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## Community-led Research

# NGĀ TINĪ WHETŪ

## —A NAVIGATIONAL STRATEGY FOR WHĀNAU JOURNEYS

**Professor Meihana Durie**

*Rangitāne; Ngāti Kauwhata; Ngāti Porou;  
Rongo Whakaata; Ngāi Tahu*

Professor Meihana Durie has a research background in the application of *Mātauranga Māori* (Māori bodies of knowledge) to Māori health, education and innovation. The broad overarching focus of his work is to identify critical determinants of *mauri ora* or flourishing vitality. Meihana is a previous recipient of the Sir Peter Snell Doctoral Scholarship for Public Health and Exercise Science (Massey University) and is a recipient of the Health Research Council of New Zealand Hohua Tutengaeha Postdoctoral Research Fellowship in Māori Health.

He currently heads Te Pūtahi-ā-Toi (School of Māori Art, Knowledge and Education) at Massey University.

### Abstract

This article examines the key determinants of flourishing (as opposed to languishing) within the context of Māori families. While indicators such as access to housing, education and income are measurable, it is argued that connections to *whānau* and cultural identity are essential elements in flourishing. The implementation of *Whānau Ora* has led to a longer-term approach to support services.

In this environment, the test programme Ngā Tini Whetū has been developed to align strategies with whānau aspirations to move self-sufficient whānau into a position of flourishing. The test targeted a small number of whānau within West Auckland, and focused on whānau as carriers of culture, models of lifestyle and as access points to the community, as gateways to *Te Ao Māori*, as guardians of the landscape and as economic units.

Outcomes are considered in terms of *whanaungatanga*, *kotahitanga*, *rangatiratanga* and *pukengatanga*. Participants report on their journey and a new commitment to a flourishing future.

**Key words:** languishing, flourishing, whānau, Te Ao Māori, Whānau Ora

## Introduction

Ngā Tini Whetū is a programme aimed at distilling the key factors that enable whānau to flourish. The initiative is part of the wider portfolio of Te Whānau o Waipareira and involves local whānau and Waipareira staff in a joint exercise to understand the dynamics of flourishing and the implications for other *whānau* across Aotearoa.

The potential for whānau to flourish is dependent upon a range of variables. The influence of areas such as health, culture, education and employment are critical determinants of the capacity for whānau to flourish (Te Hiku, 2014). Moreover, it is these same factors that exert significant influence upon the level of languishing that many whānau in Aotearoa experience.

Whilst there is a level of existing research around causal factors that influence states of languishing, there is comparatively less availability of relevant research into the key determinants of *flourishing*. This is more apparent when one considers the context of Māori families, or whānau, within the broader scope of indigenous vitality. Much of the existing research on and about whānau dynamics has tended to center around whānau exclusion, deprivation and disconnectedness. Research of this nature is critical to understanding the factors that influence states of languishing, however, there is also a need for greater understanding around the types of pathways that enable whānau to prosper and flourish.

The term *flourishing* has become increasingly prevalent in recent years as a social concept highlighting the transformative nature of journeys undertaken by whānau who proactively seek to shift from predominantly languishing situations to situations that are significantly more positive (Keyes, 2003). In other words, whānau have been able to traverse the challenging and often complex factors that determine a state of languishing by moving into a position whereby they are able to embrace the fundamental determinants that enable them to flourish.

It is important to recognise that whānau can still flourish in many ways even while enduring significant adversity. In fact, this is a common reality for many whānau, which raises the question of whether or not there exists a definitive threshold between languishing and flourishing. Moreover—is it absolutely necessary to

identify a threshold between the two states? Or, is it more imperative to recognise that whānau journeys are by nature fluid, both resurgent and regressive? In light of current evidence around the nature of whānau journeys, the latter question would appear to be more pertinent to the dual notions of flourishing and languishing.

In terms of measurable indicators, areas such as household income, suitable housing, employment, access to education and participation in Māori cultural activities provide a broad range of accurate gauges as to how well-positioned whānau might be to be able to flourish (McIntosh, 2014). In considering these factors it becomes more apparent that defining a clear threshold between languishing and flourishing is complex and may not be absolutely necessary.

The capacity to embrace Māori cultural identity and indeed whānau identity as a determinant of flourishing is often relegated to discussions that focus more on aspects such as housing, employment, education and health. Research, however, reaffirms that the capacity of whānau to forge and maintain strong connections with their Māori cultural identity is a major determinant of flourishing (Kingi et.al. 2014). In exploring this idea further, when whānau lifestyles are in close alignment with Māori cultural principles or values such as *manaakitanga*, *whanaungatanga* and *whakapapa*, a correlation with elements of flourishing is evident (Baker, 2014).

## Whānau Ora

The implementation of *Whānau Ora* in 2010 (Taskforce, 2010), has provided a tangible catalyst for changes to the way in which provision of support services for whānau are offered. The appointment of Whānau Ora navigators has allowed for greater co-ordination of social, health, justice and educational provision within the broader provision of Whānau Ora, ensuring that whānau are better able to receive the support that they require in a cohesive way.

Whānau Ora represents a tangible shift away from intervention-driven provision to a greater focus upon empowerment of whānau for self-management and independence. Although there remains a high level of need for urgent and immediate intervention for many families (Huakau, 2014), the influence of Whānau Ora has meant that social service provision generally now occurs with longer term planning in mind. Together, Whānau Ora navigators and whānau are able to engage in the formation of a longer-term strategy focused on determinants of flourishing within the context of each whānau. A new initiative arising from this shift in the development of whānau capacity provision is Ngā Tini Whetū.

## Ngā Tini Whetū

Ngā Tini Whetū is a recent Te Whānau o Waipareira-led initiative (Whānau o Waipareira, 2013) that has been implemented over the past three years. It has been designed to empower whānau to build capacity in order to flourish and to

ultimately attain whānau-driven aspirations. Ngā Tini Whetū is part of a broader long-term strategy by Te Whānau o Waipareira that seeks to provide pathways for whānau who aspire towards greater levels of self-sufficiency and self-determination. The strategy recognises a set of critical requirements that are necessary within the context of Waipareira provision in order to build a secure whānau foundation and to promote a flourishing future.

Evidence also suggests that in order for whānau to flourish, there are multiple determinants of the journey which must be carefully planned and navigated (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2015). The prevailing wisdom encapsulated within Māori ancestral traditions reiterates the message that individual success comes through the efforts and determination of the wider collective.

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***Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini,  
he toa takimano.***

My success comes not through individual effort,  
but through the efforts of the wider collective.

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A core emphasis of Ngā Tini Whetū therefore is to go beyond the realm of day-to-day provision to focus more intensely on the establishment of whānau-driven strategies aligned to whānau aspirations. The concept for Ngā Tini Whetū initially emerged in 2009 during the Waipareira Strategic Planning Hui. In a presentation led by Wai Research Patron Professor Sir Mason Durie, the idea of *self-sufficient whānau* was introduced. This helped to inform a pivotal part of the Waipareira strategy that was to comprise a set of six aspirational statements relating to flourishing whānau (Durie, 2006):

1. whānau as carriers of culture
2. whānau as models of lifestyle
3. whānau as access points to the community
4. whānau as gateways to Te Ao Māori
5. whānau as guardians of landscape
6. whānau as economic units

Part of this strategy focused upon the need to ensure that families who were no longer dependent upon provision of Waipareira services would be emboldened to continue their journey towards flourishing, having earlier identified their most critical aspirations.

A recent Te Whānau o Waipareira-led study, *He Puawaitanga o Ngā Tamariki* (2016), identified determinants of well-being across cohorts of *tamariki* from West Auckland. The study found that, despite the challenges to health that many West Auckland

whānau inevitably faced, when there were increased opportunities to embrace social connectedness and whānau identity, there was also an enhanced sense of well-being across the whānau. Further anecdotal evidence suggests that increasing numbers of whānau within the wider Te Whānau o Waipareira community are now becoming more self-sufficient and are more readily able to adopt strategies at an aspirational level.

A priority of Ngā Tini Whetū is to provide the necessary catalysts for whānau to embody each of the following six aspirational aims in their own unique way:

#### 1. Whānau as Carriers of Culture

*To promote awareness of whānau heritage*

As carriers of culture, whānau can develop a capacity to live by the cultural values of most significance to them. Cultural values provide a foundation, or *kaupapa*, enabling them to engage and interact with people and the environment in a way that aligns with what is important to them (McGuinness, 2010). Cultural carriers hold significant attachment to cultural values and express these throughout different aspects of their lives. The ability to understand and use *te reo Māori* for example, and to be able to recite *pēpeha* and perform *mihimihi* is an important expression of Māori cultural identity.

#### 2. Whānau as Models of Lifestyle

Ngā Tini Whetū recognises that in order for whānau to flourish, it is important to maintain *mauri ora*—good health and vitality. This requires whānau to be in the strongest possible position to be able to exert significant control over critical lifestyle factors. For example, it is important for whānau to be able to build capacity to mitigate the threat of risks to health such as mauri-diminishing foods and substances, but at the same time to promote the benefits of health protective factors including mauri-enhancing foods as well as engagement in physical activity (Asthma & Respiratory Foundation NZ, 2015). At the same time, whānau must also recognise the importance of regular physical activity in order to counteract the challenges of the modern urban lifestyle. The benefits of exercise to mauri, or physical vitality, are well documented and is an equally important imperative for the mauri of whānau.

The Waipareira experience has been that whānau who are able to model or promote positive practices (*tikanga*) both at home and within their wider community can demonstrate levels of leadership for other whānau and community members to follow. The importance of the cultural dimension to flourishing whānau has been well demonstrated (Durie, 2014). The cultural dimension includes the dual concepts of *mauri* and *mana*—both elements exist at the core of Māori spiritual and physical existence and the process of *wānanga* can help to bring greater clarity to their relevance for flourishing.

The longer-term goal is that whānau will be able to practise tikanga that promote good health and holistic well-being. Mauri ora within a wider holistic context requires equilibrium of all four dimensions of Te Whare Tapa Whā (Durie, 1998):

- **Taha Whānau:** Social cohesion and mana-enhancing relationships
- **Taha Wairua:** Spiritual awareness and cultural integrity
- **Taha Hinengaro:** Intellectual stimulation, increased knowledge capacity
- **Taha Tinana:** Physical and environmental well-being

### 3. Whānau as Access Points to the Community

*Connecting whānau with wider community networks and institutions*

It is helpful to consider the role that whānau can play as conduits for connection to the community. Often, it is due to the efforts and energy of individual whānau members that the wider whānau have opportunities to engage within the community at different levels. When visiting marae, for example, it is often left to particular whānau members to facilitate the journey (Salmond, 1976). Ngā Tini Whetū supports the development of strategies for whānau to engage with local and regional collectives, services and organisations. This extends to engagement with community leaders including *pakeke* and *kaumātua*. Shifting the focus towards a wider collective helps to promote a sense of community spirit, responsibility and a commitment to contribute in a meaningful way to the larger group (Stanford Social Science Review, 2015).

Deciding on educational pathways for tamariki and *mokopuna* is another critical outcome of Ngā Tini Whetū. By ensuring that whānau are well informed about all educational options available locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, they will be in a stronger position to make the best educational choices for each whānau member. Ngā Tini Whetū embraces a strategic perspective around educational development for whānau to:

- build ongoing knowledge capacity
- promote social responsibility and awareness relevant to both Te Ao Māori and *Te Ao Whānui*
- promote career opportunities that are aligned to aspirational goals and longer term aims

These goals are more likely to be achieved through:

- connecting whānau to relevant educational opportunities
- establishing forums that broaden career horizons, open new doors and inspire new learning pathways
- aligning whānau educational journeys with both individual and collective aspirational goals

- designing new models that empower whānau to travel down new knowledge pathways

### 4. Whānau as Gateways to Te Ao Māori

Building further upon the associated themes of carriers of culture, of models of lifestyle and of access points to the community, Ngā Tini Whetū promotes pathways that empower whānau to develop capacity as gateways to Te Ao Māori. In short, participation within Te Ao Māori is shaped and influenced by a variety of settings, experiences, social relationships and cultural gatherings (Waho, 1999). Access to Te Ao Māori can also be initiated through the pursuit and acquisition of knowledge (*mātauranga*) germane to Māori cultural identity.

Te Ao Māori is an all-encompassing term that can be interpreted as “The Māori World”. It is a term that describes all of the above settings and is not limited exclusively to marae encounters. Importantly, Te Ao Māori is further defined by those who reside and participate in it, thus reinforcing the importance of relationships throughout each key element of Ngā Tini Whetū.

Whānau who participate within Ngā Tini Whetū will often already be providing access for others to enter into Te Ao Māori. A critical outcome therefore is that whānau can continue to forge ongoing opportunities to learn about the cultural dynamics of Te Ao Māori, building further upon existing knowledge and experience.

### 5. Whānau as Guardians of Landscape

Māori cultural identity is deeply embedded within the *whakapapa* of the natural world (Durie, 2009). The environmental features and phenomena of each *rohe* or *takiwā* within Aotearoa highlight the way in which *tangata whenua* maintain their own particular view and perspective of the local environment. It is as *tangata whenua* that whānau have a responsibility to uphold the *mauri* (vitality) of the environment and to protect the sanctity of *whenua* (land), *wai* (waterways), *hau* (air) and *rangi* (sky and airspace) (Waitangi Tribunal, 2011).

Moreover, it is through these relationships that Māori are further able to enhance and uplift *te taha wairua* (the spiritual domain). Participation in cultural rituals (*kawa*) is important as many of these are closely linked to elements of the environment. Within urban environments, many modern challenges have arisen as development of industrial, housing and commercial interests take hold. Environmental issues such as water degradation, traffic congestion and consumer demand require that whānau must search for ways to ensure that the sanctity of the landscape is upheld

and protected. This is a real and present challenge for te whānau of Waipareira.

#### 6. Whānau as economic units

*Promoting financial literacy and economic stability*

Whānau self-sufficiency requires, in part, control of financial circumstances. The capacity to increase whānau wealth is also dependent upon a sound knowledge and understanding of financial literacy. Important aspects of financial literacy include: applying the fundamental principles of budgeting; saving and investing; acquiring long-term assets such as residential or commercial property and land; protecting whānau financial reserves; increasing whānau housing and home ownership; access to Māori trust funds and whānau investment portfolios.

Threaded throughout each of these six outcomes is the concept of *rangatiratanga*—leadership. The type of leadership promoted within this kaupapa is based on whānau acting as influential exemplars for other whānau within their communities.

*Te Puawaitanga o Ngā Whānau: Six Markers of Flourishing* (2013) identified six markers that identify critical areas in which whānau vitality can be measured. These markers reinforce and compliment the principles and values discussed earlier and include:

1. Whānau Heritage—Taonga Tuku Iho
2. Whānau Wealth—Ngā Rawa
3. Whānau Capacities—Ngā Pūkenga
4. Whānau Cohesion—Tū Kotahi
5. Whānau Connectedness—Tūhonohono
6. Whānau Resilience—Toka-tū-moana

Each marker of flourishing offers critical insights into the determinants of flourishing within a whānau context. In fact, the notion of flourishing has been identified as a critical strategic outcome across all Whānau Ora-led services. It is imperative, therefore, that whānau are provided with the necessary skills and opportunities to be able to transition from states of languishing towards states of flourishing.

Quite apart from the provision of aligned whānau social, health and educational services, the more salient question centres around which approach might be *most effective* in achieving this outcome for whānau. Ngā Tini Whetū therefore seeks to establish a responsive framework that informs whānau journeys to ensure the best possible outcomes.

Ngā Tini Whetū (literally meaning “the multitudes of stars”) draws inspiration partly from ancient Māori navigational traditions whereby the stars and planets were used as guiding points in order to steer Māori ancestral voyagers in the right direction

towards their eventual destination. It represents the thinking underpinning a Waipareira-led initiative that embodies many of these values and practices within the context of contemporary whānau realities. The stars are a metaphorical reference to the dreams, aspirations and long-term goals that whānau have identified as having particular importance. Each star is a symbolic reference to each navigational plot point for each part of the collective journey that whānau will take. The use of stars, or *whetū* in this way connects participants to the earlier ancestral navigational traditions, except rather than navigating oceans, whānau within this contemporary context are instead traversing the complexities of contemporary society.

### Programme Design

In order to investigate whānau ability to “reach for the stars”, a programme of mentoring and skills training for whānau, accompanied by research into impact and potential for wider application has been designed. Ngā Tini Whetū is being made available to whānau who have had some past association with Te Whānau o Waipareira. As a first step towards implementing the programme an exploratory pilot has been undertaken. Preliminary results from the pilot are discussed here.

The design of Ngā Tini Whetū centres around bringing together community experts, specialists and contributors collectively known as *Ngā Pūkenga*. Ngā Pūkenga will help to support whānau to recognise and then develop specific types of leadership capacities that align with the traits, aspirations and skill sets of each individual.

A high priority is to ensure that wherever possible, each *Pūkenga* has a connection to Te Whānau o Wairapeira and is comfortable with the over-riding principles of Te Kauhau Ora o Te Whānau o Waipareira, especially *mana* and *rangatiratanga*. Pūkenga from further afield were also identified to ensure that a complementary set of skills, knowledge, experience and expertise could be available for whānau participants.

A small but diverse cohort of Pūkenga were identified. They included people with a broad range of skill sets such as finance, technology, governance, *mātauranga Māori*, whānau ora, health, and education. Pūkenga were briefed about the philosophy and objectives of the kaupapa but it was left to each workshop to determine the ways in which each learning outcome might best be achieved and implemented. Members of the Wai Research team, Ngā Kaiwhakatere, provided the overall facilitation of Ngā Tini Whetū including weekly contact and communication with whānau.

### Participants

The initial delivery generated a unique process for identifying potential whānau participants based on the principle of whanaungatanga. Recommendations for potential participants came from within the wider Waipareira community and from those who had an intimate awareness of the journeys, challenges and aspirations that various whānau had undertaken and encountered. Six Waipareira whānau participated in the test delivery.

### *Te Tīmatanga: Commencement*

Stage one of the project brought together the confirmed whānau along with the Wai Research support team (Ngā Kaiwhakatere), Te Rōpū Kaumātua o Waipareira and additional mentors and support people. A *hākari* was provided and the gathering enabled the project team to:

- reiterate to whānau the overarching goals of the initiative
- reet all of the participating whānau and the pūkenga
- reaffirm whānau commitment to full participation
- recognise formal commencement within the kaupapa
- celebrate the start of a new kaupapa

### *Whānau Noho: Gathering of Whānau, Pūkenga & Kaiwhakatere*

The initial step was to arrange for whānau and associated programme leaders to meet together as a group (*whānau noho*). Four whānau noho were scheduled into the delivery of Ngā Tini Whetū and provided opportunities to bring together all participating whānau along with key mentors and wider support teams to exchange knowledge, share insights and experiences and to provide updates of their journeys. Whānau noho also offered participants time and space to renew their commitment to Ngā Tini Whetū and to be inspired, motivated and renewed in order to continue along their respective pathways towards self-sufficiency. A total of four noho took place over an eight-month period and included two at Armor Bay and two at Te Whānau o Waipareira in Henderson, West Auckland.

### **Outcomes of Delivery**

Although in-depth analysis and review of Ngā Tini Whetū has yet to be completed, the project team has been able to complete initial interviews with participating whānau. A set of structured questions was used in order to gain insights into the ways in which whānau participation may have been most useful. There have been a number of informative perspectives that have emerged, particularly around the core Māori cultural values of whanaungatanga, kotahitanga, rangatiratanga and pūkengatanga.

#### Whanaungatanga

For the whānau who participated in the pilot delivery of Ngā Tini Whetū, their involvement reaffirmed the enduring connections they all shared with Te Whānau o Waipareira. This dynamic reinforces the importance of community-led approaches to whānau development and the significance of the principle of whanaungatanga as a catalyst for engagement.

The fact that all whānau knew one another prior to participation also lowered the level of uncertainty that some had about participating within the programme.

A strong sense of camaraderie across all the participating whānau emerged from the pilot along with a shared sense of giving for a higher purpose. In fact the cohort could be reasonably described as a collective of engaged and pro-active whānau contributing to their community.

#### Kotahitanga

The test delivery has reaffirmed that the capacity of whānau to successfully navigate often arduous and challenging journeys will be stronger when the journey is made with other whānau. It is this shared experience of coming together in a noho-based environment and learning together within *wānanga*-type workshops that have led to positive outcomes. Furthermore, whānau have reinforced the importance of their connection to Waipareira as a major incentive. In the pilot study, kotahitanga was expressed in two ways: First it reflected a sense of unity between the whānau who were participating in the study and second it reflected the common commitment to Waipareira.

#### Rangatiratanga

Another pivotal observation of participants within the pilot was the desire and inclination to support other whānau on similar journeys and the willingness to lead from the front in striving to fulfill whānau-centred aspirational goals. This type of leadership within an urban environment has been prioritised by Te Whānau o Waipareira in the wake of increasing numbers of whānau who are challenged by disadvantage and disconnection from *hapū* and *iwi* (Tamihere, 1999). Moreover, because of the comparatively young age of the participating whānau, the need for ongoing support, leadership training, and mentoring is greater if strong whānau leadership for the future is to be realised.

#### Pūkengatanga

An interesting outcome from Ngā Tini Whetū has been the focus on parallel workshops for tamariki from each whānau. They have had an opportunity to learn about and acquire new skills in the fields of technology and creative arts primarily through hands-on experience. An example is the area of computer coding and multi-media applications where Pūkenga well-versed in terms of expertise and skillsets volunteered to spend time and to share knowledge with a group of very eager and enthusiastic tamariki and rangatahi.

The involvement of Pūkenga with high levels of expertise in these and other areas has ensured that tamariki and rangatahi have also been able to benefit from participation in Ngā Tini Whetū in tangible and distinctive ways. The opportunity to learn at the same venue as their parents and at the same time demonstrates the potential effectiveness of the noho and wānanga process.

### Initial Participant Responses

Whānau respondents identified a broad and diverse range of subsequent actions taken largely as a result of participation within Ngā Tini Whetū. Although a full analysis and evaluation of the delivery is yet to be completed, the initial round of participant feedback has yielded some interesting and insightful responses, some of which have been included below:

#### Whānau Strategic Planning

- Now able to plan in a more coherent and strategic way.
- Planning for the future is now a continual process that occurs in a more specific way.
- More planning and better planning is occurring within the whānau.
- Participation has helped parents to think in a more strategic way when it comes to future planning.
- Being clear about which experts in which fields are important to talk within relation to whānau planning.
- Whānau are now more accountable to goals and objectives.
- Being connected to those within the wider community who share similar aspirations and philosophies and be willing to share their own experiences and insights.
- Whānau have been able to identify more clearly defined goals.
- Making sure that the communication of goals is a regular activity and knowing what that means individually and collectively.

#### Whānau Aspirations

- Whānau are now more inclined to think bigger, not so restricting.
- Parents are not so worried about whether or not things can be done and are just trying things anyway.
- Not worrying about what others may think or perceive.
- Whānau are undertaking in-depth research and enquiry into alternative educational options at early childhood, primary and secondary levels.
- Participation has led to a shift of mindset, not so much about what parents want to achieve but what their tamariki want to achieve.
- There is a greater sense of how health, education, culture and economy interconnect and why all elements are important.

#### Te Ao Māori

- Participation has highlighted the need to learn more about Te Ao Māori and to continue learning Te Reo Māori.

- Ngā Tini Whetū has provided an opportunity to learn more about Māori culture and why it is relevant to whānau journeys.
- Since commencing in Ngā Tini Whetū, some whānau have commenced weekly te reo Māori classes.
- For other whānau, this component has also led to enrolment into Cook Island and Samoan language classes.

#### Whānau Finances and Investment

- An active savings plan now in place for events and activities, including a whānau wedding, whānau overseas travel and educational pursuits.
- Purchase of a new whānau home has been achieved.
- Purchase of an investment property has occurred.
- Planning for future purchase of rental properties.
- More astute thinking now in terms of investments and savings.

#### Limitations

- For other participants, the nature of some presentations and topics was at a level beyond where they perceived themselves to be.
- Some perceived limitations were now seen as opportunities given the exchange of knowledge which occurred in Ngā Tini Whetū, for example, learning how to budget properly and understanding other educational opportunities for whānau—not just the ones that they were familiar with.
- For some, the mode of delivery presented challenges in terms of maintaining momentum between whānau noho—the time in between noho meant that it was sometimes difficult to maintain focus on various learning topics
- Others liked going away for a few weeks and coming back and things happening naturally.
- Some identified the areas of education and te reo as important and perhaps warranting more time during noho.

#### He Kupu Whakamutunga

Perhaps the most ardent observation to emerge from the initial delivery of Ngā Tini Whetū has been the commitment and desire of each whānau to walk this path. They have all expressed a commitment to a flourishing future not only for their own whānau but also for Te Whānau o Waipareira as a whole.

As active and contributing members of the community, whānau have taken the opportunity to identify pathways for the future that will enable their respective families to flourish. They are setting a course for the coming decades which

aligns with their identity as a whānau, recognises their aspirational goals and acknowledges their contribution to dynamic and evolving network of whānau.

### Conclusion

The journey of Te Whānau o Waipareira families offers a critical narrative that will ensure that future generations of tamariki and mokopuna are secure within their own respective whānau identity in a way that reinforces their enduring connection to the Waipareira community. Ngā Tini Whetū has provided a blueprint upon which to foster whānau-driven aspirations and to put in place the necessary tools for whānau to flourish within a constantly evolving and rapidly changing society.

The Waipareira experience has given rise to the emergence of a dynamic and growing whānau-focused community connected through common values and aspirations and increasingly, through intergenerational whakapapa. It is these elements of the Waipareira narrative that demonstrate clearly the reality of the emergence of new hapū in Aotearoa-New Zealand. Ngā Tini Whetū has offered a platform for whānau to more effectively identify and determine the types of outcomes that will enable them to flourish in times ahead.

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*He tini whetū ki te rangi,  
He wawata, he moemoeā ki te tangata*

Like the multitudes of stars within the sky,  
aspirations and dreams exist within all of us  
(Durie, 2016)

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 Whānau Voices

# EXPERIENCES WITH #TĀTOU—A PERSONAL JOURNEY

Denise Smith

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## Abstract

Denise Smith shares her experiences engaging with “#Tātou”, a West Auckland programme that is part of the “Whānau House Collective Impact” initiative, and which promotes a whānau-centered approach to promote physical activity and good nutrition. Each participant is assisted by a *kaiārahi* (health navigator) who supports them to reach their goals. Denise shares the barriers to her participation, her personal journey with whānau, her resilience in the face of ongoing challenges, and the connections made with others and within herself as a result of whanaungatanga experienced as part of #Tātou.

*This article has been adapted from an interview.*

**Key words:** whānau, kaiārahi, whanaungatanga