

MĀORI LEARNER EXPERIENCES IN THE BACHELOR OF LEADERSHIP FOR CHANGE PROGRAMME

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This paper explores the experiences of four Māori students studying towards their Bachelor of Leadership for Change, highlights the diverse motivating factors that propelled each learner into their course of study, and explores their varied experiences. Kerri shares her experience as an adult learner returning to study, the introduction and challenge of technology, the opportunity to shape processes through a kaupapa Māori approach, and the importance of leaving a legacy. Scout discusses how his disability and individual learning needs were supported, the symbiotic importance of 'ako', and the significance of a dynamic, fluid and evolving learning programme. Cullum highlights the significance of finding a course that supported their desire for freedom, creativity and making learning meaningful to his diverse career pathway. Lastly, Emily identifies the opportunity to develop a wider networking community, the importance of the support of an individual mentor, and a sense of belonging. The celebration of successful Māori student engagement, within this exciting and dynamic new programme of the Bachelor of Leadership for Change, offers a fresh approach towards realising Māori student potential in the context of a learning pathway focused on disrupting the status quo, and developing transformative and systemic change at multiple levels.

KERRI DONOGHUE-COX

Ko Taranaki te maunga

Ko Waitara te awa

Ko Tokomaru te waka

Ko Rahiri te hapū

Ko Taranaki rātou ko Ngāti Kahungunu, ko Ngāt Tuwharetoa ōku iwi

Ko tamaiti whāngai he te whānau Pākehā

Ko tauira he Leadership for Change

Ko Kerri Donoghue-Cox tōku ingoa

It took me over seven years to get myself connected with Capable NZ and involved in a course. In 2011, I was invited and encouraged to take on a combined Social Work and Strategic Management Degree. I wanted to study, but I never took up that particular opportunity. For the next five years, Capable NZ re-invited me to apply. If I got nothing else during this time, I got a great demonstration of their stamina!

In late 2017, I saw an advertisement pop up on my Facebook news feed. It was an advertisement for Capable NZ and a new course: Bachelor of Leadership for Change. It asked, 'Are you a change maker?' and I thought, 'Why, yes... yes I am!'. I knew that THIS was the opportunity I was waiting for and I applied.

This is my very first degree, and I have not been in formal education for nearly 40 years. So far, I have learned a new language ('education speak' - exactly the same as 'government speak', but completely different). I learnt what a 'Zoom' room is. I am learning new ways of seeing, hearing and doing things. I've met a whole bunch of awesome people, and I have begun the art of reflection.

I have avoided reflection for nearly eight years because it's painful (one of my children died in 2010), but I am committed to my study and my mokopuna who are watching everything I do. I want them to love learning. So, I did what was required and I reflected - oh how I reflected - which is great because it is an integral part of self-development within the course. I reflected on myself, my feelings, my thinking, my doing, my journey, my history, my now, my then and my future. I reflected on the work I do, the team I work with, the community I work in, and the work we do together. Then I reflected a lot - a whole lot - on the change I want to make in the world. I am still reflecting.

Recently, the Māori rōpū of Leadership for Change had a hui to discuss an awesome opportunity for one of the Māori students, which was to attend the Ka Rewa: Māori Innovation Symposium in Auckland. After some discussion between the taura Māori in this programme, we decided that choosing one person was not kaupapa Māori, nor was it aligned to how we move in the world as Māori; we are often at our best as a collective. So, we took this whakaaro back to our facilitators who then did all they could to support our idea. All three of our rōpū attended the symposium, which was amazing given there was only enough pūtea for one. This was the beginning of our practice to facilitate change within the Leadership for Change programme. It was a great demonstration of tautoko from our tauwi facilitators. We were all very humbled by their efforts to support us to do things our own way. They believed in us!

My background is in family violence intervention. I work for Kōkiri Marae Māori Women's Refuge and have done so for about 30 years. I am a foundation member of this refuge. In my current role I work as a family violence therapist. I am waiting for a newly developed role that intends to recognise gaps in agency collaboration and provide solutions toward bridging those gaps. It could not be a more perfect role to support my study, and my study is perfect to support the new role.

SCOUT BARBOUR-EVANS

Ko Taranaki te papatūwhenua

Ko Whakapunake te maunga

Ko Wairoa te awa

Ko Ngāti Kahungunu rāua ko Ngāti Porou ngā iwi

Ko Evans rāua ko Barbour ngā whānau

Ko Kahungunu te tangata

Ko Takitimu te waka

He takatāpui ahau

Ko taura he Leadership for Change

Ko Scout Barbour-Evans ahau

Statistics New Zealand have continued their research into the realities for disabled people in New Zealand. A study in 2017 identified that a whopping 42.3 percent of disabled youth (ages 15- 24) were not in any form of study, work or training. Disability is a big Māori health issue, and you don't have to have a PhD to see it. Anecdotes from my friends and colleagues indicate that this massive rate of disabled youth, not engaged in study, work or training, more likely than not correlates with the inaccessibility of traditional tertiary pedagogy – or, in plain English, how hard we find it to access education that meets our individual learning needs when we leave school. There is little to no specific funding for accessible education in the tertiary sector; so student support offices find themselves having to magic money out of thin air or trying to decide which five students are most deserving of a grant when there are thirty who desperately need it. And as a disabled Māori person trying to navigate tertiary education, this has been my experience too.

I failed NCEA Level 2, moved to Australia, repeated a year of high school, got my Queensland Certificate of Education by the skin of my teeth, bounced from a Bachelor in Psychology to a Diploma in Business to a Certificate in Human Services (which I graduated from), and then to a Bachelor in Social Services. My experience through all my education so far has been that the traditional systems, the classroom and lecture theatre environments, the heavy emphasis on 'death by power-point' learning and even classroom sizes have had really negative effects on my ability to learn and succeed. And then I discovered the Bachelor of Leadership for Change at Otago Polytechnic.

The Leadership for Change programme was written in 2017, and it was written with the goal of changing tertiary education to fit twenty-first century work. The degree recognises our prior knowledge, 'learners' and 'educators' find ourselves swapping roles in a stunning display of ako, and our assessment work is flexible, accounting for the fact that we have lives and that "sh*t happens". Assessment criteria has been written so that as long as we display our core competencies, how we present a piece of work doesn't matter. Educators treat us learners like adults. When there's a problem, we negotiate like adults to find solutions instead of being told that the system "doesn't allow for that".

When I've been stuck in bed for a week because of chronic pain, I can still attend class by video. I can control my own learning environment according to my sensory needs. If the suggested mode of a piece of work isn't working (for example a long formal report where I can't even read my own work), I can negotiate to complete it another way without having to get a doctor's note or go through Student Support, because staff recognise that every learner is different. It's realistic, it's dynamic, and it is twenty-first century learning. I am thrilled to be able to flourish as a learner without feeling the need to "cure myself" of my disabilities, and consequently my mental health is flourishing too.

CULLUM HARMER-KAPA

Ko Hikurangi te maunga

Ko Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Kahungunu, Kāi Tahu ōku iwi

Ko Kahuranaki me Te Whatuai ā piti ōku marae

Ko Cullum Tanekaha Harmer-Kapa tōku ingoa

To be honest I had ambiguous expectations prior to starting this course. When I read the advert online it came across like a cheesy self-help seminar at first glance, but I thought to myself why not? And I clicked on the link and haven't looked back since. I didn't really know what to expect from this uniquely structured course because it strays away from the boring parts of studying which I'm all too familiar with. It's structured in such a way that you get a lot of leeway in creative expression without being bombarded with too many assessments. All the assessments are relevant despite the fact that every student in my class is veering off into different career paths. I didn't really know if they'd take me on either because my career choice was and still is, stand-up comedy and that in itself sounds like I could be taking the mickey, but I was dead serious about it ironically. I was a little worried because it's not your typical profession to go into considering that, prior to starting, I had never been on stage to do stand-up before but nevertheless they welcomed me in with open arms. To me that's saying something, because I felt as though I met the criteria and in a way it would've contradicted their values had they turned me down - which implies that they're legitimate with what they say. Ever since I started I've been given nothing but constant support which has helped me to keep this ship afloat so to speak. I'm given the freedom to create a world with words and, with a combination of their guidance and my obsession with comedy, this will help steer me into the right direction - even though I don't know where it will lead but I guess that's part of the fun.

EMILY SEVERNE

Kia ora koutou katoa

Ko Ngāti Tūwharetoa tōku iwi

Ko Tongariro tōku maunga

Ko Tongariro tōku awa

Ko Taupō-nui-a-tia tōku moana

Ko Hinekura tōku hapū

Ko Korohe tōku marae

Nō Te Awamutu ahau

Ko Emily ahau

As a young mother and parenting for four years, it was time to really think about the future for my daughter and I. At this time in her life, I felt that I'd done all I could do as a mother and it was time to gain some independence and social skills with other children. I was left thinking on what to do and my immediate thought was I need to study something, as I am one of those people who can't go back in time and go back to school. I've always heard about the Otago Polytechnic, but never did any research into the site until the day I saw the advertisement and thought I don't know about how I would go being a leader but change yes! And so I applied for the Bachelor of Leadership for Change. I had an interview, got accepted, but then I offered whānau to stay with me to make a change on their life style, and studying was not an option for this period of time. After getting my house back in one piece, my teacher happily accepted me back to begin study with the Otago Polytechnic. So far I have learnt a variety of things such as making new networks, and gaining a mentor as well as experience in what I have chosen to study. The one thing that has impacted me most so far is understanding who I am and what I am capable of. It's crazy breaking down all these never-ending layers and finding new things, and digging deeper and deeper into whakapapa and gaining more knowledge. Te Punaka Ōwheo is definitely an amazing place to have at the Polytechnic. It's an open space with amazing people who understand and who want to help and see Māori student flourish. Chris Roy from Te Punaka Ōwheo is a big founder in this as he has helped me gain experience and mentored for my development. It's a very safe and welcoming environment filled with lovely people, and computers if you need to quickly research before class.

I'm currently a student in the Bachelor of Leadership for Change; my change is around helping our Māori youth students find a sense of belonging at school. In this change, I would like to develop a programme within high schools where there are a group of Māori students who struggle to stay at school, or understand school. I want to help them find their place of belonging, to help them have future goals, because I know that I'm over seeing my peers pregnant, on the streets committing crime, or in a gang selling off drugs. I'm forever hearing about people dropping out of school and wishing they could go back in time and change that. I just want our young people to have understanding and to have a chance.

