

## STRATEGY BRIEF

# Ngā Tau Tuangahuru - Investing in Māori Success

Implications for Foundation North of the results from the first round of interviews with Māori whānau in the Māori and Pacific Education Initiative (MPEI)<sup>1</sup> longitudinal study

## Background

Ngā Tau Tuangahuru is a 10-year longitudinal study of Māori and Pasifika educational and family success, funded by Foundation North.<sup>2</sup> The study was collaboratively developed with five of the MPEI initiatives, and 69 Māori and Pasifika families were involved in the first round of study interviews in 2017. Thirty-five families self-identified as Māori (56 people), with between one and five people attending each whānau interview.<sup>3</sup>

In their first interview, whānau were asked about themselves, including their involvement with things Māori. They were also asked open-ended questions about what success looked like for their whānau and what educational success looked like for their children, including things that support or hinder success. The interviews took around 2.5 hours and the whānau received a grocery voucher as a koha for their involvement.<sup>4</sup>

This Strategy Brief describes findings from this first round of interviews with whānau and explores their implications for wise funding of Maori initiatives within the context of Foundation North's current strategy. The policy implications described in this Brief have emerged from discussion of the findings in 2019 with the MPEI initiatives, Foundation North's Māori and Pacific Committee, and Foundation North staff.

## Being Whānau Māori

Most whānau (90.5%) strongly agreed or agreed that as a family they felt strongly connected to their culture. They commented that they were proud to be Māori, that they were raised Māori and were connected to their tribal home(s). They also said they expressed being Māori every day through values such as aroha (love) and manaaki (hospitality). Their Māori-ness and their connection to Aotearoa underpinned their sense of belonging. Many (77.1%) said their culture was very important to them, and all whānau knew their iwi affiliation(s) and had visited at least one of their marae.

Most whānau said they got on well together (88.6%), and that they were doing well or very well as a whānau (85.7%). They could also count on one another for support when they needed it and had fun together as a whānau. Whānau reported that they ate together at least one or two times a week, with many doing so more than five times a week.

Most whānau (88.6%) thought about their ethnicity often or all the time. Whānau rated their level of comfort in Pākehā contexts as ranging from very uncomfortable to very comfortable.

Their responses to these questions indicate that while whānau get along with one another and stand strong in their cultural identity, this does not go unchallenged in our society. The frequency with which

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they think about being Māori and the discomfort of many whānau in Pākehā contexts points to these whānau experiencing some marginalisation – of being seen as different – within New Zealand society.

When funding Māori initiatives, Foundation North should be aware that whānau are proud to be Māori and that they draw strength from everyday practices that enable them to express their cultural identity. Initiatives working with Māori who are vulnerable or marginalised will have ways to strengthen the capability of the people they support to ‘be’ and to ‘do’ Māori, to enable them to strengthen their cultural identity. This includes strengthening collective resiliency through whakawhanaungatanga (establishing relationships) and building confidence. As a strategic goal, social inclusion is about the cultural and **social inclusion** of Māori within the context of their birth right and cultural heritage.

Initiatives may also have an analysis of the socio-cultural barriers within our society that can inhibit people from living a good life as Māori. This includes institutional racism that prevents Māori from fully accessing the goods, services and resources of our society. This is the greatest structural impediment to the realisation of the Foundation’s strategic goal of **increased equity**.

## Whānau Success

Many whānau included happiness as part of their description of success (68.6%). Frequently mentioned aspects of whānau success included having a plan for the future, collective wellbeing, education, family relationships, health and community relationships. For example,

I'd like to say happy, if we're all happy in our own ways. We as a whānau are moving forward. Looking after each other and our responsibilities. Health is in good form. Goals being met or on the way to (Māori whānau).

Many whānau said a caring support system facilitated their success as a whānau (60.0%). This included working together as a whānau and accessing support from outside the whānau. Other frequently mentioned facilitators included good communication (55.9%), and having a plan for the future (e.g., having a plan, following through, making good decisions) (41.2%).

A lack of money was mentioned by nearly half of the whānau (45.7%) as a barrier to whānau success.

Whānau are experts and have insight into their own lives, including what supports and what hinders their aspirations for success as a whānau. Their ability and right to “**decide what they need, lead their own solutions and achieve their hopes and dreams**”<sup>5</sup> needs to be part of the kaupapa of initiatives wanting to support whānau success or wellbeing. This may require prototyping and innovation to change business-as-usual practices where assumptions are made about what’s best for whānau.

The ability of organisations to support whānau to achieve success may well be disrupted or challenged by structural issues, including a lack of finances, the inadequacy of welfare supports and/or an inability of whānau to find secure, affordable housing. These ‘big-ticket’ items can prevent whānau having “**equal access to opportunity**” and may require Foundation North to be a connector, helping to ensure that whānau are less exposed to structural impediments to their **social inclusion**. This also leads Foundation North into supporting advocacy and system change efforts to address structural inequalities.

## Educational Success

When whānau described student success, educational achievement was most important (51.4%), followed by their young people working hard (37.1%) and their involvement in extra-curricular activities (34.3%). The hints and tips they shared for supporting the wellness of their child or young person are illustrated below (page 4).

When they talked more specifically about educational success, whānau described the importance of young people being proud to be Māori and being able to walk tall in both Māori and Pākehā worlds.

Educational success also included young people being happy, connected with friends, and safe at school, as well as achieving academically.

Adults in the whānau said that the educational experience the young people in their whānau were having was better or much better than what they had experienced themselves. They were, in turn, encouraging and supportive of the young people and worked to ensure that they had both the material resources (e.g., uniform) and emotional support they needed to fully engage with education, including with extracurricular activities (e.g., sport). Good communication was seen as key to this support.

Most whānau had decided where their children would go to school, basing their decisions on kaupapa (e.g., te reo or bilingual) and the model of education being offered. Many whānau described themselves as being either very involved or somewhat involved with this school (e.g., attending meetings, coaching sports, volunteering).

Whānau value education, even when their own educational experiences were fraught, and want young people in their whānau to do well academically, be proud to be Māori, and be happy and safe at school. Whānau had deliberately chosen schools for their kaupapa to help ensure this. The MPEI initiatives, in turn, stressed the importance of schools knowing their learners and knowing and supporting whānau.<sup>6</sup> MPEI and other initiatives these schools have implemented demonstrate the important role schools can have within Māori communities. They expect big things of Māori students that include character development and holistic educational success. Schools are a potential site of resistance to society's often poor expectations of Māori student success. As such, schools should be considered important enablers of Foundation North's goals of **increased equity, social inclusion, community support and regenerative environment**.

## Concluding Remarks

We began the journey of Ngā Tau Tuangahuru by engaging MPEI initiatives in collaborative design. We did this because of the commitment of Foundation North to the collaborative design of MPEI prior to any granting of funding. In this Brief we have come full circle, reflecting back to Foundation North what whānau have told us about themselves and about success so that their views might inform wise grantmaking. If there are two key messages to take away from this first round of Ngā Tau Tuangahuru they are:

1. Listening to whānau is important as whānau know what supports and what hinders them being successful. The Whānau Ora initiative has learned this, and it is timely that this message continues to spread far and wide. Whānau want to be successful 'as Māori' and to be included in Aotearoa New Zealand society 'as Māori'. Good funding practice will be cognizant of this and ask insightful questions about whether those wanting funding to support whānau are also listening to them and recognizing their right to live good and successful lives as Māori.
2. If one hand of wise grantmaking is the recognition of the importance of whānau self-determination, then the other hand must be the interrogation of structural impediments to whānau access to the goods and resources of our society. While this may be on a small scale through understanding the barriers grantees may be up against, it may also be on a larger scale with advocacy and the active challenging of a status quo that maintains Māori marginalisation and vulnerability.

# He tīwhiri hei awhina ngā whānau kia tautoko i ngā tamariki me ngā taiohi



## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> MPEI was funded by Foundation North, beginning in 2006 with the commitment of \$20 million to support the raising of Māori and Pacific educational achievement in Auckland and Northland.

<sup>2</sup> For further background to the MPEI initiative and the current study, see Trotman, R., Cram, F., Samu, T., Becroft, M., Theodore, R., & Trinick, T. (2018). Investing in "success" as Māori and Pacific: The collaborative development of Ngā Tau Tuangahuru, a longitudinal evaluation study. *Evaluation Matters—He Take Tō Te Aromatawai*, 4, 87-110. Available at: [https://www.nzcer.org.nz/system/files/journals/evaluation-matters/downloads/EM2018\\_087.pdf](https://www.nzcer.org.nz/system/files/journals/evaluation-matters/downloads/EM2018_087.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> This included nine families that identified as both Māori and Pacific.

<sup>4</sup> Ethics approval was sought and received from the NZ Ethics Committee for this study.

<sup>5</sup> Increased Equity goal, Foundation North Strategy, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Kinnect Group & Foundation North (2016c). *What have we learned about Māori and Pacific educational success? Foundation North's Māori and Pacific Education Initiative*. Foundation North Learning Series 1. Auckland: Foundation North.