



Whirinaki

At the outset in 2011, the community-led approach took Whirinaki Toiora to hui where they could identify aspirations, strengths, common issues and concerns, and grass-roots solutions. Internalising CLD principles and Toiora values has been essential, and the resulting community plan connected social, economic, cultural, environmental wellbeing, and that of individuals, families, hapū and iwi. The plan has been reviewed repeatedly updated, while staying true to our kaupapa.

Community engagement has been central throughout, ensuring a wide range of opportunities for grassroots sharing and input.

Transparency and accountability were ensured by an accessible office hub and six-monthly updates. This was a reflection of how deeply whanau are invested in the wellbeing of the wider community.

Our community governance structure, the Whirinaki Toiora Leadership Group (LG), is comprised of seven locally elected community representatives. The LG meets at least monthly, rotating across our three marae. A quarterly community hui, including a wider group (including our DIA community advisor) has also

been held, with progress reports presented and opportunities for discussion and review.

Kaupapa projects Kaupapa mahi

Te Reo o te Hikutū

Aiming to increase the use of the local hapū dialect and tikanga, the project was based on wānanga led by kaiako, Hirini Wikaira, Charlie Waata and kuia and kaumātua. This resurgence expanded the use of te reo me ngā tikanga Māori.

Over the final year of the pilot, te reo was integrated into all Whirinaki Toiora projects. This further enhanced and advanced the oral, and practical use of te reo and especially the local dialect relating to tikanga and kawa. A series of wānanga were developed in association with Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiarangi, teaching the use of specific karakia, waiata and mihimihi. Kaumātua and kuia played a key role in the transfer of knowledge, sharing karakia tawhito, waiata mōteatea, and hītori. A waiata booklet was produced including original waiata telling the stories of the hapū.

Thanks to the enthusiasm of the community and the dedication of kaiako, kuia, and kaumātua Wānanga have continued beyond the completion of the pilot.

Mokopuna and rangatahi

Supporting the development of leadership for Whirinaki's rangatahi and taitamariki by providing learning opportunities within and outside of the community, this approach is understood as part of achieving community wellness.

For mokopuna, we offered activities both at home and away from home, including a fun-packed holiday programme, and participation in the ANZAC Day ceremony, Matariki celebrations and mokopuna dance classes. While the tangible events were much enjoyed and taught useful skills, the intangible benefits of mokopuna akiaki relate more to the care and nurturing of our tamariki. Therefore, our measure of success will be the future of our taonga mokopuna.

For rangatahi toa, we started with a social enterprise designing and selling apparel with the Whirinaki theme. Its success led to another social enterprise – a local gym. With the

nearest commercial gym, an hour away crossfit wasn't previously accessible. Offering gym workouts along with a crossfit programme in a dedicated space at the marae, programmes are available free to unemployed adults and for a small fee for those in paid work. Rangatahi also studied film-making and leave the pilot ready to embark on their latest social enterprise of video and short film production.

Now self-sustaining, resourcing has far-reaching benefits: quality gym equipment, massage tables for mirimiri, equipment for video-making, and hoodies available online have all contributed to improved self-confidence, skills, empowerment and leadership amongst rangatahi. Rangatahi have learned that leadership includes collaboration, contributing, setting goals, action, and tenacity.

Raranga

Whirinaki people have further enhanced their reputation for weaving, as they share their knowledge with neighbouring communities and series of wānanga, and culminated in an exhibition with participants proudly exhibiting their work. Finely woven mats were also lovingly prepared for the marae. Participants attended the National

Weavers hui and continue to support others. Wānanga have continued beyond the project thanks to the leadership of champions such as Mandy Sunlight.

A community van

Increasing local access to a range of support services and activities has been helped by 'van pooling.' The community van has been well used and maintained in excellent condition thanks to Joe Te Miha. Its management has been debated, but a plan is in place for hireage to cover maintenance and running costs.



Looking back to



Marae solar

Increasing sustainability and reducing costs for all three marae, this initiative is already proving its worth as marae receive credits from solar energy fed into the grid.

Awa restoration

Protecting the waterways and natural ecosystems to ensure sufficient, healthy, fresh water today and into the future; this was the largest and most significant of all our projects. Key aims included:

- Prevent future flooding
- Prevent further erosion of the river banks threatening houses nearby
- Prevent further pollution of the awa

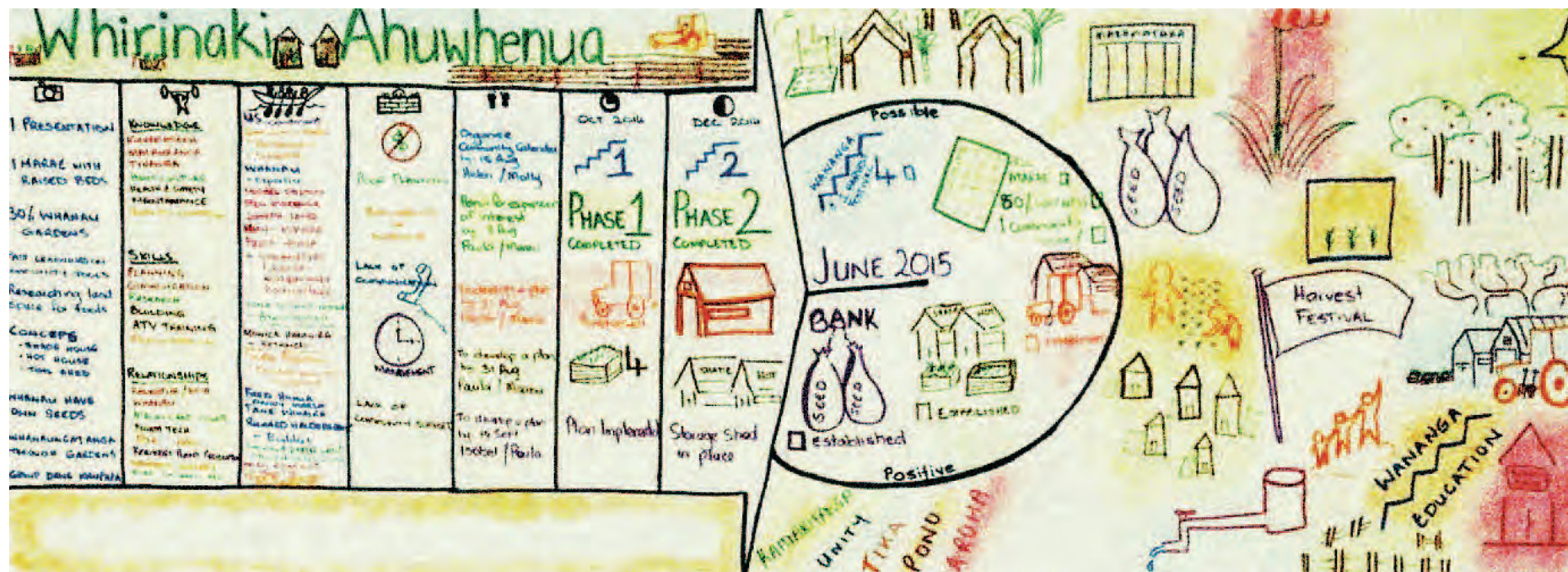
- Restore water quality to allow whānau to use the river safely and confidently
- Support rejuvenation of aquatic species and fish to the awa

This was a time and labour-intensive project with as many challenges as there are bends in the river. Revisiting and developing new project plans (in late 2015) with local and external technical experts proved to be worth the cost, delay and effort, as it provided a clear roadmap for further work. The tangible outcomes to date prove the value of this investment: Annual surface flooding prior to the awa clean-up has

diminished; water quality is improving – allowing safer swimming, and the anticipated return of aquatic species. Aggregate removed from the awa has been reused to improve road access to the urupa and marae carparks.

Annual surface flooding prior to the awa clean-up has diminished; water quality is improving... Ko ngā waipuke-ā-tau I mua ka timu, ka piki ake te kounga wai...





Pathway Planning: Each community initiative involved a PATHWAY planning process.

Native ngahere

This initiative to plant native trees to protect waterways and land productivity was reduced in favour of prioritising major works on the awa. After strenuous debate around project scope, the leadership group concluded a modified planting plan at key points along the awa was the most feasible option.

Ahuwhenua planting

Whirinaki is well known for its gardening and harvests – as far back as 1870 kumara were being produced in Whirinaki for markets, so this project builds on existing traditions and skills, as well as our natural resources. The result is a social enterprise growing heritage food varieties from local seeds for local sale. The Ahuwhenua enterprise supports local marae and will, in time, offer a surplus for sale in regional and other outlets.

Taking advantage of the South Hokianga climate, our vision is for the Whirinaki community to become a leader in growing and producing heritage crops. We seek to provide:

- Central nursery facilities to propagate plant material and species.
- Raw material for other hapu/communities
- Employment opportunities and options for local hapu/communities



- Workshops on self-sufficiency, self-reliance, sustainability, via wananga and workshops.
- Support for environmental projects with in the Whirinaki community, e.g. river restoration, future marae landscaping projects.

Particularly successful has been the experience and commitment of the working group. With a clear understanding of the business case, the group could adapt to an evolving project plan.

Whirinaki will be an inspired, unique, leading community, advancing the cultural, social, environmental and economic wellbeing of the hāpori of Whirinaki. Ka tū kaha Whirinaki ki te hāpai ngā kaupapa ahurea, te taiao me ngā ohanga, oranga nōki ō te hāpori.

At the close of the pilot, the project now has a legal status for future development, via a MOU with the Whirinaki Toiora entity.

He aha ngā painga mō mātou?

What worked for us

- An overarching community plan with the vision, mission, values, and goals
- Learning and applying CLD principles in ways that worked for us
- Visual interactive path-planning sessions which provided avenues for stakeholder input

- Frameworks such as Results Based Accountability (RBA) to enable proper assessment
- Decision making processes, e.g. surveys to help where consensus building was stuck, or physical attendance at hui wasn't practical
- Volunteers to champion initiatives
- Coordinators and managers from the community
- Consistent support from Louise (DIA).
- Celebrating successes

Taki Challenges

Developing a community plan is a time and energy intensive process – particularly when lacking unanimity about priorities and with some quiet voices going unheard. It was important to take the time needed so that questions could be addressed in a comprehensive way, rather than dealing with issues piecemeal. Community-led development takes time. The journey has been resource-intensive and has required a willingness to listen to each other to achieve anything.

Some mahi, such as the awa restoration and Ahuwhenua projects hit pressure points as

project plans were continuously reviewed, further funding accessed, and policies developed with the wider community.

The fruits of these efforts are both tangible and intangible: More sharing of resources, skills and expertise, and increased capability to meet current and future challenges. Critically, all milestones in our community plan were met.

He aha atu? What's next?

We will be building on this foundation for our next phase: ensuring sustaining existing gains

and developing new ventures. Whirinaki Toiora have established a charitable trust and the community has received governance training. The Whirinaki Toiora Trust has successfully secured resources from new funders and will expand its network of stakeholders.

Our vision and mission remains: Whirinaki will be an inspired, unique, leading community, advancing the cultural, social, environmental and economic wellbeing of the hapori of Whirinaki.

It will do this though sustainable, community-led development.



