



## Fostering Community, Strengthening Te Tiriti O Waitangi.

**Exciting seismic shifts are happening in New Zealand’s cultural political landscape. The embracing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Te Ao Māori and Māori leadership is a movement which is gaining momentum. This movement has the potential to radically re-orientate New Zealand to be better place for all citizens and a more responsible global citizen.**

**To help realise the potential we need to weave the strengths and skills of the many people that make up our nation.** We know this journey can be uncomfortable and this article outlines how community-led development (CLD) as one strand, can support this movement to achieve effective and lasting change across the many systems and institutions that make Aotearoa what it is. Community-led development values communities and understands the critical role they play in adjusting to and leading change. By fostering connections between diverse groups that make up communities we help shape the aspirations for their local communities, grow local leadership and support new power relationships that are inclusive and restorative. This capacity is vital to acknowledge and use as New Zealand tackles our colonial legacy and charts a Te Tiriti honouring course.

Inspiring Communities (IC) is a network of practitioners formed to hold and evolve the CLD body of knowledge within Aotearoa. IC decided to focus on ‘place’, understanding that transformative change becomes more possible when contributions of all those who have an interest or connection to a place are activated. The whenua (land) focus of CLD brings it into sharp focus with mana whenua, the people who are of that place, and the history of what has happened between the many groups connect to place. This overlay of Māori hapu / iwi and the many people and groups of that community who arrived over the colonial era and recent times provide the context to refine the value of CLD for a Te Tiriti informed future.



Source: Inspiring Communities **Te Whakawhanake ā-Hapori**  
**Weaving our connections and contributions.**

## The Science Shaping CLD

**It is helpful to briefly touch on the bodies of knowledge informing a CLD approach. Globally there is growing interest in locally led change.** The challenges of inequity, climate change, racism and environmental restoration are renewing interest in the key role those local citizens hold. This is reinvigorating the old concept of the Commons – those resources or parts of nature that one cannot own. These trends reflect emerging fields in science, such as complexity, chaos and systems thinking, that flow across many disciplines and emphasise a more inter-connected, relational and natural world view. This ‘new’ thinking within ‘western’ science circles has similarities with indigenous knowledge systems that have been passed between generations and survived the challenges of colonialism. In Aotearoa, mātauranga Māori is weaving with this international literature and is shaping how we frame CLD.

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**This new science is stretching the traditional Eurocentric scientific world view that tends to look at the world through a mechanistic, linear and binary lens.** These scientific assumptions, that found form during Europe’s scientific revolution and later the ‘enlightenment’ of the 16th to 18th centuries, were used to rationalise white supremacist assumptions and were thus used by the European nations to legitimise their colonising of the world. By undermining the hierarchical nature of this old science, the new science, and its informing of CLD has the potential to disrupt oppressive systems and help foster generative thinking. This ‘freeing’ up of knowledge from narrowly defined world views enables indigenous knowledge to claim its rightful place and interact with other bodies of knowledge to help shape more just and sustainable ways of living.

## Adaptive Complex Systems

**CLD views communities as adaptive complex systems. As such, communities are living social groupings that are critical in shaping the wellbeing of people and the environment.** This understanding is informed by a strength-based orientation that recognises and affirms the talents and resources that people already have and has a default setting that backs people to contribute to their wellbeing and development. By appreciating the non-linear dimension to communities, the approach avoids a narrow focus on economic development (focusing on GDP) and causal evidence methodologies that measure limited variables to assess wellbeing and progress.

Understanding the limitations of ‘either/or’ (binary) thinking is critical. CLD practitioners work to avoid the trap of binary thinking. We run the risk of rejecting one body of knowledge (eg old western science) and replacing it with the new ‘right’ way (eg indigenous knowledge). This can inadvertently perpetuate the narrow binary approach we are seeking to move beyond. To minimise this trap CLD, fosters the respect and understanding of all groups who have an interest in a place.



This includes, where feasible, opposing groups. This isn’t easy, however by hosting conversations between people with diverse backgrounds and views we help foster healthy and resilient communities and facilitate a deeper appreciation of our diversity – as well as what we hold in common. The result of this step is not merely a compromise, and seldom does everyone agree on everything, however hosted well, deeper engagement and connection can lead to subtle shifts that open the possibility for new thinking and ideas to emerge that hadn’t existed prior. Resiliency is formed through the mix of connectedness and diversity.

## Te Tiriti - many world views, one document

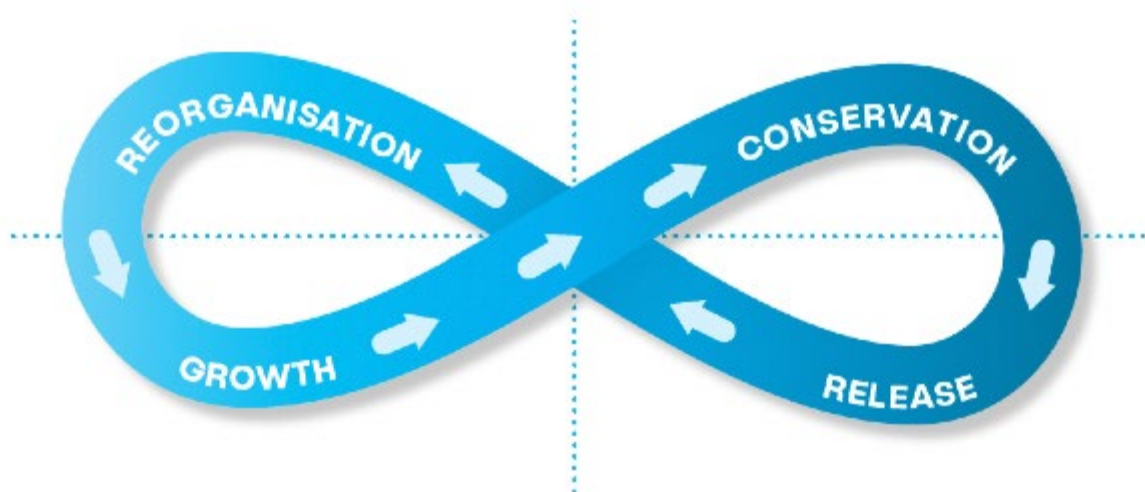
**In 1840 Aotearoa's Te Tiriti o Waitangi brought together different world views into one process with one document –albeit with numerous versions.** In historical terms and in relation to knowledge systems, mātauranga Māori met rational European science and law. This process created the opportunity for new insights and approaches to emerge out of the interaction of these rich bodies of knowledge. By 1840 Māori had already demonstrated their adaptive capacity to integrate European technology into their tikanga. Imagine what could have formed if Pākehā demonstrated the same openness to integrating Te Ao Māori at this historical juncture?

To arrive at an agreement Māori debated and interpreted Te Tiriti's value and meaning from their indigenous body of knowledge and the significant evidence they had accumulated on the relatively new arrivals. In contrast the British parties were guided by legal precedence (following what they understood as legally right), instructions from Head Office (London Colonial Office) underpinned by an assumed superior knowledge (a hierarchical world view). Note they had invested limited resources in understanding Te Ao Māori and relied on European interpreters, mostly missionaries or traders who had their own motives. The overarching British approach was informed by over three hundred years of conquering and colonising vast continents and the legal and political frameworks that had been established to maintain their empire.

The shared intent of both parties entering into the agreement was a desire for an agreed framework to guide the on-going boundaries and relationship between all parties. The colonising British partners interpreted this very narrowly from their winner / loser binary lens. This is reflected in the weight given to the English version which few chiefs signed and watered-down substantive parts of the Māori document. To briefly summarise the 180 years since its signing, the power imbalance of the British Monarchy and later settler Governments and their brutal suppression of iwi and hapu rangatiratanga (chieftainship) meant the opportunity to jointly shape the interpretation and application of what was agreed to was radically diminished (though not destroyed, as Māori kept this alive despite massive opposition).

From a mātauranga Māori perspective a 'deal' between different groups requires ongoing work from everyone that is party to it for it to maintain value and aliveness. Clearly for the majority of New Zealand's history this didn't happen and the current Te Tiriti movement is addressing this fact as one party to the agreement plays catch up. Community led development and its related tools provide helpful resources to address this neglect and support bringing life to the vision it established.

## Applying the Tools



Source: Walker, B.C.S Holling, SR. Carpenter, and A. Kinzig. 2004. Resilience, adaptability, and transformability in social-ecological systems. *Ecology and Society* 9(2):5.

**Central to the CLD theory of change is the eco-cycle framework (represented by the infinity loop). This framework, drawn from ecology and applied to human systems highlights the constant flow around the cycle of 'birth' and 'death' and expanding and contracting - essential to sustain life.**

**Applying this framework to change in human systems highlights classic traps that stop the flow around the cycle and results in preventing renewal of the system.**

Governments and many Pakeha (European decent) structured organisations, current trap is their failure to appreciate how their own way of working reflect dominant Eurocentric assumptions (linear, binary, mechanistic). This leads to a narrow definition of 'the Crown', viewing the population through a simple Māori or non-Māori lens and separating policies into discrete areas (that they then try to coordinate). This trap and related assumptions found fresh expression in the new public management (NPM) approach of the 1980's that is dominant today. Linked to neo-liberal economics, NPM brought a focus on markets, management and metrics. These were claimed as neutral tools to enable efficient and effective approaches to solving problems. The over reliance on these levers has come at a cost to the collective fabric of communities. Communities as living systems, aren't well served by either market-driven or state-driven responses. Non-financial transactions were invisible and not considered in policy solutions. Under this regime government departments grew (especially management) and policy analysis became a craft that has minimised the deep wisdom and insights of people experiencing the issue and their capacity to actors in driving solutions. Open participatory conversations in communities are different to government hosted consultations.

To move through this trap in relation to honouring Te Tiriti, Government needs to loosen its linear and one-dimensional approach and move towards a more emergent and flexible approach. If it maintains the same operating system embodied in NPM then it risks the outcome being simply a new Treaty veneer – lacking the necessary deep systemic change required to do justice to this foundation agreement. This move, shift from viewing Te Tiriti as a problem to be fixed or conversely the answer to all our problems, to being valued as a resource to guide on-going innovation and renewal.

## **Reimagining Leadership**

**Crown leadership is essential to honouring Te Tiriti. CLD highlights how this leadership is exercised as being essential.** Too many command and control or paternalistic approaches erode the connectedness between citizens and the Crown. This feeds the 'othering' narrative. The process of 'othering' weakens society's fabric as people become quick to seek blame and distance themselves from being a part of the solution. Government is relegated to 'those people based in Wellington' that don't get what it is like for us here in this community.

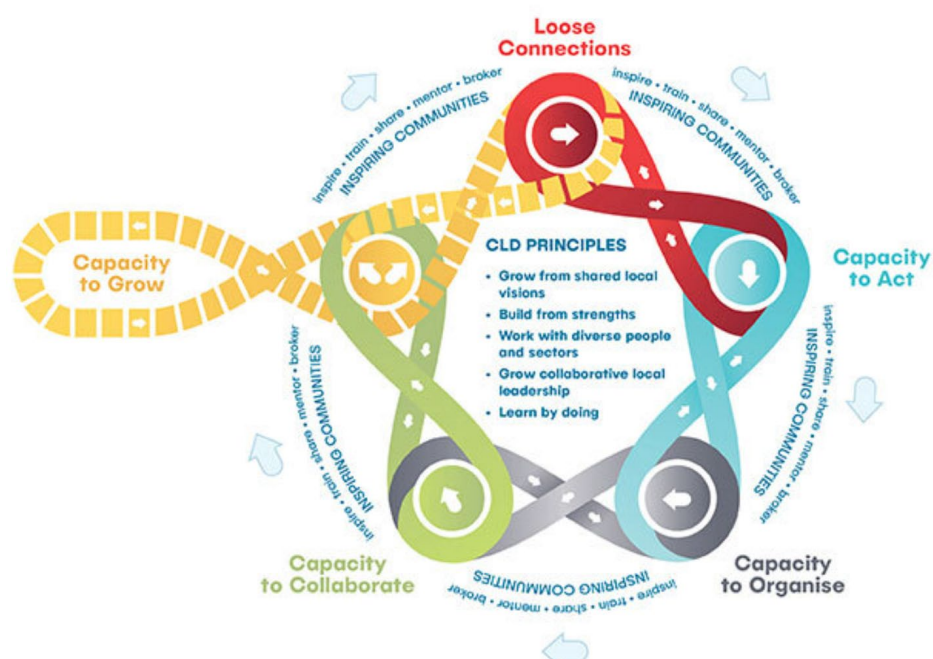
CLD leadership extends the range of leadership styles. It values leaders as hosts and brokers of relationships and aims to grow leadership across the whole system. This contrast with our current expectation for leaders to have all the answers. CLD leadership is geared for complexity. It places an emphasis on open processes, sharing of information and hosting conversations that are generative with solutions emerging from diverse groups. On-going learning and adaptive approaches are encouraged as opposed to rigidly sticking to set plans and timeframes. This aligns with the Human Learning Systems\* approach that is gaining international recognition as an alternative to New Public Management. While not a speedy process, it has potential to deliver more lasting solutions (which ends up being the quickest route to the desired destination). CLD practitioners know the wisdom of moving slowly to go far.

\*Human Learning Systems [www.humanlearning.systems](http://www.humanlearning.systems)



## Our changing 'Crown'

The 'Crown' that signed Te Tiriti in 1840 is very different to the 'Crown' of today. Movements like woman's suffrage, Mana Motuhake, and MMP have evolved our political system to be more participatory. This increased participatory nature of our democracy requires a corresponding shift in how we understand the Crown as it facilitates honouring Te Tiriti. This entails moving beyond the 1840's British binary and exclusive frame of a very small group of the Queen's representatives negotiating with Rangatira. A wider appreciation of the Crown, one that is more participatory with facilitative leadership, has the potential to release the insights, and creativity within diverse communities. The current narrow legally framed process limits participation in the process and as a result lessens the status of Te Tiriti and ownership of solutions reached. Participatory democracy values diverse groups of people directly engaging in problem solving on the issues of our time. Rather than placing the sole responsibility on a narrowly defined Government to fix the problem, local communities' step into their leadership and become part of on-going solution seeking and sense-making processes. What evolves may look different in each place with unique local context, histories shaping different priorities. As the diagram illustrates this approach grows capacity and resilience across communities.



Source: Inspiring Communities [Theory of Change](#)

## An invitation

**Community-led development can embellish our current Te Tiriti o Waitangi movement. It can help grow a fuller understanding of who 'the Crown' is, and by doing so open up more engaged conversations in communities on Te Tiriti.** It can help reenergise citizens and is able to hold the diversity and contradictions that exist in our complex world. This shifts Te Tiriti from being seen by most Pākehā as a 'Māori' issue, to it being an 'Aotearoa' issue. And in fact, an Aotearoa resource for citizens to pave new approaches. Te Tiriti creates a doorway we can move through to foster on-going innovation for the benefit of Aotearoa Inc (and maybe the globe?). This approach can strengthen the vitality of local communities, strengthen democracy, foster connections between diverse groups, develop leadership and affirm the strengths, and taonga already within their place. This makes way for a 'both and' approach that values 'by Māori for Māori, 'by Māori for all', by Government for all, and any other combination that forms out of the Te Tiriti partnerships.

**David Hanna.**

**READ MORE:** An example from Pam Armstrong, Whananaki Community-Led Development Group.