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## Mātauranga Moana: uplifting Māori and Pacific values of conceptualisation over western co-design constructs

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**Abstract:** This paper offers a critical examination of the problematic use of western co-design methodologies when applied to indigenous and diasporic communities. By centring place-based, relational design approaches to enable cultural conventions from our position in Aotearoa New Zealand, we argue the use of co-design constructs risks overlaying neo-liberal ideologies on top of our resilient indigenous Māori and Pacific knowledge systems, values, ethics, and collective approaches towards design conceptualisation.

As design researchers located in te moana-nui-a-Kiwa our discussion is underpinned by our Māori whakapapa, Sāmoan gafa, and relationship to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. We present our kōrero through a case study relationship with a local healthcare service, aiming to increase access for Māori and Pacific tamariki through design actions. Our collaboration was developed within the format of a tertiary course involving Māori and Pacific taura enrolled in Design and Fine Arts degrees at Ngā Pae Māhutonga School of Design, Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa Massey University of New Zealand. Unlike traditional university design courses that aim to achieve a specific measurable outcome, we focussed on fostering whakawhānaungatanga and evidencing this through activated learning of the cultural conventions of wānanga and talanoa towards weaving together our values through critically reflective practice.

Our case study relationship demonstrates the importance of relational place-based knowledge systems and their conditions for enabling reflexivity towards tino rangatiratanga and ola manuia within Māori and Pacific communities; further highlighting the systemic barriers that practices of co-design can seed when attempting to serve our communities in Aotearoa.

**Keywords:** *Place-based; Māori and Pacific knowledge; co-design; indigenous practices; conceptualisation*

### Te Reo Māori and Gagana Sāmoa: the language we use

As Māori and Pacific (Sāmoan) authors writing in the English language, we face communication barriers when articulating our cultural conventions within western academic frameworks and design practice. We aspire to articulate how our cultural whakapapa and gafa support engagement with our communities throughout our writing. Therefore, we use kupu Māori and gagana Sāmoa where appropriate to embody a relationship that is for and of Māori and Pacific peoples. We offer general translations in a glossary at the end of the text; however, it should be acknowledged that English translations are not exact equivalents in this context, and therefore should be treated as guides.



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The two terms, tino rangatiratanga and ola manuia are pivotal to our discussion: both communicate dynamic and expansive relationships that guide their meaning in our context. The term, ola manuia, is shared amongst a number of Pacific languages and commonly defined in government documents as, “living well or in wellness” (Ministry of Health, 2020, p.4). However, on a community level, it relates to a sense of autonomy regarding practices of well-being and the action of giving, caring, and protecting others. In te ao Māori tino rangatiratanga is frequently described as sovereignty or self-determination. Here, we speak to this term as the practice of “ensuring our communities are healthy, well-educated and can live a good life” (Hitchcock, 2018, para. 2) whilst protecting Māoritanga to thrive for generations to come.

## **Ko wai tātou, who are we?**

We are two Māori and Pacific design researchers and educators of te moana-nui-a-Kiwa working to uplift Māori and Pacific cultural and creative community engagement practices in Aotearoa New Zealand. We present an argument challenging dominant western practices of co-design and the relationship of such methods to neo-liberal ideologies. Instead, advocating for Māori and Pacific cultural values and knowledge systems that have informed co-creative engagement in Aotearoa long before the universalised constructs of co-design. We aspire to “unsettle dominant conventions in design...” (Akama et al., 2022, p.26), traversing these boundaries together with our Mātauranga Moana: the collective force of Māori and Pacific knowledge, central to who we are, where we come from and where we will go. It is necessary to acknowledge the whakapapa and gafa of our approach; we listen and learn from our Māori and Pacific communities who exercise place-based, relational methods of design daily. We build on the knowledge of our tūpuna; Kō ngā tahu ā ō tapuwai inanahi, hei tauira mō āpōpō, the footsteps laid down by our ancestors centuries ago create the paving stones upon which we stand today" (Whakatauki).

Our discussion is shaped by a case study relationship between Māori and Pacific tauira and a local healthcare service. Together, we sought to engage culturally positioned design-thinking methodologies underpinned by values of tautoko and tautua to better understand what equitable access to the healthcare service could look like for Māori and Pacific tamariki. Throughout, we speak to our own positional contexts as tohu in connecting with people and worldviews, facilitating action, and forming the aspirations behind this work.

To identify as Māori and Pacific peoples in Aotearoa also means enduring the weight of systemic inequities whilst being stigmatised by this label. The way data is collected and disseminated about Māori and Pacific peoples perpetuates a plethora of problematic intergenerational outcomes within the health, education, housing, and employment sectors. For example, when compared to the dominant majority of people who identify as New Zealand European, Māori are more likely to die younger (Statistics New Zealand, 2021b), Pacific peoples are half as likely to obtain higher education before the age of 25 (Statistics New Zealand, 2010), Māori are 28.6% less likely to become a homeowner (Statistics New Zealand, 2021a) and Pacific peoples are paid a 23% lower income (Godfrey, 2021).

These multigenerational inequities arise from the deep harm experienced by tangata whenua because of the British Crown’s decision to proclaim sovereignty over Aotearoa in 1840 (Mutu, 2013). Prior to this when the first Europeans (Pākehā) landed on our shores there was a promising opportunity for collaboration and trade between the groups. Many Pākehā chose to stay in Aotearoa, seeing potential in settling their lives here alongside Māori. Subsequently, the British Government under Queen Victoria’s reign created an agreement with Rangatira Māori to outline how to “control the growing Pākehā population” (Calman et al., 2018, p.5) to protect tangata whenua. This agreement would ensure Māoritanga, te ao Māori, tikanga and te taiao would continue to prosper and be kept safe with tino rangatiratanga – autonomy for Māori ways of living, being and doing (Calman et al., 2018). The Treaty of Waitangi was produced and signed as a result; a legal document upholding agreements and underpinning governmental actions to ensure equitable future partnerships between all tangata whenua and Pākehā. Two documents were produced, one written in English: The Treaty of Waitangi, and one translated into te reo Māori: Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Waitangi Tribunal, 2016). It is important to know the differences between these two documents; the former was written to assert authority and power over indigenous people to colonise the land, and the latter intended to uphold tino rangatiratanga for Māori by establishing “a treaty of peace and friendship” (Mutu, 2013) between Māori and Pākehā (Waitangi Tribunal, 2016). The past 183 years of mistranslations and misinterpretations have led to widespread disregard for Te Tiriti o Waitangi, sustaining Pākehā dominance over life, land, past and present in Aotearoa – consequently contributing to the design of public systems and services that continue to create inequitable access. The government’s inability to “design and administer the current primary health care system to actively address persistent Māori health inequities by failing to give effect to the Treaty’s guarantee of tino rangatiratanga (autonomy, self-determination, sovereignty)” (Waitangi Tribunal, 2023, para.1) breaches the agreements of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Pacific peoples in Aotearoa are tangata tiriti; people who do not identify as Māori but honour the obligations of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. However, there are large disparities when comparing Pacific peoples access to health, housing, and employment to that of Pākehā. Post-World War II saw an economic boom which engendered the need for more skilled workers in Aotearoa. A range of visa schemes were developed to support the economies of Pacific nations and in turn, the economy of Aotearoa. These schemes enabled Pacific peoples to migrate to Aotearoa and add value to the manufacturing and primary production workforce (Māhina-Tuai, 2012). As an outcome of World War II some Pacific Islands became territories of Aotearoa so Pacific peoples from these places gained automatic citizenship. Unfortunately, the 1970 economic recession “provided fertile ground for the public expression of racism and general resentment towards groups perceived to be taking employment from locals” (Anae, 2012, p.222). As a result, Pacific peoples were targeted for being a strain on public services. The dominant media channels and politicians generated racial hate by accusing Pacific peoples as “overstayers”, people who had stayed beyond their visa entitlements. This led to harmful police campaign known as the Dawn Raids; raiding Pacific people’s homes at dawn, jailing Pacific peoples, and sending Pacific peoples back to the islands with disregard for those who held citizenship or were within the parameters of their visas (Ministry for Pacific Peoples, 2021).

These events connect the historic landscape of inequity to the current marginalised relationships that Māori and Pacific peoples have with public health services in Aotearoa. If our shared histories are not acknowledged, our health services will continue to perpetuate harmful legacies, leading to further inequities in healthcare engagement (dismissal of cultural conventions) and inequities in healthcare design (lack of methodologies used to uplift access and dismantle barriers) for Māori and Pacific peoples. For fundamental shifts to take place Te Tiriti o Waitangi needs to be honoured at the centre of health care service and system design. For this reason, design positionality in relation to Te Tiriti o Waitangi must be critiqued to dismantle dominant ideologies that reinforce power imbalances and lead to inequitable design outcomes. Designers must take responsibility for their position of power to enact shifts towards the decolonisation of healthcare in Aotearoa and give space for design approaches and outcomes to enable tino rangatiratanga – ensuring Māori and Pacific peoples can determine their own forms of wellbeing in Aotearoa now and in the future.

## **Whakapapa, Gafa: the paths that have led us here.**

In Aotearoa today, co-design is the primary participatory design method used in the service design industry to seek out marginalised communities and solve their problems. As a result, designers often focus on deficits that reinforce problematic narratives about identity and representation in our communities. Early co-design methods dating back to the 1970s sought to facilitate the engagement of end users within the conceptual design process to *collectively* design outcomes that better meet their requirements and desires (Sanders & Stappers, 2008). Such methodologies are often used in government where there is an increased demand to engage Māori and Pacific communities in consultation – the main targets of the services being re-designed for equitable access. We can see this reflected in the 2023 New Zealand Government’s ‘National Priorities which stipulate: “We’re committed to improving the intergenerational wellbeing of whānau by working in closer collaboration with Māori” (Labour, 2020., para.1).

But does the practice of co-design enable the most appropriate conventions for tino rangatiratanga, ola manuia and respect for mātauranga? We ask this question with an emphasis on the presentation of co-design as a universal tool of practice; suggesting that anyone, in any location can facilitate groups of people to gather collectively designed information (Akama et al., 2019).

## **We need to question: who has the access, who holds the power?**

The gathering of information about Māori and Pacific communities is a contestable space that co-design risks continuing cycles of intergenerational trauma. To us, data is taonga (Hudson et al., 2017). The collection, dissemination, and use require culturally appropriate conventions of care, transmission, and interpretation (Mikaere, 2018). Historically, western data collected about tangata whenua has been used to enact power over land, language, and culture (Mikaere, 2018). Data about Māori and Pacific people is limited; not all members of our communities have been able (or want) to contribute personal information due to lack of access, cultural differences in collection methods, and distrust of data collection agendas based on historic harm. Questions about identity asked through western conventions of data collection causes whakama, especially if you have experienced displacement in your whakapapa due to colonisation, or if you were born in Aotearoa but your gafa embodies an ethnic relationship of your Māori and/or Pacific parents. This is hard to articulate through standard box-ticking conventions, or within a singular workshop. Co-design can perpetuate these inclinations of distrust and fear toward forms of colonisation as “it is a

recurrent action that implacably sweeps others and their understandings from the landscape” (Sheehan, 2011, p.69). Targeting, taking knowledge, and circulating it through design without proper understanding of potential impact disempowers our communities from engaging. This practice essentially disestablishes control of who the information belongs to. The giving and “sharing of knowledge is a long-term commitment (Smith, 2012). It is imperative that designers engaging Māori and Pacific communities in co-design understand the enormous responsibility and trust placed in them to protect indigenous data and uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Trust is earned through time and respect: a situated awareness of who, what, where and how (Sheehan, 2011). If adequate time is not spent, harm will be caused to everyone involved (including the designer) as the “danger is that designers are left to learn by trial and error, experimenting in vulnerable communities. When this fails it turns into a form of design imperialism (Schiffer, 2020).

Professor Kirikowhai Mikaere is a leading Māori Data Sovereignty specialist who champions the rights that indigenous peoples have to their own data in accordance with the Indigenous Data Sovereignty regulations of data ownership (Taylor & Kukutai, 2016) stating, “If you take data from us, it is subject to our laws, no matter where you store it...indigenous data is data produced by indigenous peoples and data about indigenous peoples, lifeways, customs and the environments we have relationships with” (Mikaere, 2018). Oppositely, western conventions of data collection through co-design methods where information is often gathered through workshopping a series of targeted questions about problems, takes a curated collection of knowledge in a homogenous, universal, and portable way, enabling the right circumstances for producing neo-liberal outcomes that fail to reciprocate with meaningful, respectful, and valuable impact (Akama et al., 2022). Consequently, methods of co-design risk trampling on cultural conventions that are unique to the communities being served, contradicting the relationally and ethically reflexive ways of being within our Māori and Pacific communities (Anae, 2019; Pohatu, 2013; Wilson et al., 2021).

Our communities hold legacies, not of marginalisation but of resilience and aspiration for each other and for the future of our people. To move forward in our healthcare design context, we question: what are our ways of communicating who we are? What are our collective dreams? How can design support our communities to thrive? And most importantly, what are the existing conventions our people already enact to do this?

## **Toward community enabling conventions**

We are advocating the need for “deeper situational awareness” (Sheehan, 2011, p.70) of the existing cultural values and conventions in our design practice. Beginning with the prioritisation of respectful, mana-enhancing relationships, we need to address the saturation of co-design tools that overlook simply sitting with someone *kanohi-ki-te-kanohi* to listen, learn and respect. Therefore, we seek to de-clutter the “increasing web-like array of methods, methodologies, approaches, models and paradigms and ideas that when distracted from our values have a ‘paralysing effect’ on the deep understandings and appreciation of what gives Pacific peoples meaning and belonging” (Anae, 2019, p.1). These tools deflect from necessary conversations of power, historical harm and inequities through actions that cause inaction. We need to shift the focus away from the designer, their tools, and the design outcome, and instead towards designers using design methods to empower our Māori and Pacific communities through genuine and respectful relationship-building practices. We can begin to shift power by decentring our design jargon. The language we use within design practice can be inaccessible and frivolous when used during community engagement and distracting from what should be central to the kaupapa. Re-thinking language through a place-based lens can better uplift our cultural values of relationality and collectivism to ultimately create an accessible space where people from different generations, backgrounds, and education can engage in meaningful collaboration.

## **Communicating our position**

When we are designing with Māori and Pacific communities, we are coming together to deepen our knowledge rather than validating knowledge that will be extracted and consumed in ways beyond our control (Akama et al., 2022). This is one of the key reasons why the questions: “Ko wai au? Ko wai koe? Ko wai tātou?” (Whaanga-Schollum et al., 2016, p.12) and “why are you here, what is your purpose?” (Akama et al., 2022, p.26) are essential to ask when unpacking each person's positionality before any further *kōrero* happens. Positionality refers to the identity, place, and experiences of a person and how these factors influence their perspective and worldview. As a designer “it is essential to see and understand what position we are looking from when we look at people and the problems, we seek to solve for them” (Noel, n.d. para.3). Your positionality is something to be proud of, your position shapes who you are as a connected person in the world, and in the context of relational, situated awareness, should be communicated upfront. Western design conventions often encourage designers to strip away their position to neutral so they can work with

anyone about any subject matter, suggesting the designer has no biases, “cyclically fortifying a design culture of nowhere and nobody” (Akama et al., 2019, p.4). Our cultural contexts, sexuality, class, location, political views, and education all contribute to how we design, and why we design. As designers in any context, but especially of indigenous contexts where relationships are central, we need to disclose who we are and why we are here (Akama et al., 2022).

Alongside positionality, essential to community engagement is upholding the mana of all people and places involved. Mana is a sacred energy, force, or power held by living entities, thus it is essential to ensure it is always respected (Huriwai & Baker, 2015). Mana-enhancing practice is a Māori approach to relationship building, where cultural values are upheld through the protection of “the spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual dimensions of a person” (Huriwai & Baker, 2015, p.6). Mana-enhancing practice is aspirational: focussing on existing strengths, as opposed to weaknesses or deficits. To uphold mana in collective design relationships, the collaboration must be responsive to the needs of the community not stipulated by outcomes wanted by the design facilitator or organisation – reinforcing the need for understanding and communicating positionality (Whaanga-Schollum et al., 2016).

## Case Study: Bee Healthy Regional Dental Service

To express the importance of decolonising partnership models for healthcare design in Aotearoa we reflect on the learnings, challenges, and outcomes from our engagement with a local healthcare provider, Bee Healthy: Regional Dental Service. We offer our experience as an example of place-based engagement activated through the cultural conventions of wānanga and talanoa – Māori and Pacific ways to organically enable critical values of relationality and reflexivity. We want to clarify that our engagement methods throughout this relationship should not be replicated within other communities or services. The power and purpose of this kaupapa is situated within the reflexive, relational space between the specific people, communities, and places.

Bee Healthy (BH) provides free dental care to tamariki until the end of year 8 (roughly 13 years old) in the Greater Wellington Region. In 2022, BH approached us to assist in re-designing the interior of their dental hubs to foster a stronger sense of belonging for Māori and Pacific tamariki. The request for design support was prompted by the low prevalence of caries-free (decay-free) tamariki disclosed by BH. Routine before-school assessments show when compared by ethnic group: 50% of Māori are caries-free; 38% of Pacific are caries-free, whereas 75% of non-Māori and Pacific tamariki are caries-free (Penny, 2022). Additionally, the dental appointment attendance rates among Māori and Pacific tamariki were also of concern: 26% of Māori tamariki and 30% of Pacific tamariki did not attend in 2021, whereas only 7% of non-Māori and Pacific tamariki did not attend (Penny, 2022).

We suggested shifting the focus from interior decoration to an exploration of the wider systemic barriers that Māori and Pacific tamariki and their whānau experience when engaging (or not) with the service. We all agreed before any design work could happen a complete te ao Māori and te ao Pasifika re-imagining of the BH service was imperative. We asked BH to commit to a process of whakawhānaungatanga between Māori, Pacific, and tangata tiriti BH kaimahi and our Māori and Pacific Design and Arts tauira so we could better understand the barriers and design opportunities for the service from a Mātauranga Moana perspective. Our rōpū consisted of BH oral health therapists, dentists, service managers, call centre team members, administration staff, and early intervention education promoters, joined by tauira from spatial, textiles, industrial, visual communication design, photography, fashion, and fine arts disciplines.

## TAUTOKO // TAUTUA

***Whakatauki: “Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini. Success is not the work of an individual, but the work of many”.***

***O le Alaga’upu: “O le tautua o le ala lea i le fa’aeaina. Service is the path that leads to elevation”.***

We presented our engagement through a course at Ngā Pae Māhutonga School of Design, Massey University of New Zealand entitled ‘Tautoko // Tautua’: suggesting flux between cultural concepts of service and support, allowing for autonomy of interpretation depending on your understanding of the kupu or gagana. Unlike traditional papers within the school where a specific conceptualised outcome is required to address a design brief, the core purpose of this paper was for tauira and BH kaimahi to engage in wānanga and talanoa kanohi ki te kanohi to build relationships through whānaungatanga and teu le vā – nurturing our interpersonal connections through our cultural conventions.

The paper was delivered over four intensive weeks held between the university studios, BH community hubs and management offices. Kai was always shared to manaaki the manuhiri of each place and to offer acts of care beyond the design kaupapa, but in line with our cultural values to enable an understanding of the whakapapa of each person; their skills, experiences, and perspectives within and outside of their formal working/studying environment. As we step through the key focus points of the engagement, we provide reflections on our learning and our reflexive responses to the needs of the rōpū as they arose from our position as kaitiaki of the relationship.

### **Part 1: positioning cultural, and social contexts alongside current perceptions of service access and creative practice.**

To begin our engagement, we introduced wānanga and talanoa tools to enable the discussion of our personal truths – especially our experiences, ways of being and perceptions towards our cultural identity, whilst acknowledging our intersections and differences. A taonga was presented by tauira of a preceding course (exploring moana-centric methodologies) as a koha to guide our kōrero. The taonga prompted members of the rōpū to share: ko wai koe, who am I? A place-based response to Lesley Ann Noel's Positionality Wheel (Noel & Paiva, 2021). In a circle, we passed a pōhatu while responding to four kōrero prompts that were centred on common values and aspirations of te moana-nui-a-Kiwa. The taonga provided physical and spiritual support: a force to uplift, hold and share our whakaaro. These interactions led to deeper, personal cultural connections within the rōpū and outlined the purpose of our engagement for both tauira and kaimahi. It also highlighted some displacement of cultural literacy for some kaimahi. The majority of tauira are rangatahi who have experienced an increase in Māori and Pacific knowledge sharing in the Aotearoa education system. An upsetting realisation was shared by kaimahi of an older generation who were encountering access to their own culture within a formal education setting for the first time. We collectively unpacked how we could support those who felt whakama for perceiving they know less than others by using inclusive language, allowing space for questions, and discussing feelings as they arise so each rōpū member was nurtured through acts of tautoko and tautua.

To further our understanding of each other's positions we travelled to see kaimahi in action at two BH community hubs to form an understanding of their day-to-day experiences from a professional and cultural position. As a result of the site visits tauira began to disrupt their outside perceptions of the service by taking note of the small and humble shifts towards representation and access that kaimahi enacted in their daily routines, such as decorating surfaces with kupu Māori, re-organising rooms to enable whānau to attend appointments together or creating resources to provide the whole whānau with culturally positioned dental education. This highlighted the considerable amount of additional labour undertaken by kaimahi beyond their job descriptions; going the extra mile to enable access to care when whānau are presented with financial and systemic obstacles. Since kaimahi come from a range of cultural and community-based contexts they have a lived understanding, dedication, and compassion towards developing alternative ways to actively increase daily access to healthcare for their people.

### **Part 2: leading with mana-enhancing practice to dream together!**

It was then time to challenge kaimahi perceptions of 'creative practice' by empowering tauira to share their art and design skills within their cultural intersections. Tauira were proud and confident as they presented their work to the kaimahi whom they had built trust with. Presentations, although varied in creative practice, were all connected through the embodiment of Māori and Pacific values. While this exercise was not intended to provide design solutions, the range of creative expression demonstrated to kaimahi the potential for creative practices to ensure impactful access, cultural representation, tino rangatiratanga and ola manuia for our communities when applied to challenges of service experience at BH.

In response to the aspirational sharing of creative works, we focussed on the practice of dreaming and imagining; historically valued conventions in indigenous approaches to design methodologies (Rowe, 2014). We plotted our whakaaro, pātai, and dreams digitally using a technique called Whakapapa Plotting; a mātauranga Māori design-thinking tool developed to visualise the relationships between cultural frameworks, research, and conceptual design offerings. Whakapapa plots are driven by the intangible, relational life forces within a project that connect tangata and whenua, seeking to facilitate a visual kōrero to ground and guide future action and dreams (Stokes, 2022). However, before any collective dreaming about BH could happen our rōpū decided it was necessary to address obstacles first whilst ensuring our approach did not fall into the traps of only focusing on structural barriers or perceived limitations of Māori and Pacific peoples. By participating within the conventions of wānanga and talanoa to

facilitate conditions of trust and safety, we could begin to whakapapa plot our dreams and speak about barriers simultaneously, without jumping to solutions. The rōpū spoke about the shame and worry of the wider access barriers to BH experienced by whānau such as lack of transport, money, time, healthcare literacy, and cultural stigmas. These barriers are often overlooked since they sit beyond the direct BH service but are essential to addressing when enabling shifts toward equitable access. Despite the aspirational reframing practices introduced, the weight of historical trauma when discussing barriers was still heavy. Therefore, as kaitiaki we needed to activate conventions to encourage our rōpū to be courageous and collectively envision a world in which our people can live longer and healthier lives, beyond the barriers we face today. Our goal was to lead with the mana-enhancing practices.

**We unpacked the question: what does mana-enhancing kōrero sound like in this space?**

This pātai was created to ground everyone in fa’a aloalo. Rōpū responses highlighted the importance of caring for vā and being aware of your own voice and that of others. How can you titiro, whakarongo, then kōrero – key cultural values that can disrupt power dynamics in group relationships. This learning was important to start with as taura come from cultural contexts where fa’a aloalo is afforded to elders, in this case, kaimahi. And whilst kaimahi have the lived experience to dream about the service from within, it was important that space was also given for our taura to dream about access from the outside, and to be able to do it through teu le vā.

**If we were to dream of a healthy Aotearoa, what would this look like for Māori and Pacific Peoples?**

Whilst our focus was to reimagine access to dental care, it was important to make space for dreaming beyond these parameters – acknowledging the interconnected nature of health and wellbeing from a Moana perspective. Our cultural conventions of hauora illuminate intersections across the emotional, physical, spiritual, and social well-being of our people. This is, exemplified through Sir Mason Durie’s Māori health framework of Te Whare Tapa Whā (Durie, 2004) and Fuimaono Karl Puloto-Endemann’s Fonofale; a Pacific Island model of health situated in Aotearoa (Puloto-Endemann, 2011). So, we focused on dreaming about an aspirational world where experiences of health services embody interconnected relationships to hauora through the vā of holistic values that are key to our cultural conventions. The rōpū raised ideas of equity, inclusion, and free healthcare. But some went further – such as dreaming of a time when Māori and Pacific Peoples were not targeted as a group in need of western healthcare. Or what if our loved ones were still present to kōrero and continued knowledge transmission? Some rōpū members even dreamed of a future where indigenous well-being practices were central to becoming a healthy Aotearoa.



Figure 1: Tautoko//Tautua rōpū response to “what would a healthy Aotearoa look like for Māori and Pacific peoples?”. (2022). Miro Board.



of healthcare service providers, designed to enable access for those who cannot reach the services within their traditional modes of operation. The festival expressed the beating heart of the community through local music performances, whānau and aiga, food stalls, school performances, and interactive activities. Although funded by healthcare providers, the community demonstrated their autonomy in activating the festival: the stage commentator broke the ice with jokes and light fun, bringing ease to the dominant lens of problematic health outputs weighing heavy on many shoulders. Our taura who were members of this community were elated to host us in their space. They stepped up and led us around the festival, sharing the whakapapa of the event, the whenua, and the personal connections their whānau have to the services within their community. It was humbling to experience first-hand the respect and friendship shared between the wider group. For those of us not from this community, we saw how important this event was to whānau, providing an opportunity to complete health tasks: like taking their tamariki for a dental check at the BH van! Making the pivot to attend the festival with our rōpū further evidenced the need to value leadership within our communities. The festival was a clear example of what happens when power is shifted to our people; access is created through the application of place-based values and cultural conventions.

The experience of engagement in health services and care struck us as clearly opposing the deficit and disengaged ways our communities are commonly presented in healthcare statistics. The “persistent inequitable health outcomes suffered by Māori are indicators of Treaty breach”(Waitangi Tribunal, 2023, p.14) if we can honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi , our rōpū’s dream of a ‘future where indigenous wellbeing practices were central to becoming a healthy Aotearoa’, becomes possible.

As we reflected on the importance of visiting the BH hubs, the healthcare festival, and having our feet on the whenua where our communities are situated, we see the evidence enabling of place-based responses to service delivery. Place-based design is deeply linked to te ao Māori and te ao Pasifika: we conceive an interconnected, reciprocal relationship between people and whenua. This relationship is bound by the care, and protection of intergenerational knowledge and experiences (Rameka, 2018). A place-based approach to relationality not only protects our whenua but also the knowledge systems, histories, and experiences that are entangled with place. As a design approach in Aotearoa, place-based design foregrounds the cultural, social, tangible, and intangible qualities of a physical location or community to formulate design concepts, approaches, and responses (Gray et al., n.d.). Place-based design gathers knowledge by understanding where communities stand and have stood – with reference to whakapapa, situated actions and time. Uplifting the mana of the whenua is relationally linked to wider Māori values such as kaitiakitanga and manaakitanga, collective care and reciprocity for our environment. A deeper situational awareness of place “generates many divergent spaces where innovation can contribute positively to the wellbeing of the whole” (Akama et al., 2019, p.17), an essential component in building relationships.

#### **Part 4: Attempting Moana-based innovation, speculation, and conceptualisation processes**

Kaimahi and taura were paired up to respond to a BH service design challenge from their professional and creative contexts. For example, a taura majoring in industrial design was paired with a community dentist kaimahi to analyse the design of a proposed mātauranga Māori designed dental tool. Taura demonstrating interest in healthcare legislation at BH teamed up with the service manager to re-think whanau-centric models of access. During this process of talanoa there were moments of epiphany as well as tension. Interestingly, no group landed on a speculative idea or solution to develop the example further, instead illuminating areas that still needed to be negotiated with their wider communities before conceptualisation could happen. There was voiced concern for the position of power taura and kaimahi felt when asked to analyse these examples, sparking thought back to the values, conventions of care and leadership empowerment addressed earlier. Kaimahi and taura plotted mana-enhancing responses to how the examples connected to the rōpū values and reflected on the agency and autonomy of Māori and Pacific communities when involved in the design processes communicated through the examples.

#### **Conclusion**

Whilst the whakawhānaungatanga case study with BH is the beginning of a larger collaborative project, it was a pivotal point of learning for the rōpū to emphasise the importance of investing in and nurturing relationships, on the whenua, and without the pressure of finding "solutions".

By valuing who we are, where we come from and the place in which we stand, we were able to create a strong foundation of values to ground future phases of collaboration between our rōpū and the BH service. Whilst this initial collaboration has not produced specific design ‘outcomes’ for increasing access for Māori and Pacific tamariki at BH, it

has instead laid the cultural foundations necessary to move forward and arrive at a conceptualised design offering that is of the communities it is intended for. We have navigated this kaupapa with our Māori and Pacific approaches to collaboration at the centre; fundamentally changing the path of how we move forward as a Mātauranga Moana collective and approach co-creative design projects in the future.

The vast range of challenges and new learnings that arose from our engagement included navigating challenging kōrero and ensuring everyone's mana was upheld throughout. A point of contention and a question that we take forward into our future collaboration surfaced around ownership: if we are working together towards collective outcomes, then how do we determine ownership of this mahi? This challenge was a timely reminder of how conventions, perspectives, and ways of approaching knowledge outside of indigenous values can seed their way into our attempts to retain relational, collective ways of generating and responding. Through further wānanga and talanoa, we unpacked the concept of "ownership", asking a responding question: who has ownership of relational concepts within Māori and Pacific communities if they are founded upon cultural conventions passed down from our tūpuna? When projects involve outcomes that have been drawn from indigenous concepts it is imperative to acknowledge they are intergenerationally shared and collectively conceptualised over time and space beyond our present (Tan, 2013, p. 64) This discussion is a clear example of why the time for wānanga and talanoa within our relationships can create critical empowerment within our rōpū, particularly when navigating challenges of western constructs that can risk renegotiating the activation and authority of indigenous ways of thinking.

When reflecting on the conventional parameters of co-design that informed the basis of our initial critique, we were reminded that when trust is founded upon a Māori and Pacific approach to engagement, we can activate a self-determined shift towards tino rangatiratanga and o la manuia within our collective responses. The engagement of cultural and relational concepts helps to enable organic and equitable participation toward framing and weaving values together. And in turn, validated and directed the cultural conventions required to move forward. Thus, we reject the notion of 'co-design' as a tool to be used with our communities. We refuse to universalise our indigenous, Moana-led diversity of relationship-led values. We advocate for a power shift within participatory methodologies back to our people by recognising the diverse and grounded processes which have been embedded in our ways of collaborating for generations. We pose questions to co-design facilitators in Aotearoa and beyond, if you are not part of the community and/or cultural contexts involved in the co-design you should be actively asking yourself: what are you doing to critique your position of power? And how are you enabling recognition and listening to the leadership of the communities and cultural practices at the centre of the relationship?

As co-authors, we have purposefully reserved our own experiences of this engagement until the end. Since we are Māori and Pacific designers positioned within an academic institution, we are constantly navigating barriers to enable aspirational opportunities for Māori and Pacific taurira; many of which were faced throughout this kaupapa. Throughout this work we have positioned ourselves to serve from the back; everything was driven by and for our rōpū. Our job was to listen, respond and create the appropriate conditions for organic wānanga and talanoa: we practiced reflexive and relational approaches to enable "plural ways of being, knowing and becoming-with-many" (Akama et al., 2022, p.26). We used our academic and design privileges to disrupt structural barriers in the background to prevent harming and re-negotiating the cultural conventions and conditions of kaimahi and taurira relationships – we became skilled at designing out the obstacles – the institutional expectations of an engagement within a university setting: resources, timeframes, outcomes, process, ethics. While we acknowledge not arriving at specific solutions towards enabling access for Māori and Pacific tamariki, we have made conscious the necessary values to underpin the future of this engagement and still contributed to alternative areas of benefit for kaimahi and taurira. For final year taurira, this course enabled the completion of their degree on time or for others, a field of literature and critical thinking to ground their future projects. For kaimahi, this engagement was their first time being given dedicated space to come together as Māori, Pacific and tangata tiriti to wānanga and reflect on their mahi from outside of the BH hubs. An area of improvement that has been actioned since is the offering of te reo Māori classes (during work time) to empower the cultural language systems of kaimahi. These small acts of alofa acknowledge the existing needs of our communities that fall outside of the core purpose of our course but play a significant role in grounding trust so our rōpū walked away with their mana intact. Collectively speaking, the most valuable and aspirational impact our rōpū moved on with, were the skills to articulate and uplift the Moana of identities that exist within their communities, carrying on the work of our tūpuna before us. This solidifies the potential of and need for authentic impact, partnership, and cultural care.

## Te Reo Māori Glossary

Hauora	Health, to be well, Māori philosophy of health
Kai	Food
Kaimahi	Staff, workers
Kaitiaki	a being who enables care, and protection of the mana of other beings/land
Kaitiakitanga	a value to facilitate care and protection of the mana of beings/land
Kanohi ki te kanohi	face to face, to be together in the flesh, a value of Māori to be together physically
Kaupapa	Approach or plan
Koha	Gift
Kōrero	Conversation, discussion
Ko wai au? Ko wai koe? Ko wai tātou?	Who am I? Who are you? Who are we?
Kupu	Words
Mahi	Work, to accomplish
Mana	Status, power. A force within a person, place, or thing, built up over time and through experience.
Manaaki	Māori who hold authority over local land
Manaakitanga	Show respect, sustain, protect
Mana whenua	The process of showing care and respect for others
Manuhiri	Visitors or guests
Māoritanga	Māori way of life, culture, beliefs, practice. To be Māori
Mātauranga	Knowledge, wisdom, skills, founded upon tikanga
Moana	Ocean, body of water
Rangatahi	Youth
Rangatira	Māori chief, leader, to be of high rank
Rōpū	Group of people
Pākehā	New Zealanders of European settler colonial descent
Pōhatu	Stone, rock
Tangata	People, human being
Tangata tiriti	non-Māori people who live by the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi in Aotearoa New Zealand
Tangata whenua	Indigenous people of Aotearoa, Māori
Taonga	Sacred object or treasure, something of value including social or cultural objects or resources or people
Tamariki	children
Tauira	students
Tikanga	Correct custom or convention, aligned with Māori values
Te ao Māori	Māori world view including three key aspects; te reo Māori, tikanga Māori and te Tiriti o Waitangi
Te ao Pasifika	Pacific world view
Te moana nui a Kiwa	Pacific Ocean, the great ocean of Kiwa
Te reo Māori	Māori language
Te taiao	The natural environment
Te Tiriti o Waitangi	The Treaty of Waitangi, Te Reo version
Tino rangatiratanga	Self-determination, autonomy. We (Māori) are in charge of our land, our people, our resources, our aspirations
Titiro	look

## WITHERS & STOKES

Tohu	Guides, marker, sign, symbol
Tūpuna	Ancestors or grandparents
Wānanga	Engaging in a process of collective discussion and reflection
Whakama	shame
Whakapapa	Genealogy, ancestry, who you are and where you come from. Not only through connections through people but land too.
Whānau	family
Whānaungatanga	A relationship that provides a sense of belonging and connection
Whakarongo	listen
Whakatauki	Māori proverb, often passed down by our tūpuna
Whakawhānaungatanga	The process of establishing meaningful relationships
Whakaaro	thoughts
Whenua	land

## Gagana Sāmoa Glossary

Aiga	Family, including extended family
Alaga'upu	Proverbs of Sāmoa
Alofa	Love, to show love
Fa'a aloalo	Respect
Gafa	Heritage, histories, genealogy, process towards an outcome
Gagana	Language of Sāmoa
Moana	Ocean, the sea, references to connecting Pacific Island nations
Ola manuia	to live well, acknowledging one's agency towards living well
Talanoa	To engage in collective and reflexive discussion
Tautua	To serve, used in community and leadership
Teu le vā	To care and support vā / relationality between.
Vā	The space in between us; to acknowledge and activate a relational journey to each other and beyond, throughout time, space and place.

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