



# Kumara Vine



He piko  
he kaainga  
Community Waikato

March 2024



## CE Update by Holly Snape

Tena koutou katoa, and welcome to our first Kumara Vine of 2024. This edition is focused on our youth/rangatahi. Our young people have so much to offer our communities and our sector. They have fresh ways of thinking and doing, and many have an advanced



understanding of the digital landscape, which has become such a fundamental part of our work. Working with our young people can require different communication skills, different expectations, and different types of feedback from what we are used to. In this edition we explore the value of the contribution of rangatahi to our mahi and we consider how to prepare our organisations and governance to create pathways for young people to contribute, and we celebrate their current contributions across our sector.

This edition also includes consideration of the value and the importance of our young people participating in the democratic process. Often our young people feel alienated and do not see the value of voting or understand the process. Inclusion in our communities, our decision-making, our social services and demystifying the electoral process is a critical part of connecting rangatahi to the broader ecosystem of our community.

We will be facilitating another mentoring programme this year and if you are interested in either being a mentor or mentee, you can contact Sally (sally@communitywaikato.org.nz) to express your interest. We would really like to encourage young people to reach out if you have an interest in leadership or governance in the non-profit space as we have a wide range of highly experienced governors and community leaders who can provide mentorship.

There are several other important things to look out for this year. Community Waikato will be running a conference in the last quarter of the year. We do try to ensure the conference event is affordable, but it is worth keeping in mind as you set your budgets to include professional development.

The Incorporated Societies Act 2022 is in place as of October 2023, and incorporated societies have until 5 April 2026 to reincorporate their organisations. There are several changes from the previous Act, and this is your opportunity to ensure your guiding document is fit for purpose and captures all it needs to in order to comply legally, but also to enable you to operate effectively in what is a very different world from 1908 (when the first Act was enacted).

Finally, Community Waikato will be moving in 2024. While we will be sad to leave 33 Victoria Street, we are excited about what the future will hold and how we might better strengthen our partnerships with others across the non-profit sector. Big changes like this give us motivation to reflect on our work and how we can have the most impact. And as always, we are open to your feedback and thoughts, so please reach out if you have suggestions for the Community Waikato Team.



CEO Andrea Goble moving into 33 Victoria Street, Hamilton in 2008



Some of the Community Waikato staff outside 33 Victoria Street, Hamilton in 2024

**"Anxiety can keep us safe; it can motivate us and drive us to do things. Eco-anxiety is like any other anxiety, it can be very useful and it can cause us to act, respond and care in really appropriate ways, and then it can also get really severe depending on the parameters of our lives. It can cause serious problems and be really debilitating for people."**

- Dylan Chad, Founder of the Climate Action Conference

Many New Zealanders around the country are personally feeling the effects of climate change in day-to-day life. Including our rangatahi, who hold a unique long-term perspective in our communities as future environmental protectors. From the Christchurch earthquakes in 2011, through to the forest fires in Australia in 2020, and most recently, major flooding around the country in 2023, young people are now watching their whaanau, friends, and schools struggle and adapt to major climate problems. More than that, they understand that these environmental issues are going to appear more frequently and dramatically over the course of their lives. It feels like a looming existential dread and an overwhelming responsibility to protect Papatuaanuku - and themselves

But how can we support rangatahi to reframe their eco anxiety into action?

**"I think it is really important to connect with your values, whatever they are, and then apply them to yourself, like if you value love and beauty give yourself the grace to let yourself experience love and beauty in your life."**

- Lucy McLean. Clinical psychologist and Master's graduate with a focus on explaining and approaching eco-anxiety

At the beginning of 2023, Impact Hub and Seed Waikato partnered to develop an Eco Anxiety Workshop with influential panel members from around New Zealand specialising in climate change and eco anxiety. We asked Dylan Chad, Lucy McLean, and Michal Garvey how to reduce our anxiety.

Here are a few suggestions from our panel:

**Acknowledge your emotions.**

Feeling internal shame for experiencing emotions which are completely reasonable only adds another negative feeling to the list. Understanding your emotions and why you are feeling them can help you identify what you find valuable, meaningful, or important.

**Discuss realistic action points.**

**"We live inside systems, give yourself a break, if you have to drive to work because that's the only way you can get to work, that's the system's fault, not your fault"**

- Lucy McLean.

Take the time to create a realistic plan which you can implement into your day-to-day life. Any change that you can sustain long term will have a much stronger impact than small, unorganised efforts.

**Create a community.**

Finding or creating a community of people who are committed to the same goals within climate change can create a space where people can empower each other. There are many organisations, groups, and even businesses which are working towards the goals of being eco-friendly, creating systemic change, encouraging everyday habits and much more. Researching existing communities within your area can be an amazing way to discover how you can contribute to an existing local or global movement.

Are you looking to join a community of like-minded people working towards social change? Visit us at Hive 11 (11a Somerset st, Frankton) to get involved with events similar to the Eco Anxiety Workshop and transform your anxiety into action.

[www.seedwaikato.nz](http://www.seedwaikato.nz)



## Empowering Rangatahi in Governance

# A Path to Inclusivity and Innovation

By Tokaanu Thompson, Kaiwhakarite

In the space of governance, the inclusion of rangatahi (young people) holds immense promise for fostering inclusive and dynamic decision-making processes. Rangatahi, with their fresh perspectives and technological insight, bring a unique lens to governance structures, rooted in their evolving worldview shaped by social, cultural, and technological advancements. This article delves into the various dimensions of engaging rangatahi in governance, exploring both the opportunities they present and the barriers they face.

### The Potential of Rangatahi Engagement

Rangatahi engagement in governance signifies more than just a demographic shift; it represents a fundamental transformation in how decisions are understood and actioned. Their lived experiences, aspirations, and interconnected perspectives challenge conventional norms and prompt a re-evaluation of policies and practices. By providing platforms for rangatahi to contribute, societies can tap into a reservoir of creativity, innovation, and progressive thinking.

One of the key strengths rangatahi bring to governance is their natural comfort with technology and proficiency in navigating the digital world. In an era dominated by social media and instant communication, rangatahi effortlessly bridge the gap between traditional governance practices and the expectations of a rapidly changing society. Their knowledge in utilising various platforms for information distribution ensures a wider reach and cultivates a sense of transparency and accessibility in governance.

Moreover, rangatahi's diversity of perspectives enriches the decision-making process, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of issues and solutions. Their youthful energy often translates into innovation and creativity, injecting a spirit of dynamism into governance structures. Additionally, their focus on long-term sustainability and community well-being reflects a genuine concern for the future, contributing to strategic planning with foresight.

### Barriers to Rangatahi Engagement

To effectively engage rangatahi in governance, it's vital to address the barriers hindering their participation. Limited access to opportunities, a lack of mentorship, and age-related stereotypes pose significant challenges. Many young individuals face information and networking barriers that hinder their awareness and access to available governance opportunities. The absence of mentors and role models leaves rangatahi without crucial guidance, hindering their ability to navigate the complex landscape of governance. Moreover, age-related stereotypes, strict experience requirements, and institutional barriers contribute to a sense of exclusion among rangatahi.

Within Maaori entities such as Marae, the dynamics add further layers of complexity. It can be challenging for rangatahi to engage in governance discussions, especially when addressing sensitive topics with elders or kaumatua. The hierarchical structure and cultural protocols may inhibit open dialogue, making it difficult for younger members to voice their perspectives or challenge traditional viewpoints. Conversations with aunts, uncles, kaumatua or perhaps parents may require navigating respectful communication while advocating for innovative ideas or alternative approaches.

The perception of experience significantly influences how current governors unfairly assess the depth of knowledge and experiences of rangatahi within governance. Despite the potential benefits of involving young people in governance, prevailing biases often discount their valuable perspectives and insights. Current governors may unjustly judge them based on age-related stereotypes, assuming they lack the necessary experience or comprehension of complex governance issues. This unfair perception leads to strict experience requirements and institutional barriers that disproportionately affect rangatahi, marginalizing them and excluding them from decision-making processes.

Moreover, the fear of tokenism exacerbates these challenges, as rangatahi may doubt the sincerity of their inclusion in governance initiatives. Addressing these issues necessitates challenging age-related stereotypes, reforming outdated institutional structures, and actively promoting inclusive practices within governance. Mentorship opportunities, increased awareness of available opportunities, and fostering supportive environments for rangatahi engagement are crucial steps toward breaking down barriers and creating a more inclusive governance landscape.

### Strategies for Overcoming Barriers

To overcome these barriers, organizations and governing bodies can adopt inclusive recruitment practices, establish mentorship programs, and provide cultural competency training. Flexible experience criteria and the creation of youth advisory boards facilitate a more accessible pathway for rangatahi engagement. Simultaneously, rangatahi can actively network, advocate for youth representation, and participate in skill development initiatives. Establishing peer support networks and joining youth organizations enhances collaboration and provides experiential opportunities for rangatahi.



### Cultivating Core Values

Unpacking the idea of effective leadership and governance, cultivating core values within rangatahi is essential. By embedding values such as inclusivity, accountability, and a long-term vision for sustainability, we provide them with a powerful compass for ethical decision-making and responsible governance. This approach fosters an inclusive board landscape that mirrors the rich tapestry of our communities, embodying cultural responsiveness and social responsibility.

In addition to embedding values such as inclusivity, accountability, and long-term sustainability, for Maaori, cultivating core values within rangatahi (youth) also entails integrating whakapapa and tikanga Maaori into leadership and governance practices. Whakapapa serves as a foundation for understanding one's place in the world and the responsibilities that come with it. By honouring and acknowledging whakapapa, rangatahi gain a deeper appreciation for their cultural heritage and a sense of belonging within their communities.

In essence, for Maaori, cultivating core values within rangatahi extends beyond conventional notions of leadership and governance. It encompasses a holistic understanding of cultural identity, ancestral connections, and ethical principles rooted in whakapapa and tikanga Maaori. By embracing these values, rangatahi are empowered to lead with authenticity, integrity, and a deep commitment to the well-being of their communities.

In conclusion, as well as recognizing the invaluable contributions that rangatahi bring to governance, it's essential to acknowledge and express gratitude to those who have played a significant role in lifting the floor on rangatahi capabilities. Incorporating rangatahi in governance is not just an investment in the future; it is a commitment to dynamic, inclusive, and forward-thinking leadership. The benefits of their involvement extend beyond the immediate, creating governance structures better equipped to navigate the challenges and opportunities of the present and future. As we embrace the future, let us recognize and celebrate the invaluable contributions that rangatahi bring to the table. Together, we can foster an environment where rangatahi empowerment in governance becomes a cornerstone of inclusive and innovative decision-making processes, shaping resilient and responsive communities for generations to come.



## #makingmokoupunadecisions:

### The rangatahi voice

Democracy only works if everyone gets involved. Unfortunately, many young people, Maaori, Pasifika and other underserved communities are disengaged from democratic processes. Low voter turnout is a major concern especially for local government elections but also evident in the general elections.

Taurikura NZ has been involved in civics education for three years. We found that most people were unaware of the roles that councils played in their everyday lives. As one young participant, standing for district council, said "We're not taught anything really about why we should vote, what we're voting for . . .".

Lack of awareness has meant a persistent lack of diversity in candidates for local government. Elected members, typically, continue to be white, male and beyond middle aged. They also tend to own property, be employers and, in rural districts, farmers. This narrow range of perspectives determines the priorities and makes the decisions which affect the lives and wellbeing of whole communities, as well as the futures of young people.

#### Representation: Having a voice and why it matters

Every three years we get opportunities to vote. The democratic dream is that our governance spaces authentically represent the diverse needs, visions, and priorities of all their communities. It is crucial that our democracy be 'representative' of all the people it claims to act for. This means we all need to engage, participate and vote.

While national elections attract more attention and resourcing, most decisions that affect our daily lives are made in local and regional councils. There are now more women and Māori in local government, but there are "still some glaring gaps" including young people.

Young people are passionate about complex issues like climate change, poverty, housing, and education. They are enthusiastically involved in leadership spaces within their own environments. They have great knowledge and skills but are reluctant to participate in spaces that seem irrelevant, unwelcoming and culturally indifferent.

When young people have enough information to make informed decisions and are connected to the issues, they commit to political engagement. For rangatahi Maaori, political campaigns that emphasise the cultural values and perspectives of Te Ao Maaori are clearly appealing. The results of this have been seen throughout the country with young Maaori leaders becoming Mayors and councillors as well as new parliamentarians. Galvanising and building on this engagement is our key task as a democratic society.

We need to support diverse candidates, including young people, to stand for election. This would offer real choice in representation and voting, and inevitably transform the culture of governance spaces.

#### Voter turnout declining

Voter turnout, especially in local government elections continues to decline. Young people vote the least of any age group in Aotearoa. A 74.2% turnout in the general elections for 18 to 24-year-olds, may be indicative of more appealing candidates, especially for the Green Party and Te Pāti Maaori. However, turnout remains highest for voters over 55 years.

For local elections, turnout is stubbornly low, and those who do vote are often doing so based on scant information and confusion about who and what they're actually voting for. A case in point is the current Hamilton City Council byelection where only 22% of eligible voters voted. Despite major issues affecting young people nearly 700,000 people who were enrolled didn't vote in the 2023 general election.

Non-voters are more likely to have low incomes, fewer assets and rent their homes which often means changing postal addresses. This makes it more difficult



Oomaero Hui

to contact people, especially young people who rarely use postal services anyway. In contrast, there is a clear relationship between home ownership and voter turnout in local elections, influenced by the visibility of groups like 'ratepayers associations', and the prominence of local businessmen and property owners standing for election.

#### Diversity leads to better outcomes

Diversity in local, as well as national, government matters. Everybody benefits. Diverse representation means a greater range of perspectives, values and priorities brought to the table. This leads to better, more informed decision-making and outcomes that reflect the needs, wants and desires of communities.

Unfortunately, it is very difficult to encourage and support people, especially Māori and young people, to vote when there's 'no one like me to vote for'. Equally, it is difficult to encourage young people, Maaori, Pasifika and other underserved communities to stand as candidates because "it can be really hard to see yourself in those positions". Yet, these communities need to be at the table, to frame issues and priorities, set agenda and bring a cultural lens into decision making. A lack of diversity in candidates perpetuates an unrepresentative democracy.

#### Engagement and participation in democracy: barriers and pathways

Councils are responsible for improving the social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing of our communities. However, many people don't understand the roles council play, or that they have any 'rights' unless they are rate-paying homeowners. This is particularly concerning when so many young people are facing generations of vulnerable tenancy with home ownership out of reach. In fact, decisions made locally impact on generations to come in terms of housing, employment opportunities, public facilities, water supplies and the environment.

There are increasing calls for investment in civics education to empower young people to participate. As one of our young participants stated, "We just cannot continue to just accept as the norm low voter turnout when all the decisions that local government makes directly affect us". Practical changes to voting methods,

such as mobile ballot boxes are one solution that should increase participation and voting rates amongst Māori and young people.

#### Conclusion

Taurikura's vision for our Mana Tangata Mana Maangai civics education programme is "knowledgeable and engaged communities participating enthusiastically in democracy". A collective effort is vital to increase democratic participation and representation of all communities in local government as well as our national political and electoral systems.

The socio-political landscape is getting younger and browner. The challenges our current and future generations face means #makingmokoupunadecisions, at both local and national level, is ever more urgent.



Huntly Community Expo

<sup>1</sup>See for example, Joni Tomsett, Make Civics Education a Core Subject in All New Zealand Secondary Schools, Dec 2023 on Action Station Community campaign platform. Also, the Independent Electoral Review (2023) and Future for Local Government Report (2023).

<sup>2</sup>#makingmokoupunadecisions is a term created by the Young Elected Members of Local Government NZ to explain the need for decision making that looks ahead 30years or more to fully consider the impacts for generations to come





# Community Waikato Workshops

■ **March-June 2024**

## Diversity and Inclusivity

26 March, 10am to 12.30pm, Rainbow Hub Waikato, \$75 community

11 June, 10am to 12.30pm, Rainbow Hub Waikato, \$75 community

Learn how you can better support Takataapui / Rainbow / Queer / LGBTTQIA+ colleagues, clients, customers, patients, service users, stakeholders, or collaborators.

## Funding Workshops

Come to a fully-subsidised funding workshop delivered by the local community funders

- Cambridge – 10 April, 9.30am to 12noon
- Te Kuiti – 1 May, 9.30am to 12noon
- Online - 29 May, 5.30pm to 7.30pm
- Hamilton - 12 June, 9.30am to 11.30am
- Online – 19 June, 5.30pm to 7.30pm

## Understanding and completing your COGS application

3 April, 5.30pm to 7.30pm, zoom

This workshop will focus on understanding the requirements for your COGS grant and how to make the best application possible.

## Governance in Community Organisations

These fully-subsidised workshops will take you through the basics of governing community organisations

- Online - 27 March, 6.30pm to 8pm
- Online - 28 March, 11.30am to 1pm
- Cambridge – 10 April, 12.30pm to 2.30pm
- Te Kuiti – 1 May, 12.30pm to 2.30pm
- Online - 26 June, 6.30pm to 8pm
- Online - 27 June, 11.30am to 1pm

## Evaluating Progress in NFP's

30 April, 10am to 12noon, Western Community Centre, \$75

This seminar outlines the current thinking and literature on evaluations of nonprofit organisations then provides a way forward for participants to implement an impact evaluation that is relevant, do-able, affordable and reflective of the work of the organisation.

## Teams at their Best

9 May, 10.00am to 12noon, Western Community Centre, \$75 community

This seminar focuses on the important role that teams play in an organisation. It includes the complexities of team culture, how teams' function, and the good and the bad of how team membership plays out.

Register online at [www.communitywaikato.org.nz/workshops](http://www.communitywaikato.org.nz/workshops)