EDITLAB – DIGITAL NATIVES IN THE #SOCIAL IMPACT SPACE

Katene Durie-Doherty, Fender Maeva and Ken Gavet

With the advent of the digital era, the shape and delivery of stories has changed dramatically. Traditional long form narrative and conventional journalism now sits alongside messaging of 140 words or less together with a myriad of imagery that disappears seconds after opening. While there are so many ways to now reach audiences, in some ways it has also never been more difficult to really reach them.

Whānau Waipareira recognises this also presents an opportunity for enabling the role of digital technology in elevating storytelling as a means to improve wellbeing within the vulnerable communities we serve. As a result, in 2018 Waipareira’s Social Innovation Hub – Wai-Atamai established EditLab. EditLab’s purpose being to undertake digital storytelling in the social impact space. Digital storytelling from the lens of urban indigenous peoples. The following are some of the thoughts, aspirations and views of the three co-founders – Katene Durie-Doherty (Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Kauwhata, Rongowhakaata), Fender Maeva (Ngāti Porou, Te Rarawa, Ngāti Kuri) and Ken Gavet (Ngāti Hamoa) as they build out EditLab.
Urban Māori Content That’s Wired for What’s Next

EditLab is a newly formed digital agency that operates within the Wai-Atamai Social innovation hub. A tight collaboration team which translate brands into content.

It’s a collective approach to content creation to ensure the shared vision of resilient whānau, community future makers and Mana Māori translates authentically into content. From concept to delivery, the work is steeped in the values of Whānau Waipareira as articulated in Te Kauhau Ora – the Whānau Waipareira code of conduct.

EditLab is passionate about building impact narratives from the community with a team that’s born and raised in the West with an Urban Māori creative lens that’s totally wired for what’s next. Bringing fresh, ahead of the game content, with good humour and heart to the table. This agency is driven by the whānau kaupapa and doing things differently.

With many organisations, digital agencies often work in silos, Whānau Waipareira has a different worldview. To share genuine stories that have authentic messages about community and social impact it recognised that the establishment of a digital agency in this space would need to:

• be born out of and based in the community it serves if it were to remain relevant
• be based within a group who collectively contribute to the common shared agenda of social impact and
• operate within a culture that allows for rapid prototyping, accepts learning from failure as the norm and has agility at its core.
As a result, EditLab was established as part of the Social Innovation Hub for Whānau Waipareira – Wai-Atamai. It works collaboratively with other teams in Wai-Atamai that includes Research, Strategy and Innovation, Change and Transformation and Brand and Design.

Being part of an integrated hub that develops insights into wellbeing, prototypes and evidences social impact, aligns and maps progress against the 25-year Whānau Waipareira generational strategy provides the collective energy that enables EditLab to translate key digital messages for social impact audiences.

The Team (left to right):

Ken Gavet – Head of Content, Katene Durie-Doherty – Media Co-ordinator, Fender Maeva – Creative Director.

Building out the EditLab Space

At the time of writing this article, EditLab is four months old and hitting the ground running. Assignments have spanned across both strategy and production.
Strategy

Undertaking campaigns and content production has already taken a large chunk of time, especially in the Whānau Ora space. Snapshots of assignments in this space include:

- 2018 saw a national Whānau Ora Conference held by the commissioning agency – Te Pou Matakana. EditLab produced content from the conference for a Whānau Ora tribal and Urban Māori collective based in Auckland called Te Pae Herenga o Tāmaki. A show reel with highlights was also produced as a resource to share within their respective organisations.

- Early 2019 sees Te Pou Matakana launch a new TV advertisement for Whānau Ora aimed at a general New Zealand audience. EditLab worked alongside New Zealand Advertising Giant Ogilvy NZ who have been working on this ad for Te Pou Matakana. Sharing creative thinking, content design and taking on board new learnings for the team has been invaluable for EditLab.

*Working Alongside PR Firm Ogilvy NZ for 2019 release of a Whānau Ora Advertisement, Client – Te Pou Matakana Commissioning Agency*
Production

Videography, photography and anything in between is what makes up the production crew work programme. An example of a large assignment recently completed was the production of a social impact documentary for Whānau Waipareira.

In late 2018, EditLab Associate Cam Swainson-Whaanga produced Whānau Waipareira’s first social impact documentary (20 min) that was also a first in the NZ indigenous space as well as a first as a Māori-produced social impact documentary. This documentary was a collab with the Wai-Atamai Change and Transformation and Research teams which lead out on social impact measurement and embedding within social purpose organisations.

A Word from the Crew

Ken

EditLab is more than a three-man crew, it is a platform to enhance the views of any subject. Our approach to assignments requires the whole team present, from client consultation to final stages of post-production.

“Our shared values and learnings created pathways for us, utilising film to reach out and engage whānau”
– Ken Gavet

The difference between us and other digital media groups is our history. We all naturally share the same vision due to the similar nature of all our life journeys that includes the relationships built together since high school here in the West [Auckland]. Along with our own personal journeys this is what has groomed our love of film. Being born in the West sees us have a deep sense of understanding of Whānau Waipareira, a strong connection to the people and all of us passionately working to improve the wellbeing of whānau.

We've found strengths in each other that complement other areas: Katene, as the co-ordinator leading the team in building relationships and deeply attuned to the aesthetics clients are after; Fender, as the Creative Director coming up with concepts, running interviews and a confident ambassador in front of the camera; myself as the technical, digital, editing aspects, delivering a product with a shared vision.
Fender

For me, I started out as a social media intern bringing my creativity and love for art and the community. When the EditLab started, the idea of having more hands-on-deck, with similar mindsets was very exciting. It's kaupapa Māori so we understood the value of learning and bouncing off each other would eventually grow our capacity in our thinking. Our shared values and learnings created pathways for us, utilising film to reach out and engage whānau.

You could look at it like, "guards up vs from the heart". We don't have borders or barriers on creative thinking. Mainstream barriers born out of that style of professionalism can cut off your range of thinking. Authenticity equals engagement, this inspires change and action. We aim to go for the unexpected from the outset. That might hack some people off on the way, (we do tend to hack a few people off from time to time – IT, accounts... anything in the compliance world actually!) but hey, that's a common challenge to innovation – having the confidence to work outside the box. We don't mind breaking the rules, but we do it in a way that makes the new approach the new way. It's natural to us. You see Taika Waititi bringing his comedy flavour to Marvel movies, that has never happened before, and it works. It works well.

“Authenticity equals engagement, this inspires change and action. We aim to go for the unexpected from the outset.” – Fender Maeva

Fender Maeva - On set at the Ogilvy Advertisement Campaign
Working in Māori broadcasting Katene saw first-hand the resource challenges of community and Māori media. With EditLab we get to make all the work from the kaimahi that wouldn’t normally be visible – visible. That can only grow the social impact. In our increasingly digital world, shareable and relatable content can change minds, and change the way we think about things.

Katene

I come from a place of wanting to upgrade the aesthetic, bringing the aesthetic that fits with innovative thinking. How we present a brand story visually has never been more important to our future success. In true Whānau Ora style, you’re not selling an idea to a client you’re sitting alongside them to understand and co-design.

For a few years the team members from EditLab had been doing their own creative thing as well as following each other’s journeys online. One of the key influencers for all of us over that time were various Content/Digital Curators with wide-spread fan bases. We all have an eye for quality in picture, and these curators have high-standards of visual content. We want to bring that quality into this space. Now when you add the kaupapa, well, then you’ve got something pretty magic to work with. We also have a shared love for different genres of music, therefore audio also plays an imperative role in our content. The difference being that it’s hands on learning and the natural way EditLab collaboratively operates.

At EditLab we are a team who hang our hat on quality. We like fresh ideas with substance, work that actually works without the BS.
Final Say

EditLab working in the social impact space for four months has been a roller coaster journey, a journey of lots of highs. Navigating new territory, carving up in the social impact space through the lens of an urban indigenous organisation that continues to make waves for whānau wellbeing is where it’s at. Sharing insights from EditLab on the passion for film, living and breathing the community you serve, fostering collabs with like-minded people have all proven to be hallmarks of success to date. No doubt future success will continue to hinge on this digital native collab – a collab with a new type of energy that enables a stronger connection and reach with its audiences going forward.

Mauri Ora!