



The Strength of Whananaki

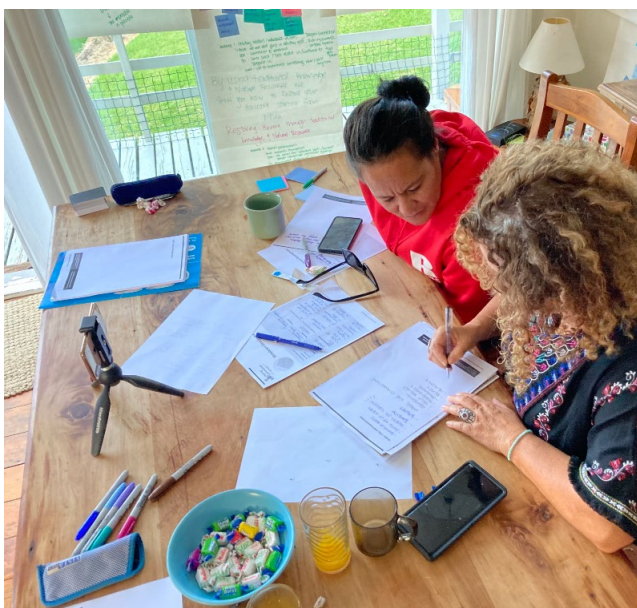
Whananaki is on the east coast of Northland – locals call it paradise on earth – those same locals are setting aside many years of the ‘us and them’ mindset to bring the best of both worlds together for the betterment of their place. The community is noticing that shift, particularly in the last five years and say their place is much richer for it.

Pam Armstrong is one of the many locals involved – she says Whananaki’s adoption of Community-led development approaches sitting alongside *mātauranga Māori and an indigenous lens has firmly shaped their vision for a culturally connected caring community.

“Community-led Development (CLD) is able to bring the diversity together, and that connection happens at many levels. As time has gone on it has meant a greater appreciation for bringing all perspectives together around the table.”

We started by setting the vision as no-one really understood the layers that existed in the community. And while it takes time and there is still a long way to go - *kaumatua, *pakeke, *tai tamariki, land owners, and many other residents are now working together on a number of solid cultural, environmental, social and economic initiatives. It is no longer just one side of the community doing its thing - it is together. There were limitations with the either/or – binary thinking. Efforts to involve as many locals as possible has led to subtle shifts that open the possibility for new thinking and ideas to emerge that hadn’t existed prior.

Weaving *mātauranga māori and CLD approaches to shape the change. 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.



A number of initiatives have flourished; from the marae development, to planning a local community hub, a youth-led social enterprise project working to produce natural and māori medicinal plant- based balm and bath bomb products, to the development of a large-scale native nursery. Connected in too is the appropriate support from Central government through DIA’s CLD partnership programme with its focus on this more emergent and flexible approach. On-going learning and adaptive approaches are encouraged as opposed to rigidly sticking to set plans and timeframes.

Source: Whananaki community workshop.

Restoration of Whananaki's flora and fauna is just one example of this alignment. By fostering the respect and understanding of all groups who have an interest in change we moved from it being just a few key local farmers wanting to eradicate pests and weeds to a wider community approach. To start with we were utilising contractors and while the work was getting completed, the transfer of knowledge and skills to the wider community was limited. With a move towards biodiversity restoration through an indigenous lens, the contractors' key role is to teach locals the skills so that the community works from a strengths based approach developing self reliance/self management practices. While it will take longer, the expertise will remain in place with the community. That is the type of 'shift' happening in Whananaki. This approach will lead to the cleaning of the waterways, building walkways and the establishment of a new major native nursery that will provide flora and fauna restoration for the Whananaki area and beyond, as well as the employment of three locals full time.

Whananaki locals that were coming from a place of 'it has always been done this way' – are now more open to considering an indigenous lens – thinking about the generations to come and there is better listening all the way around. Although economic development may seem more important for pākehā, Māori just understand it differently and there is room to embrace both world views. For Māori the wairua and whanaungatanga to te taiao is equally important. If we do the right thing by the environment, it will do right by us. This approach avoids a narrow focus on economic development. We are starting to realise the tangible and intangible benefits of working towards a culturally connected caring community.

“Whananaki's mission statement is Te Hoe o te Waka – all paddles working together to move the waka swiftly in the right direction.”

We are tapping into the rhythm of the community, the paddles are moving together not swiftly but in the right direction”.



Source: Mountains to sea. The awa restoration project in Whananaki.

***Te Reo Māori Translations**

- Kaumatua - respected tribal elder
- Pakeke – adult
- Tai tamariki - youth
- Mātauranga māori – māori knowledge

Hear Pam talk more about Whananaki's journey on this IACD webinar – facilitated by Inspiring Communities's Denise Bijoux.

> Working towards a more culturally connected community in Whananaki

Learn more about Whananaki's CLD group and their many projects and initiatives that restore their whenua, people and place.

> Whananaki: Our Community Story

READ MORE: Fostering Community, Strengthening Te Tiriti O Waitangi. An article from David Hanna, Inspiring Communities Practice Lead.