be able to have culturally authentic and potentially transformative experiences too. This could involve sitting around a fire hearing about past tragedies and then taking part in cleansing rituals. It might include experiencing traditional welcomes to Indigenous lands and learning how to perform Indigenous people's songs and dances and the meaning behind these. Or it could include hiking among ancient trees and learning that they are protected because they are the embodiment of ancestors of their hosts.

An additional benefit is that the regenerative and Indigenous tourism trails will encourage regional dispersal beyond the usual tourism hotspots which can be sites of overtourism during peak seasons, and allow visitors to travel to more remote parts of regions to have these experiences – not only spreading the economic benefits of tourism – but also enabling them to give back to people, place, community and environment as they go.

## 15. Final word

We conclude with an excerpt of a speech given by **Madeleine** (Luez, 2023) in Tauranga on the last night of the exchange, which encapsulates the healing power of Native Nations and its benefits in terms of showcasing authentic Indigenous cultures, empowerment of Indigenous youths, and the elevation Indigenous tourism businesses:

**Madeleine** This is not just tourism. This is a connection to the original people of the land. This is supporting indigenously owned businesses and creating pathways for the disadvantaged. This [is] hearing the real stories of the country and truth. This is the acknowledgement of the Indigenous. This is ...[a] showcase [of] who they are at its core. This is saving lives. This is providing opportunities, sparking ideas and allowing youth that have been disconnected for so long a chance to reconnect with their spirit. This a physical, spiritual and emotional journey. This is a healing process. Native Nations is exactly what we need at this time.

+++++

## References

Choe, J., & Mahyuni, L. P. (2023). Sustainable and inclusive spiritual tourism development in Bali as a long-term post-pandemic strategy. *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*, 11(2), 11.

Holst, A. M. (2023). *If You Seek Sense of Place: Comparing How Local Narratives are Reflected in a Storytelling Strategy*. Master's thesis. Mid-Sweden University.

Hutchison, B. (2021) *Advancing a regenerative tourism system in New Zealand : an analysis of an Indigenous tourism operation and the Tiaki Promise destination pledge*. Master's Thesis in Development Studies. Palmerston North: Massey University  
<http://hdl.handle.net/10179/16666>

Hutchison, B., Movono, A., & Scheyvens, R. (2021). Resetting tourism post-COVID-19: why Indigenous Peoples must be central to the conversation. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 46(2), 261-275.

Lockhart, J.W. (2023) Kohutapu Lodge: A model for regenerative tourism in New Zealand. BBC 2 August  
<https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20230801-kohutapu-lodge-a-model-for-regenerative-tourism-in-new-zealand>

Luez, Madeleine (2023) Speech: Native Nations - Tracing Indigenous Footsteps. 29 November <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/NR5TXqnac9FJoEcf/>

Mead, H. 2003. *Tikanga Māori: Living by Māori values*. Wellington: Huia Publishers and Te Whare Wananga o Awanuiarangi.

Native Nations – Tracing Indigenous Footsteps. (2023). Facebook.  
<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61550536230108>

Te Aka Māori Dictionary (n.d.). Te Aka Māori Dictionary. Retrieved September 2, 2024 from <http://www.maoridictionary.co.nz>