

Analysis: Tangata whenua

Date: March 2022

Purpose

During May and June 2021, the Joint Venture engaged with people across Aotearoa New Zealand to inform [Te Aorerekura – the National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual Violence](#). A key part of this engagement was the conversation with tangata whenua. This paper reflects what we heard from tangata whenua about the family violence and sexual violence systems and the opportunities for improving how Aotearoa New Zealand work to prevent, respond, heal and recover from violence. Communities, organisations and individuals were generous in sharing their experiences, and through their insight government agencies have worked to develop a 25-year Strategy designed to achieve the moemoeā, or vision: All people in Aotearoa New Zealand are thriving: their wellbeing is enhanced and sustained because they are safe and supported to live their lives free from family violence and sexual violence.

This paper sets out themes from ngā hui (meetings), tāpaetanga ā tuhi (written submissions), pepa kāri ki te Minita (postcards to the Minister), and whakautu ki te rangahau (responses to the surveys) received during this time. These voices are also supplemented by a 2019 evaluation report about the experiences of male offenders in a residential programme.

This paper uses as much as possible, the words and voices of the people who shared their pūrākau (stories) and whakaaro (thoughts).

Our engagement process for tangata whenua

In addition to tāpaetanga ā tuhi and pepa kāri responses, JV officials engaged with tangata whenua by partnering with Māori organisations working with and supporting whānau Māori in their communities. Through these relationships of trust and respect, the JV were able to hold hui (on marae and in rūma hui) as far North as Kaitaia and as far South as Bluff. In all, 21 kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face) hui were held.

Tangata whenua hui participants were predominantly Māori and wāhine of varying ages. Most hui participants were kaimahi Māori, practitioners and specialist practitioners from kaupapa Māori, iwi, hapū, government and non-government organisations (NGOs). All of these kaimahi were providing hauora (health) services for whānau Māori including for pēpi (babies), tamariki (children), rangatahi (young people), pakeke (adults), kuia (female elders) and koroua (male elders).

Some hui participants had experience of family violence and sexual violence and many wore multiple hats (for example, they identified with other ethnic groups, had disabilities or



supported and cared for whānau Māori members with disabilities, and/or identified as rangatahi and/or members of the rainbow community).

For some hui, there was a dedicated notetaker and at other hui participants were invited to write their whakaaro on post-it notes or asked scribes to capture their group's kōrero (discussion) on flipchart paper or on a whiteboard for everyone to see. Participants also shared their pūrākau¹ and whakaaro with us during whakawhanaungatanga (process of connectedness) and throughout the hui. All hui kōrero was transcribed for analysis and wherever practical, transcripts of the notes were sent to hui partners for review.

Tangata Whenua – needs, issues and gap analysis

Tangata whenua have consistently argued that family violence and sexual violence profoundly and disproportionately impact almost every aspect of Māori lives – including events that result in the loss of life. Although there is limited data about the impact of violence on whānau Māori, what is available confirms that wāhine and tamariki Māori experience higher rates of family violence and sexual violence than other groups in Aotearoa New Zealand. The data also shows that whānau Māori experience violence differently to other groups, particularly because of the impacts of colonisation, with barriers such as access to services, and fear of children being taken by the State. Also, many of these affected groups (for example, people impacted by violence, disabled people, older people, Rainbow communities and people who use violence) are also whānau Māori.

When family violence and sexual violence happens, it substantially increases the risk that whānau Māori will be exposed to the negative consequences of violence in all its forms. Moreover, it is usually the hoa wāhine (female partners), pēpi, tamariki and rangatahi who have suffered, and continue to suffer, the disproportionate burden of harm and trauma resulting from family violence and sexual violence within their whānau, whāmere (household) and hāpori (family, kinship group).

Māori practitioners, researchers and academics argue current systems and structures have been, and continue to be, designed to accommodate Western concepts of family. They also argue these systems (both historical and contemporary) have eroded the diversity and contextual qualities of what whānau is and what it means.

Researchers argue that the issues tangata whenua face are symptomatic of a complex mix of structural, social and economic factors. These factors are well demonstrated in health, education, housing and income data. They are underscored by the impacts of colonisation, institutional and social racism/discrimination and failures by successive governments to honour and give practical effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

¹ When participants shared their pūrākau, the notetakers only recorded high-level ideas. These pūrākau were viewed as taonga tuku iho (cultural heritage) and so every effort was made not to record verbatim what was shared with us by hui participants.

On the topic of historical trauma and whānau violence, Māori researchers and academics² posit that colonisation, which includes the importation of colonial ideologies and practices of gender, race and class, have undermined traditional Māori structures, beliefs and ways of living. Insights from the Waitangi Tribunal Mana Wāhine Kaupapa Inquiry attest that acts of violence against wāhine Māori are violations of whakapapa. Moreover, the concept of whakapapa denotes that past, present and future generations are intrinsically interconnected to the extent that violence and its impacts can be carried from one generation to the next, and beyond.

For tangata whenua, whānau encompasses a wide range of social constructs underpinned by whakapapa. Whānau is commonly multi-generational collectives supported and strengthened by a wider network of whānau members. At times, whānau can be extended to accommodate a collective group (not necessarily defined by whakapapa) working together to achieve a shared kaupapa (purpose). Research has also confirmed that:

- Whānau are collectively responsible for raising tamariki
- Development of healthy relationships is directly related to the quality of whānau, hapū and iwi relationships (including an understanding of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour)
- Wāhine Māori have always had significant and complementary roles to tāne Māori as they relate to wellbeing, guardianship and protection of whānau.

Feedback received during our engagement was consistent with these research findings. Whānau Māori and communities spoke about their erosion of trust in the government, attributing this to the:

- Persistent systemic and institutional discrimination they experience as individuals and as collective groups
- Lack of acknowledgment and accountability for the ongoing failure of successive governments to address both the root causes and consequences of colonisation.

These factors have perpetuated inequities and inequalities between Māori and non-Māori and contributed to the conditions whānau Māori now find themselves living in.

The kōrero with tangata whenua confirmed there were significant gaps in the information that was presented through the draft National Strategy and its supporting documents.

Tangata whenua:

- Were concerned that pēpi, tamariki and rangatahi Māori seemed to be absent and/or invisible in the draft National Strategy and Action Plan
- Want a Strategy that recognises the indivisibility of whānau Māori (by which they observed it was often difficult, if not impossible, to separate people impacted by violence from people who use violence)

² See for example, Pihama L, Cameron N, & Te Nana R. 2019. *Historical trauma and whānau violence*. New Zealand Family violence Clearing House Issues Paper 15. Accessed via https://nzfvc.org.nz/sites/default/files/NZFVC-Issues-Paper-15-historical-trauma_0.pdf

- Seek stronger assurances that government (i.e. Ministers, chief executives and senior government officials and the public service more generally) would be held to account for decisions and actions they made on behalf of whānau Māori
- Expect a draft National Strategy anchored in te ao Māori, had whānau Māori at its centre, included recognition of the impacts (historic and contemporary) of colonisation, racism and discrimination on the ability of Māori to thrive
- Want government to develop a research programme based on kaupapa Māori methodologies and frameworks, which will inform decisions about legislation, policies and practices designed to protect and support whānau Oranga
- Want a research agenda supported by a system that protects ownership, collection and use of (disaggregated) data about whānau Māori
- Need responses and service where the safety of tamariki and wāhine Māori is paramount and where they are at the forefront of solutions and actions that meet their needs
- Want multiple pathways and responses (prevention, intervention and therapy) that hold users of violence to account for their behaviours and actions
- Want a cohesive and comprehensive Justice sector response to family violence and sexual violence, including awareness-raising, education and continuous training (centred around the experiences of people impacted by violence) for practitioners, professionals and decision-makers
- Want government to acknowledge that the existing funding and contracting models, as well as the provision of resources and services for whānau Māori, are completely inadequate and that work needed to begin immediately to remedy this issue
- Expect government to demonstrate its commitment to true Te Tiriti partnership by devolving decision-making and governance responsibilities to whānau, hapū and iwi.

Tangata whenua – services and supports

For the communities, practitioners and service providers supporting whānau Māori, the impacts of systemic failures have been and are equally profound. For years, Māori practitioners and service providers have been subject to inequitable treatment and funding in comparison to services for the general population. Māori initiatives have been over-scrutinised and exponents of kaupapa Māori methodologies and te ao Māori knowledge (including leaders in the use of these approaches and knowledge) have been continually undervalued and stymied.

For decades, Māori providers have delivered needed and vital supports to whānau Māori, which were not covered or funded in service contracts. Māori services (and communities) have been under-resourced and subjected to unrealistic monitoring and performance expectations. This includes the contracting models which make it even more difficult to support whānau Māori to thrive. Despite these challenges and barriers, tangata whenua and Māori service providers have persisted and remain determined to contribute to whānau, hapū and iwi wellbeing. This is because providers and communities are driven by te ao Māori

values, principles and approaches – in the way they work with whānau and because everyone shares a collective belief in whānau Oranga.

Tangata whenua acknowledge that addressing these issues is challenging and multi-faceted. Tangata whenua are also hopeful, and committed to identifying, developing and implementing aspirational and transformative solutions to support and return whānau Māori to a holistic state of ora. For tangata whenua, the first step is that they be supported to identify their own solutions, be appropriately resourced to implement them, and that action be taken to shift decision-making processes and resources from government to whānau, hapū and iwi.

Emerging themes from engagement with tangata whenua

There was thought-provoking, perceptive and heartfelt whakaaro from tangata whenua who participated in the engagement on the draft National Strategy and Action Plan. Much of the feedback received was rohe (tribal boundary) and/or hāpori (community) specific; clearly centred around what whānau Māori need to heal and to thrive; and which was also focused on what service providers need to support the mahi they do with whānau Māori.

The whakaaro that tangata whenua shared with the JV was reviewed and the following themes were identified.

Whānau Māori are in control of the solutions

Tangata whenua told us whānau Māori have to be in the “driver’s seat” so the solutions identified, developed and implemented actually meet their needs. Tangata whenua told us:

“Our whānau, hapū, iwi and hāpori want actions that are devised, developed, owned and led by Māori ...”

“We want by whānau, led by whānau.”

“Government need[s] to recognise, resource and get out of the way so that tangata whenua can work with their own. By Māori for Māori.”

“Local solutions for local issues. Whānau solutions.”

“Community at the heart of every decision.”

“Entrench whānau and community approaches in the mahi.”

The National Strategy needs to be anchored in te ao Māori, mātauranga Māori and ritenga Māori, and by Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Tangata whenua told us the National Strategy needs to be anchored in Māori knowledge and ways of knowing. They also told us Te Tiriti o Waitangi needs to be embedded in the Strategy. Tangata whenua said:

“We call for Te Tiriti framework and te ao Māori strategy formed by [Interim] Te Rōpū to be embedded throughout the National Strategy to achieve equitable outcomes for all Māori and address the disparities between violence statistics for Māori and non-Māori.”

“The platform that sits under everything in the Strategy should be aroha, whanaungatanga, tika, pono, kōrero awahi ...”

“We need to see manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, tautoko and mana motuhake in these documents ...”

“Indigenous knowledge can be the answer and solution to contemporary problems.”

“It’s about quality and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. It’s about ... whakapapa and tikanga ...”

“The voices, experiences and institutional knowledge of tangata whenua, hapū, iwi and hapori are acknowledged and taken into consideration.”

“Let the mana and tapu of all tamariki be at the front, centre, back, top and bottom of every decision.”

To address family violence and sexual violence, the underlying issues and consequences must be addressed

Tangata whenua told us family violence and sexual violence were part of the bigger picture around whānau ora. They told us government needed to develop and implement holistic policies and practices which address the deep-rooted and underlying issues inhibiting the positive health and wellbeing of whānau Māori. Tangata whenua said:

“It’s important our whānau are healthy and able to heal.”

“Tangata whenua having a clear understanding of the whakapapa to violence. Without perspective, there’s no understanding of how to move forward.”

“We recommend preventative measures such as education, support for all families, and support for all children regarding colonisation, historic endemic grievances, discrimination, and how this impact[s] on people, with a plan to realise an Aotearoa that is safe and free from all types of violence.”

“Maintaining safety through identity and needing to break displacement of identity ...”

“Where does trauma occur? Where does abuse occur? We need to look at how we support our women ... we’re trying to hold whānau and ourselves together and the trauma we have inherited in our DNA. What I’m not seeing is the acknowledgement to put more support networks around women as the main victims of trauma ... we need to invest more in supporting women.”

Government to address impact and consequences of colonisation

The issue of inequities experienced by whānau Māori was a huge concern for many respondents. Tangata whenua expressed bitterness, anger and frustration that the ora of whānau Māori and hapori has been significantly impacted by inequities and inequality. While some expressed distrust, others told us they were hopeful that government would prioritise and address these inequities so whānau Māori could achieve the dreams and aspirations they set for themselves. Tangata whenua told us:

“We strongly advocate for equity to be at the forefront ... to ensure whānau Māori receive culturally appropriate, accessible, helpful and free services to prevent violence, as well as address and support those affected by violence, intergenerational trauma, discrimination and racism.”

“Recognising that equity for Māori communities will be different from the other diverse communities of Aotearoa.”

“We want equitable distribution of resources.”

“Government policies need review and revamping for transformative changes in respect of tangata whenua ideology and need to ensure that there is a strong and persistent effort in terms of equality, in order for a collective change approach to occur.”

“... colonisation has had intergenerational effects on whānau [Māori], including trauma, poverty and experiences of violence and abuse ... colonisation is expressed through schooling and parenting and both of these sites have become environments where power and control are normalised and enhanced.”

Experiences of adult male offenders in a residential programme

In 2019, a report entitled, *Impact report Moana House residential programme* was released. Almost half of the participants in the report were tāne Māori who either participated in the programme or who worked for Moana House. The report participants provided the following insights into the experiences of adult male offenders who were residents of Moana House:

“I was heading down a very dark path ... But being at the whare has opened my eyes ... to my own behaviours, given me a lot of empathy for my whānau now and to my iwi (tribe) around me ... we recently finished victim empathy and for myself that’s a real hard one to address because I’ve created ... a lot of victims and also, myself, have been a victim to a lot of violence, you know, so just readdressing all of that.”

“It was so hard in the sense that you have to talk ... about the stuff that is under the surface, that people don’t see. Like sexual abuse and the real horrible things that nobody wants to talk about ... Whether it be with Corrections or inside my head, I was always going to be in that cell until I got rid of those demons off my shoulder.

“It has been challenging, being vulnerable and naming the things that are my stumbling blocks ... like drugs, technology, gangs and old associates, and my manipulation.”

“I used to think I needed to unlearn some of the patterns of why I learned to be so violent ... when in fact that is not true, it wasn’t about unlearning them, it was about acknowledging them, acknowledging and understanding the patterns, the behaviours that I used then.”

“It is a bit of a delicate process ... and there are whānau dynamics going on that are unhealthy for a lot of our people, so the whānau process itself begins to address those things.”

“That’s huge, just taking a risk, like with the Christmas tree fundraising ... I know a lot of people in the community and I was very anxious, and I had to get over that stigmatisation and my own feelings of inadequacies and self-esteem. The shame and guilt, toxic shame and not feeling self-worth.”

The emergent issues from engagement with tangata whenua were:

- Whānau Māori are in control of the solutions – whānau Māori in the driver’s seat so solutions identified, developed and implemented meet their needs
- The National Strategy needs to be anchored in te ao Māori, mātauranga Māori and ritenga Māori, and by Te Tiriti o Waitangi
- To address family violence and sexual violence, the underlying issues and consequences must be addressed
- Government to address impact and consequences of colonisation.

Bottom lines for tangata whenua

Tangata whenua call on government to:

- Position whānau Māori at the centre of all proposed solutions to address family violence and sexual violence
- Give practical effect to genuine Te Tiriti partnerships with tangata whenua (including devolution of and/or equal representation, governance and participation in decisions at all levels)
- Reorient existing systems (including those supporting “by, with and for Māori solutions”) by providing equitable responses to the causes and consequences of family violence and sexual violence for whānau Māori

- Address the historical and contemporary impacts that colonisation and systemic racism/discrimination have (and continues to have, including the devaluing of mātauranga Māori) and require all agencies and service providers to be upskilled with an understanding of the complexities of family violence and sexual violence and the burden of historic and complex trauma on whānau Māori
- Focus on primary prevention, including committed investment in initiatives that build social and cultural capital alongside educative, therapeutic, rehabilitative and healing services and programmes for whānau Māori
- Transfer decisions, investment and resources to tangata whenua so they can tailor solutions relevant to the needs and aspirations of whānau Māori within their hāpori and rohe
- Refocus the development and implementation of legislation, policy and practice settings that detrimentally disadvantage tangata whenua and move toward constructive, flexible and culturally responsive, learning and partnering settings
- Invest in a tangata whenua and whānau Māori-centred research agenda that better informs the development and use of kaupapa Māori and te ao Māori methodologies and frameworks, including as a base for aspirational measures and indicators of whānau oranga
- Put a comprehensive sector-wide workforce development programme in place that includes socio-historic and contemporary factors relevant to Aotearoa New Zealand and Te Tiriti o Waitangi.