

Nga Maumaharatanga:

**Māori & Pacific
Education Initiative**

*Our journey of
forging philanthropic
innovation together*

**MPEI contributors
& Frances Hancock**



ASB Community Trust

Te Kaitiaki Putea o Tamaki o Tai Tokerau

supported by **ASB**



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About the Trust

ASB Community Trust (the Trust) distributes grants to the not-for-profit sector throughout Auckland and Northland. Founded on the sale of its shares in the ASB bank, the Trust has distributed more than NZ\$745 million since it was formed in 1988. With investments of NZ\$1 billion and annual grants of about NZ\$40 million, it is the largest philanthropic organisation in Australasia. The Trust's vision is "to enhance the lives of all the peoples of our region by wisely allocating, equitably sharing and responsibly managing the resources that we hold in trust for present and future generations to allow for inter-generational equity."

About the writer/researcher

Frances Hancock is a graduate of Harvard and Massey universities. She is a writer, researcher and community development specialist. In 2008 she received the Just Practitioner Award from Unitec Institute of Technology School of Community Development.

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The accounts by successful applicants in chapter five are excerpts from their published stories and gratefully included here. For references see p.4.

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About MPEI's name change

Originally, MPEI was named the Māori and Pasifika Education Initiative. Following discussion among selection committee members, the term 'Pasifika' was replaced by the word 'Pacific'. While the term Pasifika is used in some contexts, the word Pacific was considered a more universal expression. Pacific is an English term and Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand rely on English as their common language, while also speaking their own languages within their own communities. The name change was embraced internally in 2009, and was recognised more formally in 2010 as MPEI documents began to be published.

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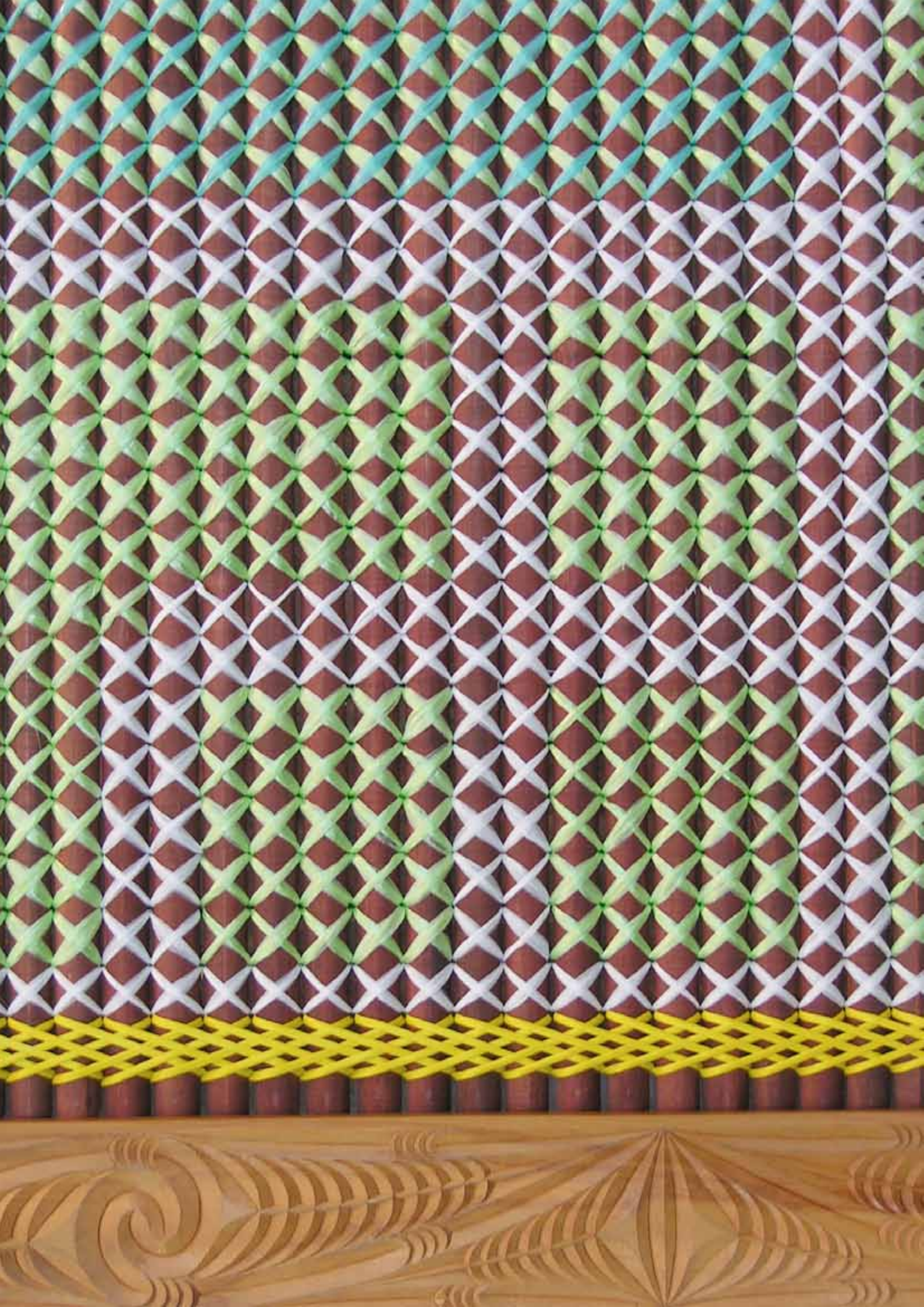
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Mihi

Ki nga iwi o Tamaki o Te Tai Tokerau
Nga mihi mahana ki a koutou katoa
Ka mihi ki a koutou hononga ki te whenua
Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa

*To the iwi and Māori of Tamaki and Te Tai Tokerau
We extend our warmest greetings
In respect of your relationship to the land and its history
Greetings to you all*

Ki nga iwi o Te Moana nui a Kiwa e noho ana e mahi ana
I nga rohe o Tamaki o Te Tai Tokerau
Talofa lava – Malo e lelei – Kia orana
Nisa bula vinaka – Fakaalofa lahi atu
Namaste – Taloha ni – Fakatalofa atu

*To Pacific peoples also living and working
In the Auckland and Northland region
Talofa lava – Malo e lelei – Kia orana
Nisa bula vinaka – Fakaalofa lahi atu
Namaste – Taloha ni – Fakatalofa atu*

Ka mihi ano hoki ki
Nga momo iwi katoa
E whai herenga ki tenei rohe
Nga mihi tino mahana ki a koutou katoa

*We also acknowledge
The many other peoples and ethnic communities
Who have strong ties to and interests in this region
Our warmest greetings to you all*

Ki a koutou katoa e noho ana i Aotearoa
E noho tawhiti ana i tawahi
Nau mai whakauru mai ki te panui i enei kupu
Tena pea he painga reka ka kitea e koutou i konei

*To all of you who are living in New Zealand or abroad
Welcome, come in and be part of us
Read the stories that follow
May you relish what you find here*

Whakatauki

He ira
He puawaitanga
He ponanatanga
He matauranga
He maramatanga

A dot
A blossoming
Uncertainty
Knowledge
Enlightenment





Foreword

*Professor Stuart McNaughton
ONZM – Professor of Education
and Director of the Woolf Fisher
Research Centre, Faculty of
Education, The University
of Auckland*

In developing the Māori and Pacific Education Initiative, ASB Community Trust has recognised the twin challenges facing us in providing the education to which our communities are entitled. The challenge is to have a world-class system which is of high quality and equitable. MPEI acknowledges that the first is dependent on the second. The right of Māori and Pacific peoples to have equitable educational achievement that is guaranteed, not just acknowledged, is behind MPEI. New Zealand is recognised internationally for innovative thinking in education and adopting ground-breaking practices. Clearly, we haven't been innovative or ground breaking enough, and MPEI is leading the way with a social transformation agenda to solve the two-edged problem.

The question of how MPEI came to do this, and how MPEI is becoming better at doing this, is told in this story. It describes a bold step by ASB Community Trust in establishing MPEI, which is tasked to seek out and fund promising local solutions in host communities. The MPEI vision: *Ma tatou ano tatou e korero, We speak for ourselves*, has been enacted by encouraging and providing generous funding for a small number of local solutions. This vision recognises that innovation and potent solutions must be developed within the local context to have the potential to be generalisable and sustainable. Doing this carries risks.

How MPEI has learned to manage these risks is compellingly detailed. It has adopted a dynamic partnership approach which operates at several levels. One was through the original design and development with advisory groups and at community hui and fono where engagement with host communities took place. At another level MPEI has adopted a donor relationship based on trust in which the first six projects are expected to deliver their valued outcomes against milestones; at the same time MPEI is fully engaged providing capacity-building support. MPEI learned early on and then advised groups to focus on this early capacity building, and to establish success before rolling out their solutions.

True to its beliefs about what initiatives should be able to demonstrate, MPEI has committed to being self reflective and evidence based in honing its processes. This is shown in the narrative and its companion report *He Akoranga He Aratohu: Māori and Pacific Education Initiative lessons to Guide Innovative Philanthropic and Social Practice*. It is also demonstrated in the systematic evaluation of the projects.

ASB Community Trust is to be admired and congratulated for developing strategic philanthropy. Befitting its status as the largest philanthropic organisation in Australasia, it is making a powerful commitment to solving the problem of guaranteeing educational success for Māori and Pacific communities. It has been bold: enabling specific innovations to take root but also requiring proof of success in meeting the aspirational goals; and to learn from the patterns of how well projects meet the challenge.



Preface

Jennifer Gill, chief executive officer & Moi Becroft, MPEI project manager

As the largest philanthropic organisation in Australasia, ASB Community Trust has investments of NZ\$1 billion and annual grants totalling NZ\$40–45 million. In 2006 the Trust embarked on a philanthropic journey in search of innovative proposals to address the serious problem of educational underachievement among Māori and Pacific youth. Trustees put aside NZ\$20 million for a new Māori and Pacific Education Initiative (MPEI); an investment greater than any amount the Trust had ever committed to a single initiative. Intent on forging social change, trustees also resolved to explore a different way of doing philanthropy.

The Trust set out to develop an initiative that would not have someone else tell Māori and Pacific communities how to do things but rather would create an opportunity for them to determine the solutions to a problem sorely affecting them and our nation. The aim was to lift the educational outcomes of Māori and Pacific youth by a significant percentage through innovative initiatives funded over five years.

In 2009 the Trust committed more than NZ\$10 million in its first MPEI grant-making round and in 2011 invested a further NZ\$6 million in a second round. It also established the MPEI Storytelling Project to publish the stories and lessons of this initiative as it unfolded rather than wait for a retrospective account sometime in the future. Simultaneously, the Trust engaged external consultants to conduct an independent external evaluation of MPEI projects.

In 2012 the Trust published a detailed account and assessment of the steps taken in the MPEI grant-making process: what happened, what worked, what didn't and why. Entitled *He Akoranga He Aratohu: Māori and Pacific Education Initiative lessons to guide innovative philanthropic and social practice* (MPEI contributors and F. Hancock, 2012), this rigorous evaluation also identified key lessons and preliminary conclusions.

In this narrative contributors share their recollections of the early days of MPEI. They recall how the idea of a new initiative evolved, the reasons for and assumptions underpinning significant decisions, key contributions made, the challenges and concerns faced at each stage of the journey, and the highlights.

Frances Hancock crafted this record from in-depth narrative interviews with key contributors to the MPEI grant-making process, which included trustees and staff of ASB Community Trust, members of MPEI reference groups and selection committees and MPEI external consultants. She also drew on her extended interviews with some unsuccessful applicants and the successful applicants of the first grant-making round. MPEI contributors reviewed and edited drafts of their narrative interviews and this text. Frances describes her work as 'collaborative text making' and is guided by the ethics of friendship, respect, generosity and justice.

This narrative offers a taste of what the Trust's MPEI grant-making process looked like, felt like and worked like, for those involved in it. It represents the views of various collectives engaged in the process and individual perspectives. Most especially it seeks to honour the vision of MPEI: *Ma tatou ano tatou e korero, We speak for ourselves*, and to convey the strength that comes from and through collaborative leadership.

1





Taking the road of philanthropic risk taking and innovation

Going back to the very beginning

In 2006 a searching enquiry ignited discussion at an ASB Community Trust strategic planning retreat. Trustees and the Trust's new chief executive officer, Jennifer Gill, had gathered at Long Bay just north of Auckland, to review the Trust's strategic plan and discuss future directions.

"Could the Trust do something to address the great gap between disadvantaged Māori youth and others in Northland, particularly in the primary and intermediate school years?" asked Jenny Kirk, a trustee who lived there.

"I had no idea how to effect such change," Jenny Kirk mused later, "but I believed that something should be done."

Over the lunch break, Pat Snedden, then deputy chair of the Trust and chair of its Investment Committee, took what would become known as "that legendary walk".

"It occurred to me while walking," Pat later recalled, "that Trust funds directed to educational purposes had made little headway in stalling the problem of educational underachievement and turning things around for Māori and Pacific communities. Despite a strong imperative to respond to the needs of our region, the Trust was constrained by a reactive approach to proposals made to us through the usual application process. The Trust was also enjoying the fruits of a sustained period of profitable investment, resulting in a healthy financial reserve. What if we were to put aside an amount of money large enough to make a difference through a new initiative? I asked myself."

Pat returned to the afternoon session with a breath-taking and visionary proposal. "People," he said, "I have an idea!"

We, trustees and chief executive, stopped in our tracks. All eyes turned to Pat, a man known for big-picture thinking.

"Let's do something big and bold," he announced. "Let's support a whole movement of change aimed at lifting the educational outcomes of Māori. Let's invest \$20 million in a handful of innovative initiatives and fully fund these projects over a five-year period to ensure their success."

Everyone was stunned.

But the silence that so quickly consumed our voices was immediately embraced by the sense of intrigue following in its wake.

'Wow! That's good; that's great; that's just what is needed!' thought Jenny Kirk.

"Could the Trust really afford that kind of funding?" a trustee asked.

"Yes," Pat reassured, reporting that a healthy investment return was already on its way.

"How and where does this proposal fit with the work of the Trust?"

Mary Foy rsm questioned.

Mary was aware from firsthand experience of the significant need in Māori and Pacific communities but was compelled to exercise the critical enquiry of a trustee.

"Is it possible for the Trust to develop such an initiative within its current grant policies?" she continued. "The proposal to address the needs of youth across school years one to eight may not touch those rangatahi who most need attention. We don't know what the real need is and if we were to go ahead without reliable evidence on which to base such an initiative we might miss the real need."

All agreed that rigorous research was required.

"Should a Trust initiative be confined to the North or to the entire region?" another trustee asked.

As soon as one trustee talked about the issues facing youth in South Auckland, those familiar with West Auckland raised similar concerns. We quickly ran away with ourselves.

For a movement of change to occur, we need to engage the people who are the subject of our concern in formulating and implementing the solutions to the problems they face.

There's never much emotion at a board meeting but as the afternoon took its unexpected course huge excitement began to take hold. Pat's audacious proposal fell on fertile ground. Taking action aimed at making a substantive difference resonated strongly among this diverse crop of trustees and the newly appointed chief executive.

Sensing interest, Pat introduced the theory of change at the heart of his proposal.

"For a movement of change to occur," Pat continued, "we need to engage the people who are the subject of our concern in formulating and implementing the solutions to the problems they face."

Pat knew from his long involvement in two significant community developments in New Zealand what could happen when communities drive social change. In the case of Ngati Whatua o Orakei claims (relating to Crown breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi, New Zealand's founding document) a renaissance of great cultural, social, spiritual and economic significance was forged in less than a generation and enabled this iwi to re-establish itself as a powerhouse of Auckland. In the case of Health Care Aotearoa, a kaupapa Māori model of care was combined with Pakeha expertise in business and health development to produce significant changes in New Zealand's model of primary health care. Both developments achieved outcomes far in excess of initial expectations. How was this possible? According to Pat, each promoted *the principle of doing it for ourselves* and was championed by people willing to take risks, set their sights on the long view and exercise patience in getting there. Pat had learned that dramatic change takes time and that quickness was a relative thing.

"Active participation of communities who are the subject of particular concerns is essential in forging viable long-term solutions," Pat argued. "If we work with leaders who have a track record of working with their communities, we can expect that their fluency in their own history as well as their professional expertise will assist them and us to analyse what things are working well or not working in the education system for their youth and why. If we share the responsibility for the problem and act collectively with leaders of affected communities, their social capital insights will tell us whether or not particular projects will succeed."

As Pat sketched his vision on the whiteboard, animated discussion eschewed. Allowing people to probe his emergent thinking and co-author ideas fuelled a collective sense of vision, urgency and commitment geared to action.

"When Pat looked in my direction I felt compelled to speak," recalled Wilmason Jensen. "Our Pacific communities go straight to heart of things and when faced with major problems focus on articulating a vision. For us, ownership is a big thing. Pat's vision demanded attention. Back then I was 31 years old, the youngest person in the room and still finding my way around the Trust. But in that moment I felt Pat extend an invitation to me. 'Our Pacific youth are facing similar challenges,' I said. 'Could this initiative also seek to address the needs and aspirations of Pacific youth?'"

Trustees agreed a similar need was facing Pacific communities and that they should also be considered in any emerging educational initiative.

"As the afternoon unfolded, I felt the fear of losing control," Wilmason continued. "As trustees, we didn't know at the outset how much control we would be required to let go. I respected and valued the Trust's solid structures, systems and policies. Why change processes proven to work? Paradoxically, however, while Trust processes worked well in many respects, they were not working for our Pacific and Māori communities."

Before the close of the day, trustees not only endorsed the concept of Pat's vision but also agreed in principle to make it happen – subject to further research and the appropriate due diligence. Pat Snedden, Kevin Prime (then Trust chair) and Jennifer Gill agreed to lead its development.



A time ripe for a fresh philanthropic turn

Courageous decision making rarely occurs in a vacuum, and in this case the time was ripe for a new direction. Sometime later, Jennifer Gill reflected on the dynamics that allowed the Trust to forge a new path.

“Various factors coalesced to steer the Trust towards a more proactive, innovative and strategic philanthropy. Our trustees recognised that philanthropic benefits would flow from operating with a more strategic outlook and were keen to identify the critical issues facing the Auckland and Northland region in which the Trust operates. Strategic planning opened up a new world of possibility for the Trust, creating an exciting horizon beyond the existing ‘business as usual’ approach. A compelling and achievable vision was to drive the development of a fresh strategic direction and initiatives flowing from it.

“Our trustees also embraced the idea of harnessing greater intellectual rigor in grant making through an evidence- and outcomes-based approach; a trend not only occurring within the world of philanthropy but also across government and other sectors. Trustees wanted to ensure their decision making was responsive to contemporary challenges and not occurring in a grant-making bubble. A growing staff team showed increasing organisational capacity and signalled the Trust’s commitment to ensuring adequate resourcing for its operations.

“Significantly, the Trust had critical mass in the form of an endowment large enough to contemplate various kinds of philanthropic endeavours, including a major Trust-led initiative. Without this reservoir, it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to consider a major initiative like MPEI.”

But there was another crucial factor, without which MPEI may not have been given an opportunity to grow. The Long Bay experience, as it was known, illuminated that philanthropic risk taking was essential for progress to be made on the seemingly intractable social problems facing the region and nation.

“Traditional answers had not worked or were having little effect,” Jennifer explained. “The more usual philanthropic practice of spreading resources widely did not allow for major innovations to seed and flourish. The latter required a substantial investment up front and funding over a number of years to enable communities or organisations to implement their visions through exciting projects. Without such investment, communities and organisations would find themselves caught in the bind of constantly having to seek top-up funding to cover operational costs, which could drain project enthusiasm.”

Having worked in philanthropy for over two decades Jennifer looked for inspiration where she knew it would be found.

“New Zealand philanthropists, such as Sir Roy McKenzie and Sir Stephen Tindall, had already demonstrated their belief that a key role of philanthropy was to fund innovative solutions to social problems. These businessmen dovetailed their social commitments with their entrepreneurial business experience and investment practices to create respected, private philanthropic foundations that give away substantial funds every year. Their approaches suggested that innovation by its nature is a risk-taking endeavour that requires investing in and nurturing new ideas.

“A risk-taking approach,” Jennifer suggested, “would steer the Trust towards the higher risk end of the investment spectrum, where a shrewd businessperson would expect a greater return if the right investment decision was made. In the case of philanthropy, however, if projects did not deliver, then social, financial and reputational losses could be just as great. At the other end of the philanthropic investment spectrum lay business as usual, core grants, such as the running costs for community organisations, community building refurbishments or outdoor shade covers for early childhood centres. In pursuing new initiatives, the Trust had to consider the possible effects on, and if necessary protect, its core grant making. This funding contributes to the ‘bread and butter income’ of many worthy not-for-profit organisations in the region. The questions facing the Trust at the time touched a



powerful nerve: Could philanthropy do something to address serious social problems for the good of society? And if so, what?”

As compelling as these factors were, any one in isolation would not have been sufficient to drive a new initiative like MPEI. Taken together, however, these factors created an opportunity for a potentially cutting-edge initiative that would have the Trust undertake grant making in a different way. Pat’s proposal gave the Trust permission to strike out on an uncharted journey – but as is often the case with visionaries it came without a map to follow!

But how do we do it?

“The real challenge,” according to Jenny Kirk, “was not deciding to fund MPEI but figuring out how to go about developing it as an innovative initiative. None of us had a clue! We couldn’t simply launch out and risk substantial Trust funds, however compelling the reason. We had to be certain or as certain as we could be that the funds would make a significant difference.”

From its earliest conception, MPEI reached for social transformation. At the Trust’s helm were leaders committed to this radical purpose and now charged with finding a way to progress the vision crystallised at Long Bay.

Kevin Prime, of Ngati Hine, brought huge mana to the role of Trust chair and strong Māori and community networks waiting to be tapped.

Pat Snedden, in the role of deputy chair, was an experienced trustee who had earned the confidence and respect of his peers, and could also rely on Māori connections through his work with Ngati Whatua.

Jennifer Gill, the Trust’s new chief executive, was eager to work with trustees to forge philanthropic innovation while maintaining the Trust’s core funding programmes. Jennifer strongly believed that a key role of philanthropy was to provide the venture capital of social change. Trustees embraced this notion and through MPEI would seek actively to test its merits.

Kevin, Pat and Jennifer relished the challenge of finding a way to co-design and co-develop a major educational initiative with the most affected communities in the region, and were prepared to wrestle with its inherent uncertainties.

“In the not too distant future,” Jennifer Gill recalled, “we expected to provide trustees with sufficient information to enable them to make a properly informed decision. There were no givens, except the certainty that the Trust didn’t know all the answers. In the early stages, we had no idea what kind of projects might be funded through the emerging initiative or where they would be situated within the Trust’s geographic boundaries.

“We resolved to undertake an organic process, even if it led us into a cul-de-sac with nothing to show for our enterprise. We were determined to evaluate each step of the journey and put ourselves on the line. We anticipated some leaders of affected communities would be willing to walk the journey with us and would likely shape the final decision making, but how this would happen was yet to be conceived. Ultimately, trustees would have the legal responsibility for any decisions made but, in our minds, there was ample opportunity to create a process that would allow interested others with valuable expertise to shape Trust decision making.”

The questions facing the Trust touched a powerful nerve: Could philanthropy do something to address serious problems for the good of society? And if so, what?

Why a focus on education and on Māori and Pacific youth?

Why education? Why not health or housing or unemployment?

The Trust had a 20-year history of engagement with the education sector. It made practical sense to build on this history and harness existing relationships.

“Also, we were drawn to the beauty of simplicity in targeting a central determinant of wellbeing that in turn would impact on many other aspects of everyday life,” Jennifer Gill recalled. “The Long Bay experience had touched a nerve. Our trustees were aware of the worrying implications of educational underachievement. Arguably such implications justified, if not demanded, taking action.”

Across the nation, many community leaders, politicians, health professionals, researchers, academics, Māori and members of iwi, hapu and whanau, and Pacific Island communities were deeply concerned about the educational underachievement of Māori and Pacific youth. Many recognised its wide-ranging impacts on New Zealand society and economy. Failing to address the problem was likely to condemn future generations of Māori and Pacific communities to an unskilled underclass; to blight economic progress; hinder attempts to strengthen social cohesion, national identity and unity, and harm New Zealand’s international reputation. In short, educational achievement was critical not only for the wellbeing and prosperity of Māori and Pacific Island communities but also for our region and nation.

An examination of hard facts and academic evidence proved beyond doubt that the issue of educational underachievement was not only critical for Māori and Pacific communities but also for the nation. Government statisticians had already projected that over the next couple of decades at least one million people in New Zealand were likely to be aged under 15 years and identifying as either Māori or Pacific Island – statistics already occurring in South Auckland. And these youth were trailing behind others educationally.

In 2007, just over 80 percent of Māori boys in Whangarei (Northland’s largest city) failed level one of New Zealand’s National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA). Health research reiterated the impact of educational achievement – or lack of it. Paediatric research concluded that education was pivotal to improving health outcomes in Pacific Island communities. Improving health outcomes required raising the level of family income which, in turn, required raising the levels of educational achievement. A higher family income would help to diminish the incidence of overcrowded housing which, in turn, would reduce the incidence of illnesses attributed to such living conditions.

Based on the evidence, Pat’s original proposal morphed into a Māori *and* Pacific education initiative for the region.

“Drawn on ethnic lines, our fledging initiative needed a convincing reply to this question –Why should any group in society be treated differently from others and, in this case, why do Māori and Pacific youth deserve special treatment?” said Pat. “Looking back, our thinking became clearer over time as we faced facts and engaged with Māori and Pacific academic and community leaders.”

These prominent leaders gave a rationale for special treatment that was imbued with poignant simplicity, deep intelligence and collective vision.

“We want what you have,” they replied. “People at university, people with high paying jobs, people who are successful in their life careers whatever their field, people confident about themselves and their culture. How come the state education system works for most people in the population but not for our Māori and Pacific peoples?”

These prominent leaders, and others who would later submit applications, also revealed that, “At school, no matter what the prevailing philosophy, a Māori and Pacific Island child often feels like a poor cousin to his Pakeha mates. The starting deficiencies become magnified the further on you go in the school process. But why is this? What ingredients are missing for our youth?”



A strategy to engage affected communities in defining the solutions

This rationale prompted trustees and staff to ask more questions.

In securing our prosperity as a nation, why wouldn't New Zealand seek actively to invest in its future workforce and population? Why wouldn't the Trust make a sizeable investment? What difference could we make in tackling the significant issue of educational underachievement in Māori and Pacific communities? How could we develop an initiative that would not have someone else tell Māori and Pacific communities how to do things but rather create an opportunity for them to determine the solutions?

The strategy to invite members of the 'host' communities to participate in designing possible solutions contained multiple meanings.

"The notion of host communities," Pat later explained, "implicated the ethic of hospitality or manaakitanga at work in our evolving collaborative enterprise. It positioned the subjects of our concern as the hosts, thereby creating an opportunity for them to participate actively in determining a way forward; one which allowed for solutions to arise authentically from within their communities. When we, the Trust, stepped into such communities we could confidently argue, 'This initiative is being developed by people like you'. This approach also acknowledged at the outset that the subjects of our concern were not only individuals or whanau but also members of communities whose particular histories, identities, cultural values, knowledge and ways of doing things were likely to be implicated in the achievement of successful educational outcomes.

"We also recognised," Pat said, "that some people can do some things but are prohibited from doing other things because of the asymmetry and workings of power. To achieve progress and restore a sense of empowerment within their communities, our approach had to allow for the legitimate aspirations of participants; in particular, the things they wanted changed. Our intention was to build a wedge into the problem and create an entry point for the affected communities by situating them as agents of change and empowering them to act with a meaningful resource. We believed that whakawhanaungatanga would illuminate an agreed kaupapa leading to a shared moemoea that people would be willing to get behind and work towards."

We believed that whakawhanaungatanga (relating well to others) would illuminate an agreed kaupapa (purpose) leading to a shared moemoea (vision) that people would be willing to get behind and work towards.

Clarifying parameters

Trustees agreed to 'ring-fence' substantial funds to demonstrate seriousness of purpose and ensure that the Trust's financial commitment to MPEI would not depreciate in changing economic circumstances. Ring-fencing funds told Māori and Pacific communities: 'Your interests count in this matter and won't be shaved because of difficulties the Trust might experience elsewhere'.

This radical decision was soon tested by an international recession. When the economic downturn began to hit hard and core funding streams were threatened by stock market losses, animated conversations took place at the Trust's board table.

Again trustees and staff probed searching questions: Was it appropriate to forge ahead with MPEI? Is this initiative the best use of money right now? Is an economic downturn the right time for innovation?

"Trustees were finally persuaded by the argument that in hard times innovation is needed more than ever," reflected Jennifer Gill. "MPEI sparked a sense of promise in troubling economic times and if not pursued could suggest an acceptance of poor educational outcomes for Māori and Pacific youth."

MPEI would focus on community innovation, creating new mechanisms that could add to or challenge existing approaches without disregarding the efforts of the state education system. It would fund a small number of groups who might not otherwise have had an opportunity to implement their visions; community ownership of and support for their initiatives would encourage active participation and project sustainability.

While only a handful of initiatives would be funded, trustees and staff held the hope that MPEI projects would not only prove effective and beneficial to participants but also carry the potential to be scaled up or become a model for replication elsewhere. Trustees and staff hoped that successful MPEI projects would, in time, become financially sustainable by earning the support of government and other philanthropic organisations, or by other means.

The extent to which Māori and Pacific peoples had missed out on educational achievement ruled out any possibility that a turnaround could happen in a few short years. Therefore, in developing MPEI, the Trust took the view that, “We will support those who will be the fore-runners for testing ideas aimed at influencing educational outcomes over the next 15 years”.

“In taking up the long view, we accepted that the people making the decisions wouldn’t be around to see their fruition, except at a distance,” said Pat Snedden. “We also agreed not to settle for a solution because it was already available. Instead, we should reach for innovation and decline applications that did not meet the desired threshold.”

The Trust eventually set a limit of five-year funding. Why five years? Educational underachievement was a consequence of generations of difficulty that would have to be worked through carefully to achieve lasting change. In Aotearoa New Zealand the critical pre-school period spans five years, while further down the track a young person journeys through high school over a five year period.

But another reason influenced the proposed five year time span. Trustees are appointed by the government for a four-year term. The trustees around the table felt they couldn’t commit much beyond a single term of appointment, on the basis that the next group of trustees might want to pursue other grant-making initiatives and they should have the opportunity to do so. The current crop also agreed they should see the grant-making process through and take full responsibility for it.

Thus the Trust set out to engage members of Māori and Pacific communities in developing this new philanthropic initiative.

“A goldmine of possibility lay before us,” Pat Snedden recalled. “A cynical approach would not produce substantive changes in educational achievement levels within Māori and Pacific communities. Instead, we had to animate people to the possibilities that would excite their interest and drive their commitment to collective action. The challenge was to leave the opportunity open for as long as possible, until it was caught. We also had to keep people in the tent; we had to prove we were match-fit for the conversation we were inviting Māori and Pacific leaders to have with us.”



2





Journeying together through a parallel process

Getting started

The journey of engagement began by reaching into Māori communities.

At a Trust Māori strategy meeting Pat encouraged trustees and staff to deliberate on how the Trust could work with knowledgeable members of affected communities to orchestrate a major improvement in the educational outcomes of Māori.

“What will be the next kohanga reo movement,” Pat challenged, “and who can lead us in that direction? Thinking about what kohanga reo has achieved over the past two decades, what is the next best endeavour – the silver bullet – that can turn a local inspiration into a national movement and transform the existing educational underachievement of Māori? And who are the people we ought to invite to go on the journey with us?”

We, trustees and staff, named Māori community leaders, professionals and academics we knew personally or knew of, who were working in the field of education. Enthusiasm grew with each name called, and brought to mind the grandmothers who started kohanga reo in their garages and in the whare of their marae.

“Do you think we could invite people working on the ground, such as frontline workers and mums whose children have experienced kura kaupapa?” ventured Moi Becroft, a new staff member.

Trustees agreed.

While some were carried away by the excitement of possibility, others were more cautious.

“Māori communities have been consulted enough and should simply be resourced to do what they are already doing,” voiced a trustee.

“Perhaps the severity of the problem and its implications requires a fresh impulse,” another offered.

Meanwhile, a slew of questions were unravelling in the minds of staff, who were considering what this conversation might mean for them, especially for their workloads, as well as for the Trust. Was this vision, the vision of one person or was it an emerging vision for the Trust as a whole? Is this the core business of a philanthropic trust? Has the Trust got the capacity to resource such an initiative? Hasn't the Trust already got enough grant-making activities to oversee and manage?


Visionaries, after all, are known for creating work for others.

A new way of doing things

“I cannot emphasise enough how un-designed the initiative was in the early days,” Pat Snedden later observed. “We were working within the frame of uncertainty that inevitably marks any quest for social transformation. Community development initiatives often require enormous leaps at the front end. To find a way forward you must put your faith and trust in people, and expect to shape the journey with them as you go along together.”

The Trust needed diverse perspectives to nourish this collective enterprise, and starting out trustees and staff were challenged to value the professional and broader life experiences that each brought to MPEL.

“I had only been in my role at the Trust for a couple of months,” Moi Becroft recalled later, “and was not yet certain when to speak in the company of trustees. Pat led the way, offering everyone opportunities to speak. His invitation told me he valued our diverse and grounded perspectives. I was able to contribute not only in the context of my new role but also as a person of Māori descent and as someone who had worked in the community for many years. I felt a huge sense of freedom and was challenged, along with others, to step up to what we as a philanthropic organisation could do to make a real difference. None of us knew what the initiative would be, but I was eager



to embrace the prospect of being privy to the Trust's conversations with highly regarded authorities on Māori education. I knew I had much to learn, but I also felt terrified!"

As often happens in transformational endeavours, courage soon got the better of terror, and Moi went on to become a pivotal role player in MPEI as the project manager.

In the world of philanthropy, the usual trade route for exploring new initiatives is to commission a respected academic or research institute to study the issue of concern and produce a substantial report, with an executive summary and key recommendations based on evidence. Trustees consider the findings, decide on priorities and delegate staff to implement initiatives that might require shoulder tapping or commissioning an organisation to take up the challenges presented in the report.

While as a Trust we embraced the value of academic rigor and input, we veered off this well-worn philanthropic highway. The approach emerging through MPEI was more akin to kaupapa Māori protocols, which bring authorities together to discuss matters of concern and arrive at shared conclusions about what could be done and by whom.

"Let's bring together the authorities on this matter to tell us what ought to be done and then let's do it!" said Pat, inviting others to explore an unsealed road.

"Pat's approach was direct, seemingly straightforward and decisive," recalled Moi Becroft. "It also tested everyone's willingness to harness the power within our reach to achieve important purposes. We had no idea at the time that this new approach would require over three years of intensive preparatory work."

Introducing Māori protocols and practices into the life of the Trust

When staff confronted the challenge of implementing the emerging vision they quickly realised the considerable challenge Pat had laid at their feet.

"We needed to put first things first," said Jennifer Gill. "The Trust had long recognised a gap in addressing tikanga Māori in its organisational life and it was time to do something about it. Some efforts had already begun and others were to follow."

After becoming a trustee in 2001, Kevin Prime performed the role and responsibilities of a kaumatua when called upon (Prime and Hancock, 2010). Attending his first annual general meeting of the Trust at Waitangi, Kevin was asked by Judith Bassett, the Trust's then chair, to conduct the mihi. Tai Tokerau elders responded, welcoming everyone to the gathering and its conversation.

Appointed Trust chair in 2003, Kevin continued to lead by example. In respect of Māori protocols, he began meetings with karakia, extended mihi to every Māori group on their arrival, and wove tikanga Māori into every hui, including the farewell of trustees and staff, annual meetings and gatherings with elected officials.

When the Trust hosted the National Conference of Community Trusts in February 2005, the proceedings began with a powhiri at Orakei Marae. The marae experience offered the warm embrace of manaakitanga coupled with the stirring storytelling of the meeting house. This experience renewed the emphasis on relationship building with Māori and paved the way for the inclusion of tikanga Māori at future conferences and MPEI hui.

With MPEI on the horizon the Trust stepped up its commitment. Recognising that the Māori language was a national language of Aotearoa New Zealand, the Trust engaged a te reo Māori teacher with Tuhoe affiliations to teach staff how to pronounce Māori vowels correctly, use common greetings and waiata. Nearly all the staff learnt how to introduce themselves in te reo Māori and deliver a small mihi, and the non-Māori men developed particular skill at mihimihi for different Trust forums. Looking back, these were major changes for a Pakeha organisation, which MPEI reference groups and selection committees later noted.

Kevin Prime encouraged the use of te reo Māori and English, and when it was helpful to do so would translate the commentary so all would understand. "The active use of both languages allowed participants to operate in their first language. A bi-lingual approach encouraged people to feel comfortable and helped to ensure that they were able to understand and contribute fully to the proceedings," he later explained.



The importance of observing Māori protocol

*Pat Snedden, former trustee
and deputy chair of ASB Community Trust*

During the 2005 National Conference of Community Trusts, one incident sticks in my mind and points to the importance of observing Māori protocol.

About 200 people gathered at Orakei Marae for dinner, followed by an orientation programme. A kapa haka performance was planned, but at the last minute an unforeseen occurrence prevented their display. Over dinner, I found myself talking with Sir Hugh Kawharu, who was acting in his capacity as a kaumatua of the marae. Sir Hugh suggested that the conference participants gather in the meeting house after dinner.

“We’ll talk to them,” he proposed. Immediately I sensed what was coming. “About what?” I questioned. “About what we know,” Sir Hugh continued, and without batting an eyelid he laid out the evening’s programme. “You can talk about Bastion Point and I’ll talk about the Treaty.”

Ngati Whatua had given me permission to speak on such matters before, and so it happened again that I found myself in front of 200 guests in the Orakei meeting house, giving a spontaneous dissertation on the formation of Auckland and the place of Ngati Whatua in its establishment. This linked to the Treaty process and my understanding of it, and led inevitably to the despair of 130 years of dispossession that culminated in the occupation of Bastion Point and eventually a claim to the Waitangi Tribunal.

Sir Hugh followed my dissertation with a 40-minute appraisal of the Treaty of Waitangi. The spell-binding account could only have been delivered by this giant among New Zealand’s academics, who was also the person whose scholarship produced the Māori and English translations of the Treaty, now accepted by iwi and academics across the country as well as by the Crown and the courts.

As the day drew to a close, I found myself in a bus travelling back to the hotel with other conference guests, whom if asked would likely have agreed ‘This evening was a very special occasion’.

I cannot stress enough the poignancy and timing of this event. It took place not long after Don Brash, then leader of the opposition National Party, delivered his infamous speech at Orewa. A number of conference participants would likely have leaned sympathetically in favour of Dr Brash’s point of view on a number of issues, including his interpretation of the Treaty and Māori concerns. But a significant number of attendees were Māori, whose riveted attention helped to create an audience of keen listeners.

Kevin’s leadership combined with the abundant manaakitanga of Ngati Whatua to model a different way of doing things, and at the same time helped to equip people with another world view. After a wonderful welcome onto the marae, a delicious meal and 90 minutes of intimate conversation in the meeting house many hearts and minds turned. People suddenly understood the other side of the story, through a telling interpretation of New Zealand’s history and its future from a Pakeha and a Māori perspective.

With this intellectual leap, a whole emotional shift occurred. Many non-Māori participants felt a surge of empathy, enabling them to move from a position of suspicion towards Māori to standing on common ground with Māori. This development was not driven by ideology. Rather, at Orakei, people were captured by the generous and warm hospitality mediated by a bicultural conversation. Everything was done in a manner that showed another dimension of manaakitanga. Such was this wonderfully pervading and ever-gracious manaaki that hearts opened to things Māori. Trustees saw Kevin operate as a leader who knew exactly what he was doing and – if they didn’t already know it – they realised it was an honour to stand with him. Another consequence was that at future community trust conferences the active participation of local marae became the norm.



The first hui

In November 2006, a diverse mix of over 30 Māori responded to the Trust's invitation to attend the first MPEI hui. The group included a deputy principal from Kaitaia, a community leader from Moerewa, a youth worker from the Kaipara Harbour area and national champions of Māori language. A handful of scholars were invited, recognising their mana and expertise in Māori education.

The hui began with a powhiri; the first ever powhiri held to welcome such visitors to Allendale House, the home of the Trust, in its 19-year history. It was a standout event, with an impressive collection of people.

"We welcomed them on and they answered us; and then the kaupapa was laid out," recalled Waitai Petera, a former trustee with tribal affiliations to Northland's Te Aupouri and Ngati Kuri. "In our invitation, we had given them the briefest of briefs and here they all were sitting in front of us; wide-eyed with anticipation and with big smiles on their faces. I would've loved to have known what many of them were thinking. The expressions on their faces suggested disbelief, as if to say, 'Am I hearing right?' Two of my Northland colleagues, Kelvin Davis, who later became a member of parliament, and John Paitai, who was deputy principal of Kaitaia College, told me afterwards they were blown away by the kaupapa and the idea of what we could achieve together.

"For me, and perhaps for some others," Waitai continued, "a sense of awe and anticipation continues to linger from that powhiri. There was a sense of 'wow', which has remained at the heart of MPEI. No-one was there for themselves or speaking only for his or her particular area. Instead, contributors to MPEI were of the highest calibre and embraced the diversity in one another. From that hui, the Māori Reference Group was selected. The powhiri started things off in a good way, and Māori believe if you start in a good way then chances are you will end things in a good way."

Establishing reference groups

The decision to forge a Māori and Pacific initiative led to the development of a parallel process with two reference groups, one focusing on the needs, interests and aspirations of Māori communities and the other focusing on the needs, interests and aspirations of Pacific communities.

Reference groups deliberated on the depth, breadth and characteristics of the problem of educational underachievement and considered how MPEI could make a difference.


The groups met for half a day on a bimonthly basis for more than a year to establish the terms of reference, vision, mission and principles for MPEI.

Initially, reference group members came to support the kaupapa of MPEI and wanted to show their appreciation. After attending a couple of hui on an unpaid basis, members were offered remuneration for meetings at the same level as trustees, although a number chose not to accept the fees.

A staff secretariat made regular reports to reference group meetings and reported their minutes. Initially, however, there was no set way for doing this.

"The gist of such conversations was difficult to capture and open to interpretation," recalled Keri-Anne Wikitera, an MPEI research adviser/project administrator. "Eventually things were brought into line with other Trust processes to ensure that MPEI remained on track. Reporting, for example, followed the format and procedures of reports to subcommittees of the Trust Board. The reference groups and later the selection committees made decisions that were signed off by the Trust. Everyone agreed that MPEI grant-making processes had to be transparent, robust and efficient; and the structure and processes put in place helped to achieve this outcome."

In establishing reference groups, the Trust did not aim for representation. Identifying as Māori or Pacific would give first rights of entry into the conversation, but educational and community leadership was needed to guide this initiative.



Instead, the Trust sought to engage those who had dedicated their lives and careers to the field of education or to their communities, on the basis that they could offer educational expertise and the mana to engage the interest of their communities.

In some respects the Trust was taking a calculated risk, but at its helm were experienced leaders who knew that mana leaves behind tracks, along which others are prepared to travel.

“If the initiative failed for whatever reason, then the Trust’s reputation could be harmed, not only within Māori and Pacific communities but also among the wider community,” reflected Pat Snedden. “We therefore needed recognised leaders, such as Associate Professor Manuka Henare and Professor Michael Walker, who were willing to own and put their name to the initiative, to help mitigate that risk.”

Trustees and staff identified and accessed existing connections, forged new networks and developed processes to establish and maintain relationships. They were able to tap networks in a way that allowed people to, more or less, self-select themselves in or out, all the while gently encouraging these esteemed Māori and Pacific leaders to climb on board for the ride. Without such networks, the Trust would have had to hire people to make critical connections on its behalf.

The Trust’s approach to prospective members of the reference groups was honest and direct.

“We have an idea,” Pat Snedden announced to prospective members, “but no idea where it will go. We believe the opportunity to explore the idea with us is worth your time because we expect that the resulting initiative will be big and bold, which we hope will produce significant benefits for your communities and our nation. You have the opportunity to not only participate in shaping the conversation but also in deciding the outcomes. The stark performance of Māori and Pacific achievement requires a hard-headed approach to shift and change current realities. What ideas do you have that will make the most efficient use of Trust money and accelerate achievement levels in your communities? How do we do things differently so as to engage and empower your communities to lead their/this development? If this is the start, what would be the thing that brings you back to the table so we can not only keep the conversation going but work together to take it somewhere?”

Looking back, we faced a significant challenge in developing MPEI. Could we create a relationship with reference group members so that those with control of the resource had complete confidence in those with the social capital insight and expertise on the subject? Our governance as trustees had to be flexible enough to ensure informed decision making but porous enough to allow ideas to be pushed around and tested from different angles.

Kristen Kohere-Soutar, a trustee with Ngati Porou affiliations, believed it was both timely and brave of the Trust to open up decision making at a certain level to Māori and Pacific contributors. “The Trust sought from the outset to establish a working partnership with members of the reference groups that would enable them to shape the development of the MPEI and their role in it. The goodwill generated through this approach encouraged members to get in behind MPEI and when the reference groups got under way, there was good momentum and emotion, indicating a strong sense of shared commitment among the members. MPEI became seen by all as a blue skies opportunity.”

The suspicion felt by members of the Māori Reference Group gradually gave way to a sense of trust. Members warmed to the authenticity of the Trust's proposal and its invitation 'to come up with something'.

The Māori Reference Group

The Trust established a Māori Reference Group in November 2006. The membership was comprised of trustees; Kristen Kohere-Soutar (chair), Kevin Prime, Pat Snedden, Waitai Petera and Mary Foy rsm. They were joined by Dr Ngapo Wehi, Associate Professor (later Professor) Elizabeth McKinley, Associate Professor Manuka Henare, Rangimarie Hunia, Pita Tipene, Kelvin Davis and Frank Leadley. Others also made valuable contributions in the beginning stages, including; Tui Ah Loo, Professor Pat Hohepa, Josie Keelan, Wayne Knox, Shirley Maihi, John Paitai, Kim Penetito, Dr Wally Penetito, Professor Dame Anne Salmond, Dr Pita Sharples and Professor Michael Walker.

The prestigious presence of Māori Reference Group members had a significant impact on everyone in Allendale House. It encouraged an openness to learn more about things Māori and make organisational changes to ensure appropriate cultural practices, where appropriate.

The Trust spared no expense in getting people together, at times flying members in and out of Auckland for meetings and providing accommodation.

“In practice, some people turned up uninvited and some of those invited never came back, while others joined along the way,” recalled Moi Becroft. “In the end, it seemed as if ‘the right people’ had found their way to the reference group. A working party structure also emerged, consisting of about five members. The working party met in between reference group meetings to progress the work programme, such as developing a vision statement, and feedback recommendations for all to consider and decide. While there was some drop off in membership as time went on, this was not due to a lack of interest on their part but rather because of their busy lives and many interests.”

Initially members were reserved and there was a distinct air of suspicion.

“Some bought into MPEI right from the start and never doubted the Trust’s sincerity. I saw a huge opportunity and went for it,” recalled Kelvin Davis. “Others felt distrust and were more guarded. ‘Where are the fishhooks?’ they murmured. ‘What’s the catch?’ ‘Is the Trust really inviting us to tell it how to spend its money?’”

Kevin Prime could always be relied on to leaven suspicion with humility and a straightforward approach.

“The money is already sitting in an account waiting to be spent,” Kevin said in an early meeting. “This opportunity is not based on a promise to commit money that is coming from somewhere. We want to work with you to decide where the money should go. Here’s our chance to think together and make some impact on the world.”

While exercising utmost respect for different points of view, Kevin’s skilled interventions went straight to the point, encouraging people to stand together and proceed from there.

“The cautious approach of reference group members was grounded in long experiences of the one-way consultation processes of government departments,” observed Keri-Anne Wikitera. “The suspicion felt by members of the Māori Reference Group gradually gave way to a sense of trust. Members warmed to the authenticity of the Trust’s proposal and its invitation ‘to come up with something’. Their expertise was valued and they were being given the opportunity to shape the direction of this new initiative. A blank slate was on offer; but not for a small project. Rather, it represented a sizeable putea that allowed for something big to emerge. Members were convinced of the integrity in the process; that they would be able to grow the initiative themselves and not be constrained by a broader political agenda. Poignantly, it seemed to me, innovation was ignited only when this sense of trust was established.”



“Importantly, we didn’t rush things,” recalled Associate Professor Manuka Henare. “Our meetings were well facilitated by Trust representatives and the purpose was clear. With MPEI there were no time limits. Instead, we set a firm foundation, agreeing that ‘if you join the journey, you stay in the conversation’, and ‘collectively we will keep going, going, going, until we get it right’.

“People spoke with passion and intelligence, never argumentatively,” he continued. “Over time we came to know each other well and to feel an implicit trust in the process. It was inevitable that someone would miss an occasional meeting due to other commitments, but we could rely on one another to ensure the views of those absent were taken into account. When we gathered we reviewed where our discussions had left off at a previous meeting. This enabled those who weren’t at that meeting to immediately join in, so that everyone could move on together from the same place.

“The more we met, the more we engaged in a dialogue of equals. Putting power dynamics to one side, we relished the opportunity to discuss our differences and add to the ideas already sitting on the mat.”

During high velocity meetings the atmosphere was electric. Deep thinkers wrestled with complex ideas and canvassed different points of view. The chair created an environment where all could speak and things were allowed to take their course.

“Even though there were professors at the table, everyone was encouraged to speak,” recalled Waitai Petera. “At times it was hard to reach consensus but we managed to achieve agreement because everyone had trust in each other; everyone wanted the best for our people.”

Sitting around the reference group table, we all agreed that ‘If nothing changes, nothing changes’. We were a large and diverse group with somewhat different views and weighty topics to consider. We tried hard to be broad and inclusive in our approach, and as a consequence we often went round in circles. We also had to manage inconsistent attendance at meetings, which meant that different people came to each reference group meeting. At times we played catch up to inform people about matters discussed in their absence at previous meetings.

“Some members of the Māori Reference Group had a specific idea in mind when we went looking for a silver bullet to overcome the problems of educational underachievement,” recalled Kristen Kohere-Soutar. “We were looking for smart, Māori-driven solutions at the sharp end of Māori development. My attitude going into MPEI was this: ‘If we are serious in our intent to address the gap in educational achievement, then let’s be brave enough to not only step into it but also to do it well’.”

It was a tough challenge. We needed time for ideas to ‘gel’ and to forge collective thinking. We could not escape our geographical location, whakapapa links and community networks. As we got deeper into discussions we encountered conflicts of interests. We all tried very hard to be as impartial as possible, to do the job as well as we could and to be fair to all applicants. In the end we relied heavily on a robust decision-making process, professional integrity and principles to guide action. Selection committees later faced similar challenges.


Kaumatua Dr Ngapo Wehi of Ngati Kahununu, fluent in te reo, a strong speaker on marae, an expert in haka, renowned for his contributions to kapa haka and the use of weapons and, most importantly, a good human being, was faithful in attending our reference group meetings. While capable of speaking his mind, he rarely spoke.

“Matua,” Pat Snedden would ask respectfully, “have you got anything to add to our korero?”

“No,” Matua would reply.

“His quiet presence reminded us all of the outcomes we were searching for; in particular, confident Māori raised as children to be Māori and to be successful in life whatever path they choose,” recalled Pita Tipene, a member of the Māori Reference Group. “‘What makes a Māori a Māori?’ his silence echoed. ‘Without those

“What makes a Māori a Māori?’ his silence echoed. ‘Without those characteristics, we become brown Pakeha, which was the purpose of assimilationist policies underpinning our state education system’.”



characteristics, we become brown Pakeha, which was the purpose of assimilationist policies underpinning our state education system’.”

“Matua acted as a kind of witness to our proceedings,” recalled Moi Becroft, “and helped to reassure us that from a cultural perspective we were on track. We knew if we went down a path we shouldn’t have been exploring, he would tell us. His presence created a sense of safety for us all and reminded us constantly of the spiritual realm and the ancestors living among us. I felt a deep sense of happiness when he was among us and always noticed when he was absent. He let us know, one way or another however, that he was committed to being on the journey with us.”

The Pacific Reference Group

The Pacific Reference Group was established after the Māori Reference Group, in April 2007. The group was comprised of trustees; Wilmason Jensen (chair), Soana Pamaka, Mary Foy rsm and Jenny Kirk. They were joined by Tuiataga Faafua Leavasa-Tautolo, Linda Aumua, Pila Fatu, Peta Si’ulepa, Nua Silipa and Toleafoa Sina Aiolupotea-Aiono. Others who made a valuable contribution in the beginning stages were Alfred Ngaro, Hamish Crooks, Pefi Kingi, Tony Kolose, Dr Stuart Middleton and John Tuisamoa. Efeso Collins also contributed as a reference group member for a while, before stepping aside to take up a staff role as an MPEI research adviser/project administrator.

Pacific members either knew each other personally or knew of one another, and relished the opportunity to work together.

Reaching into various Pacific Island communities and across sectors, our networks ensured a range of perspectives were canvassed during our discussions. We came from different communities, age groups and professional backgrounds. Women and men sat together around the table and there were constant references to the realities of being New Zealand born or Pacific Island born, a distinction which can sometimes be very important depending on what it means for people personally or for their families and communities. We had diverse religious affiliations, and spirituality surfaced in our discussions a number of times. ‘What church group do they come from?’ we asked ourselves. Such connections could have a very important impact on how discussions developed.

Notwithstanding captive interest, an air of suspicion also marked the early engagement of these Pacific leaders.

“When I sat down at the table, I was prepared for battle,” Linda Aumua said, recalling her first encounter. “I had been engaged in the education sector for 27 years and I came in with my antennae up, ready to fire questions at the Trust. Who are you and what do you want with my community? Where were you 27 years ago and why the sudden interest? Why are you concerned about the educational achievement of our people? What right do you have to come to our communities? What is the history of the Trust and where did its money come from? Which Pacific people are you working with? Most importantly I wanted to know, where did our Pacific peoples come into the process?”


“Here’s the deal,” Pat Snedden reiterated when suspicion was raised. “You are here to give advice and we will take your advice but you have to demonstrate to us that you have determined a robust approach to dealing with the problem of educational underachievement within your communities.”

During breaks and standing in the car park after meetings, members of the Pacific Reference Group quizzed one another.

“So, what do you reckon? Is this for real?”

“Is the Trust really going to leave the final recommendations to us?”

Aware of a need for Trust leadership, Jennifer Gill joined the discussions when further clarity was required.



“How long is this process?” someone asked.

“We will take as long as it needs to get to the place where you’re satisfied with the outcome,” she replied.

‘Okay, we’ll see,’ Efeso thought, but afterwards told a friend: “I don’t think this is for real”.

On one occasion, Jennifer Gill drew the Trust’s organisational structure on the whiteboard to show where the reference group was placed. In explaining the diagram Jennifer confirmed what other Trust representatives had already reiterated.

“We’re at the starting point,” Jennifer said. “Nothing is set in stone or yet constructed. There’s no advice to follow, just this question: Here we have this fund, how shall we do this?”

“When I saw Jennifer’s drawing I realised how influential the reference groups were,” Linda Aumua recalled. “They are serious,” I thought.

“In all my years of experience no-one had ever asked that question before,” she explained. “Usually in consultation processes, the approach and desired outcomes were already largely determined before any effort had been made to pull in Pacific people to see what they thought. By comparison, the Trust’s approach was very new and raw. Trustees and staff had done nothing apart from making a major decision to create a substantial fund to support projects aimed at lifting the educational achievement of our people. Looking back, Trust representatives were patient in replying to my provocative questions; their replies brought me into the history of the organisation and into the beginnings of MPEI with a feeling of peace.”


“There was a lot riding on our involvement,” Efeso later explained. “Sitting around the table, we knew that if things didn’t go the way we hoped our people would challenge us directly: ‘You were on that committee; how did you let this happen?’ For me, the question was one of integrity: If I get involved in MPEI, will I be able to stand up in church in front of my people and hold my head high? It took a long time to settle in my heart that the trustees and staff were trustworthy and genuine in their desire to make a difference for our peoples. I felt the strong pull to resist the opportunity because of the baggage of previous consultations. I also felt a deep desire to commit myself to it, to open the door for our people.”

As chair, Wilmason Jensen had other concerns on his mind.

“How would our Pacific communities, and the ways we go about things, be viewed by some trustees?” he considered. “Pacific communities do things differently. We like to keep discussion open to allow for wide-ranging points of view to be expressed on the basis that, whatever is your view, is your view. The leader or facilitator of the discussion sums up by seeking to articulate a shared view or to name ground upon which all can stand. This approach is not regarded as a process of lobbying but rather a process of shared reflection and understanding.

“I feared other trustees would not understand or respect the gems in this process, and that miscommunication would result,” he later recalled. “I also feared other trustees would not fully appreciate the pragmatism of our communities. This pragmatism is grounded in a deep understanding of the complex problems facing our people; problems within family and community environments as well as at a societal level; problems that go beyond a tally of social statistics.

“But I was surprised. The reactions of trustees showed their willingness to respect different ways of doing things, to consider other points of view and, most importantly, to listen to their Pacific colleagues.”



Suspicion eventually gave way to trust, and members of the Pacific Reference Group agreed to follow the vision of MPEI.

In taking up the challenge that lay before them, everyone recognised the unique status of Māori and a fundamental respect for tangata whenua permeated the work of the group.

“Our Pacific peoples take genealogy very seriously and we show great respect towards those who are hosting us,” explained Wilmason. “This cultural understanding and practice is deeply ingrained in the way of life of our peoples. In our minds we thought, ‘Māori are the tangata whenua. This is their land. They have a long history of injustice with which to contend. We are not the indigenous peoples of this country. We are here because of their manaakitanga. Therefore, let’s show respect for their special standing in this country. Let Māori take the lead and show the way forward. We don’t want to be seen to be competing against them in developing MPEI. Let’s play the role of little brother or sister and show them the respect that we would show towards our big brother or sister. Besides, they may have started before us, but we’ll catch up!’”

Once the Pacific Reference Group was under way, we all looked forward to the combustion of commitments, energies and ideas that characterised our meetings. Our conversation was constantly bubbling, and while the focus of discussion was always seriously considered, we didn’t take ourselves too seriously. We appreciated the wisdom and fun derived from our meetings.

We were very keen to be involved in the process and took a broad-minded approach. What stood out for us was that our people were finally able to have their say, knowing that others were listening. We took seriously that we were speaking for our people. We live among our people in our local communities and know their struggles. We didn’t see ourselves as being any different from the people we were striving to speak for. We recognised, however, that being a reference group member gave us new rights: Here’s our chance to turn a long-held dream of our people for educational achievement into a reality. Let’s die trying to make a difference. We accepted that we had no ready answers and felt the need to open our minds to new ideas.

With our own people at the decision-making table, MPEI offered new prospects for our children. We knew that Pacific Island parents may not walk their children to and through the front gates of their child’s school to the classroom because they feel embarrassed about not being able to speak English very well. Can we get them to and through the school gates, beginning with kindergarten and preschool? And if so, how? we asked ourselves. In our minds the questions had to be that basic if MPEI was to make a difference.

A journey of personal transformation

Wilmason Jensen, former trustee and chair of the Pacific Reference Group and Pacific Selection Committee

My membership on the Māori Reference Group opened my eyes to new ways of thinking about educational underachievement. The first trigger to changing my point of view was listening to highly esteemed members of the Māori Reference Group talking about the effects of culture on a young person's self-esteem and how this, in turn, affects a young person's ability to achieve.

As a Samoan child, raised in Samoa, I was deeply steeped in my culture. I knew who I was; my self-identity and esteem as a Samoan were intact. My father is a respected chief, and growing up in our village I knew I was secure in a strong sense of culture. I came to New Zealand for schooling. My parents were hugely supportive, driving us into education and encouraging us to succeed. The values of my family connected strongly with the values I encountered at Kings College, where I attended secondary school on a music scholarship.

I often recall my interview at Kings College, during which the principal said to me: "To be in this environment you must be prepared to work hard and strive to succeed. The opportunity is yours; don't screw it up!" My five years at Kings College not only shaped my life but also reinforced the strong tradition of achievement in my family. It occurred to me when listening to my Māori Reference Group colleagues that if a child is surrounded by such values and expectations, then they will be more likely to succeed.

In deconstructing my own educational experience, it gradually dawned on me that I had had a very privileged education. I realised, listening to my Māori colleagues, that there was something crucial in the idea of feeling good about who you are, especially your cultural self, and that this factor contributes significantly to the development of 'an engaged Māori citizen'.

I began to see that they were talking about me! I had been able to achieve because of a whole host of reasons that many of my primary school peers could not rely on. I felt confident about my identity, I had a supportive family, I was expected to work hard,

I was blessed with a scholarship to a leading private school, I was able to develop influential connections in secondary school that I could later build on and so on. My primary school mates had similar abilities, albeit in different areas, but within a few years of schooling had dramatically different outcomes in educational achievement. Many had failed to achieve in terms of the recognised standards, whereas I had gone on to succeed.

On further examination, I realised that socio-economic status also makes a critical difference. All my primary school mates were in the same 'class' as me. We all came from 'poor' families, not that we knew it at the time. Only in looking back did I realise that our families subsisted on low incomes, which also affected the opportunities available to us and the expectations of us. We were more likely to be directed into manual labour than into a professional career anchored in a university education.

I realised that I had never heard the depth and complexity of the problem of low educational achievement. Before, whenever someone suggested there was something wrong with the education system I had dismissed their point of view. I could understand why others saw them as 'whinging' Māori and Pacific Islanders, whereas I saw myself as a solutions-orientated person. But now I was beginning to see that the education system was geared towards middle-class Pakeha values that take for granted that parents have time to supervise homework, can read and speak English, can advocate on their child's behalf and so on.

I started to talk about my new insights with Pacific Island groups to which I belong, and in listening to their points of view I began to recognise that there are generations of low educational achievement across our communities. My whole way of seeing this issue was changing and Pat Snedden gave me great heart through this personal process of change. When I finally took up my role as chair of the Pacific Selection Committee, the only thing I knew for certain was that I didn't know the solution.



Trust leadership was critical

Kevin Prime quietly supported and encouraged Kristen Kohere-Soutar and Wilmason Jensen to embrace the leadership challenge of chairing the reference groups and later the selection committees.

“Their appointment to key leadership roles meant that Kristen and Wilmason could contribute as trustees *and* as Māori and Samoan persons respectively,” Mary Foy rsm later reflected. “The Trust was able not only to harness their considerable professional expertise but also to recognise the contribution of their cultures and broader life experiences. MPEI created an opportunity for the Trust to recognise its own emergent leadership and, in the process, the emergent leadership in their communities. Their leadership of the process was critical to its success. They carried the mana and were responsible for ensuring the aspirations of the reference groups and selection committees for Māori and Pacific education were heard and upheld.”

A great joy of the MPEI experience was the wonderful working relationship Kristen and Wilmason developed.

As chairs we, Kristen and Wilmason, understood that our role was to fulfil the original vision and objectives of MPEI, ensure a robust, rigorous and transparent approach and present the findings and recommendations of the collective to the Trust. We sought to display high mutual respect in our relationship with one another. We each made an effort to understand the other’s point of view and negotiate concerns amicably.

Importantly, as chairs, we never spoke of our decision-making framework, but there was a clear understanding of and respect for the mana of tangata whenua that we both sought actively to uphold. According to Kristen, “There was an implicit recognition of the whakapapa that connects Pacific peoples to Māori. This generated an inclusive approach that sought to manaaki our whanaunga from te moana nui a Kiwa, rather than see them as competitors for the putea. We each took seriously the mantle of responsibility invested in us.”

Importantly, some questions were never asked, such as: How much should be spent on Māori and how much on Pacific projects? As chairs, we assumed there was enough money in the putea for everyone and agreed it would be unbecoming conduct to talk about what our mates were getting, as such behaviour was not in keeping with the way a chief walks and talks.

“There are enough dumplings to go around everyone sitting at the kai table,” Kristen counselled members of the Māori Reference Group when the matter came up. “Let’s just wait and see.”

In the end a potentially divisive matter was settled beautifully without any dispute. Our focus was on what was needed for our communities rather than an equitable divvy up of the available funds. Believing there was enough to go around allowed us to trust each other enough to take our eyes off the money and focus our full attention on the merits of each application. In each case both reference groups asked the same question: “What will this particular project do for our people?”



Coming together

A particular highlight, and a very important part of collaboration, was the coming together at different times of the Māori and Pacific reference groups. On each occasion there was whispering beforehand among Dr Ngapo Wehi, Wilmason Jensen and Tuiataga Faafua Leavasa-Tautolo to set the scene and establish protocols.

“What will be the kawa for our gathering?” Dr Ngapo Wehi asked when the first opportunity for a combined gathering presented itself. He immediately recognised the significance of the occasion and that in the Pacific Reference Group the matai were women.

As always in such situations, manaakitanga rose to the fore.

In his whaikorero, Dr Wehi welcomed both groups and set the context for the process, acknowledging that the women matai would act as the speakers for the Pacific group.

“We are not on my marae; nor are we at your fono,” he observed. “And since we are at the ASB Community Trust we can set our own rules by developing tikanga that works for this occasion.”

“With that instrumental act of leadership, the dynamics shifted,” reflected Pat Snedden. “The kaumatua freed our capacity to participate fully in a process marked by a wairua of manaakitanga and a deep concern for the mechanics of relationship. The quality of the interaction that followed had a profound effect on us all. The reflex of the kaumatua was matched by the savvy of the matai, both of whom understood what was required in the moment for transformation to occur. Their actions demonstrated cultural excellence at its finest. Everyone was astonished and anxieties suddenly disappeared. That day our leaders got the substance right; the kaumatua spoke to the anxiety our Pacific colleagues had about not being accepted as equals; the matai responded fluently in Māori and Samoan, expressing a deep understanding of his actions and replying in a manner that witnessed the powerful contribution Pacific members were to make to MPEI. All of this happened under the hospitality of the ASB Community Trust, which paradoxically had never done anything like this before!”

“Such protocols, when they do occur, are important because they bring people together,” replied Faafua. “I expected the Trust to observe appropriate Māori protocols when we came together, and Dr Ngapo Wehi guided us skillfully through them with a life-time of experience for us all to lean on. Being part of the combined process was a very enriching experience for everyone and added to the quality of information that informed our decision making. There was a feeling of unity when we came together. In Samoan, we would say ‘alofa’; in Māori you would say ‘aroha’. Perhaps another Samoan phrase that more closely describes the feeling generated when the reference groups came together is ‘ava ma faaaloalo’ meaning respect and deference. The expression acknowledges a deep sense of emotional security that prevails when there is mutual understanding and respect for shared values.”


A powerful vision and guiding principles

The wise counsel of reference groups shaped a powerful vision and guiding principles for the emerging Māori and Pacific Education Initiative.

The vision of MPEI – *Ma tatou ano tatou e korero, We speak for ourselves* – was expressed in the second or third meeting of the Māori Reference Group, and signalled the Trust’s intention to create meaningful opportunities for those most affected by the problem of educational underachievement to turn things around for themselves.

Kevin Prime explained its significance to his people: “This vision resonates strongly with words often spoken by Ngati Hine: *We want to speak for ourselves*. Why is it so important to us that we speak for ourselves? For so many years others have been speaking for us, knowing what was good for us, making decisions for us. But we do not need others to speak for us; we can speak for ourselves. We know what is good for us, and we are capable of making our own decisions.”

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Pita Tipene, another member of the Māori Reference Group with Ngati Hine affiliations, also offered reflections on the deep meanings of this vision. “This vision statement can be understood in a number of ways but essentially conveys the idea of people being self-confident, self-aware and, in particular, self-determining. What does it mean to be self-confident? It means being confident in one’s self and in one’s people. It means being aware of who you are and, from that basis, determining your future and your destiny. For Māori, it means specifically Māori determining solutions for Māori. At the core is our deep desire for success in education for Māori. Success for Māori in education means breaking free from the effects of assimilation and colonised thinking, which have oppressed Māori people. Education must be liberating and work intentionally to free oppressed minds. In this sense, the vision of MPEI speaks to the history and future of our nation. It implicates a particular history of our nation experienced by our Māori peoples, and seeks to overcome failures in the educational record of Māori and Pacific Island communities. Above all things, our people want to see a future that is better for their children and their grandchildren. The drivers for us are our future generations. The vision statement points us in a clear direction. ‘Tatou’ suggests that initiatives must be community-driven, with leadership provided by someone or some group in the community.”

Pacific insights were equally compelling.

“It took ages for the Pacific Reference Group to get the wording right,” recalled Toleafoa Sina Aiolutepotea-Aiono, “and the essence of our Pacific words carries the same kinds of meanings found in the Māori translation: When we speak for ourselves, we speak for our people and we speak for our future in this country. It’s time for us to stand up and serve our people. This is a movement of change grounded in the knowledge that our children and families are not doing well. We know enough about the education system to know that it’s not working well for our people. But we also know what works for our people. How do we use the knowledge we have to do something differently so that our people will succeed?”

“*Speaking for ourselves*,” explained Tuiataga Faafua Leavasa-Tautolo, a member of the Pacific Reference Group, “expresses unity of spirit which allows for a deep-seated sense of satisfaction brought about by sharing something that is deeply valued. *Speaking for ourselves* allows people to be totally free and open, removing all boundaries that inhibit meaningful expression. People have an opportunity to speak with a real sense of freedom of spirit, which invites a very, very warm feeling that makes you want to reach out, to be there and simply to be. This very, very warm feeling is energising and encourages people to participate actively because they feel welcome and that their contribution is valued.”

From this vision, the reference groups devised a number of guiding principles that were to define MPEI projects: strategic relevance, project sustainability, measureable outcomes, partnership and self-help, community ownership and capacity to deliver.

From this vision, the reference groups devised a number of guiding principles that were to define MPEI projects: strategic relevance, project sustainability, measureable outcomes, partnership and self-help, community ownership and capacity to deliver.

These principles conveyed to Māori and Pacific contributors alike that holding onto one’s culture and taking it into the future would allow their youth to become better citizens.

“Culture is so important to who we are as citizens and what we do along the way,” Waitai Petera later reflected. “Our culture helps us to make a contribution to society. Used wisely, culture is a real resource. How can you do your best for society if you leave half of yourself at the door?”

In essence, MPEI projects were to advance Māori and Pacific Island engagement in citizenship through educational achievement.



Dealing with conflicts of interests

As the next steps in the grant-making process beckoned, members of the reference groups began to consider the opportunity to apply for an MPEI grant.

“Are you going onto the selection committee or have you been conflicted off?” we asked each other during our meeting breaks.

Some were affiliated to organisations intending to apply for MPEI funding, which was made clear at the outset of the reference group process. Others wanted to offer advice to community groups if asked.

We agreed it was important to be transparent about conflicts of interest so our communities could have confidence in us. Such transparency discourages hidden agenda.

But we couldn't escape our origins. We had all acted previously in a voluntary capacity in our communities; how could we not be 'interested' when our communities are a big part of who we are?

In stepping down to submit or support particular applications, the considerable knowledge of individual reference group members was lost to the grant-making process that followed. Also, allowing people to act as reference group members and then to self-select out so as to submit or support applications presented a significant risk. The public could think that members of the reference group developed terms of reference to suit themselves or that they had knowledge about MPEI other applicants did not have.

Our journey together reinforced that perceived conflicts of interest must be managed actively along with actual conflicts to ensure confidence in the grant-making process. The process had to be 'above board', so to speak, otherwise the whole project could be considered a sham, leaving other applicants feeling 'That was just a waste of time'.

Reflecting three years later, some reference group members concluded it would have been better for the Trust to establish a clear policy upfront, stating that reference group members (and their organisations) would not be eligible to apply for a grant.

Setting the foundations

The reference group process ended without a formal conclusion. Those appointed to selection committees were soon engaged in their next challenge.

For some, the work of the reference groups was done and it was time to move on. A number of those who stepped down because of conflicts of interest however, were left feeling that the reference group process was incomplete. Their understanding was that the reference groups went into abeyance during the selection process but that they still existed and had much to offer the evaluation and grant monitoring processes.

From the Trust's point of view the reference groups exceeded expectations.

“They created a strong foundation for MPEI and imbued the initiative with their mana and wisdom,” reflected Jennifer Gill, the Trust's chief executive. “The reference groups not only created the vision for MPEI and invested it with multiple meanings, but also showed us how to live it. But next time we need to pay more attention to endings so that everyone feels the process is complete. Each step of the MPEI journey came with its own learning curve.”

With the foundations for MPEI firmly in place the Trust proceeded with the next stage – the implementation of the grant-making process.

“We discussed the option of inviting reference groups to suggest proposals for trustees to consider, assuming they could go to their communities and shoulder-tap good projects,” recalled Mary Foy rsm, a former trustee. “But the reference groups advised the Trust to spread the net wider. They wanted as many groups as possible to have the opportunity to apply for MPEI funding.”



So the Trust set out to engage further with Māori and Pacific communities through a communications strategy, hui and fono, and an expression of interest process. Not surprisingly, another learning curve lay ahead.





3





Grant making as an unfolding process

Engaging Māori and Pacific communities

Arguably, MPEI needed a communication strategy tailored to Māori and Pacific audiences, and a striking advertising campaign ready to roll within six months of the application deadlines.

But the Trust's effort to devise a 'fit for purpose' communication strategy and advertising campaign using a commercial organisation was soon derailed.

Concept drawings were delivered the day before the reference groups were to meet, and staff immediately saw that the use of certain images, the proposed logo and the entire pitch was culturally offensive.

"You've missed the mark," Jennifer Gill told the consultants. "This is not what we're looking for – we would never promote such images."

When the consultants presented their concepts to the reference groups the following day, they suggested possible changes in an attempt to retrieve the proposed campaign.

"I realised then that I was one of the faces of the Trust and not simply the person organising airfares for reference group members," Keri-Anne Wikitera recalled. "I knew that changing the colours of the campaign or making other such modifications would not rescue its fundamentally flawed approach. If it were to proceed, the Trust would not be looked upon favourably. I made my position clear."

Reference group members responded to this challenging situation in a respectful and decisive way, earning the admiration of staff who witnessed this encounter.

"The reference group members listened to the presentation with interest," recalled Keri-Anne, "but when the consultants left the room they gave a simple, straight-forward and abundantly clear response: 'No, we can't have this campaign; not at all'."

Pacific Island trustees gave Trust staff broad advice, and it was decided to handle communications internally using an inhouse email tree and website to send information to existing networks.

"I admired the staff for following through on our advice," recalled Soana Pamaka, a former trustee and a member of the Pacific Reference Group. "Their actions told me they had listened to and heard our concerns and were committed to a developing culturally appropriate approach."

For Kristen Kohere-Soutar, chair of the Māori Reference Group and the Māori Selection Committee, a critical question lingered: "What might have been achieved if the Trust had chosen a public relations company that not only offered creative expertise but also grasped the strategic intent of MPEI, and brought the cultural expertise and experience necessary to ensure a suitable and exciting pitch? MPEI was seeking a great idea or a dream invention; a carefully considered and creative campaign was required to transpire the message across diverse communities and sectors."

Hui and fono

In March 2008, the Trust invited potential applicants to attend a hui or fono to learn more about MPEI.

That month a Pacific fono was held in Otago and another in Waitakere City. Over 150 Pacific Island participants attended, and they were invited to speak in their own languages by creating language groups in which to raise issues and ask questions.

Hui were also held in March on Orakei Marae and Papakura Marae in Auckland, Ngararatunua Marae in Whangarei, and Maimaru Marae in Kaitiaki, with over 260 Māori participants.

The duration of the hui and fono was typically around 90 minutes. This included opening prayers, welcome and other formalities, a 20–30 minute presentation, 30 minutes for questions and comments, and refreshments to close.

The Trust did not spare costs in organising the hui and fono.

“We considered it important to feed people, and as far as possible to host the gatherings in an appropriate place,” recalled Moi Becroft, MPEI project manager. “We gave sizeable koha to marae and in our genuine concern to be gracious hosts we over-catered for everything!”

“For MPEI fono, we had food coming down from heaven,” added Efeso Collins. “Why is food so important to our Pacific peoples? We are so accustomed to meeting around food. Enjoying food together eases everyone and helps to establish rapport. The role of the host is very important in Pacific cultures. The host is responsible for ensuring that there are adequate provisions so that guests feel at home, comfortable and able to contribute.”

The first fono was held in a church hall in Otara and was an impressive gathering of Pacific peoples.

“It was my idea of a crowd!” recalled Soana Pamaka. “Over a hundred of our Pacific Island peoples attended, including local school principals, people who work for government departments, community people, church ministers and community workers, among others. I felt a surge of excitement at seeing Samoan, Tongan, Cook Island Māori, Niue and other Pacific Island faces. Until MPEI, the Trust hadn’t received many applications from Pacific Island organisations. Possibly, in the case of our Tongan communities, cultural values conflicted with the application process.

“If a Tongan organisation was to apply to the Trust for funding and their application was declined,” Soana continued, “there’s a high probability they would not submit another application. They would probably tell others: ‘Well we went there, but they declined us. That organisation doesn’t want to support us, so we’ll have to look for funding elsewhere.’ Our people would walk away and not look back, whereas a Pakeha organisation would accept the decline and try another approach next time.”

Arriving late at that first fono, Soana stepped into the room just as another Pacific Island trustee was working hard to sell the idea of MPEI to participants.

“Every line he uttered was met with silence, which led to more speaking from the front to sell the idea. I was waiting for the applause; but there was none. I expected ‘the wow factor’ but instead I was surprised by ‘the what factor.’”

The facial expressions and body language of participants communicated a sense of disbelief, and in the pews people whispered to their neighbours. ‘What do they mean?’ ‘This can’t be what it sounds like?’ ‘Is this for real?’ ‘Maybe I misunderstood; what did you hear them say?’

“I witnessed many participants trying hard to tie the discussion to their experience and seeking to understand the opportunity on the table,” observed Pila Fatu, another member of the Pacific Selection Committee.

According to Pila, the substance of the exchange went something like this:

“We have a big pot of money and we want your ideas on how to spend it. Tell us how you would go about tackling educational underachievement in your communities; tell us your dreams,” said Trust representatives.

‘What are you talking about?’ said the crowd’s silence.

“These are our aims; here are our terms of reference for MPEI,” Trust representatives explained.

‘But what do those terms of reference mean?’ Again fono participants looked quizzical.

“Here’s a particular idea – is this what you’re looking for?” a participant asked.
“Yes, we could possibly look at that kind of proposal,” the Trust representative replied.

‘Oh, okay. Our project could fit the criteria. We have a good chance. Great!’ thought the participant.

“How much can we apply for?” another participant asked.

“There’s no set amount,” a Trust representative replied.

“Who can apply?” another participant probed.

“We’re open to advice,” the Trust representative advised.

The Trust didn’t set out to confuse participants; nor did we intend to offer vague replies. Perhaps the exchange revealed that everyone was on the ground floor of this new initiative; there was still so much to be determined.

Did the Trust inadvertently give the impression that participants had a good chance of being awarded significant funding? A number of people, including reference group members, felt we did.

With hindsight, we needed to better emphasise our intention to fund only a few projects, and give a clearer indication of what the Trust was willing to consider.

The second fono was held at Waitakere City Council chambers and was more formal than the South Auckland event. The venue wasn’t ideal; seating was arranged in a semi-oval design, and when participants walked in they were faced with the mayor’s throne and a panel of people.

But the ‘Pacific wireless’ had transmitted some of the Trust’s key messages before the event and participants’ questions were more direct. This time there were fewer enquiries on technical matters and more effort put into pitching ideas.

“I valued these persistent enquiries,” recalled Wilmason Jensen, “and left the fono with a feeling of admiration for the great lobbyists who had attended!”

At fono and hui, participants were encouraged to collaborate in developing proposals. At the same time the Trust acknowledged the pressure participants usually feel in a grant-making process to compete against one another. Here, too, another important lesson was about to be learned.

At the Northland hui, such was the enthusiasm for pursuing a collaborative approach that during refreshments animated discussion was sparked among several groups. Instead of approaching Trust representatives for more information, which usually happens when philanthropists or their representatives come to town, these participants seized the day by beginning their own communal conversations.

“After morning tea at the hui held on the Ngararatunua Marae, the Nga Puhī participants wouldn’t go home!” recalled Moi Becroft, MPEI project manager. “As lunchtime approached the marae did what marae do every week all over New Zealand. It went to work with the industry of a small army who appeared from nowhere to produce a tasty meal in no time at all, inviting people to stay so the korero could continue over lunch.”

“We need time to meet and talk with our communities,” an excited participant said to Moi after the Kaitaia hui. “We need time to consider what collaborations might be possible.”

“Her words resounded in my ears when MPEI deadlines interrupted this potential innovation and no proposal eventuated,” Moi Becroft reflected later. “With hindsight, we could have offered a longer timeframe for participants to work through collaborative proposals and modest funding for follow-up hui, such as venue, food and facilitator costs.”

Establishing Māori and Pacific selection committees

The Trust created Māori and Pacific selection committees in April 2008 to contribute to Trust decision making.

The Māori Selection Committee comprised Kelvin Davis, Mary Foy rsm, Associate Professor Manuka Henare, Rangimarie Hunia, Frank Leadley, Professor Elizabeth McKinley, Waitai Petera, Kevin Prime, and Kristen Kohere-Soutar (chair).

The Pacific Selection Committee comprised Linda Aumua, Mary Foy rsm, Jenny Kirk, Mokauina Fuemana Ngaro, Soana Pamaka, Ezra Schuster, Tuiataga Faafua Leavasa-Tautolo, Lil Tuioti and Wilmason Jensen (chair).

The committees met 12 times separately and three times together. The Trust encouraged members to act in a free and frank manner when exercising their responsibilities.

Both committees engaged the rigor, integrity, complexity and humour evident in the reference groups. Each sought to ensure that the resources dedicated to MPEI were used appropriately and wisely to build Māori and Pacific communities and deliver positive outcomes. Both committees adopted a culture of critical enquiry that challenged members to say what they wanted to say and to ask the hard questions of one another.

“We all tried very hard to play things straight down the middle, to do the job as well as we could and to be fair to all applicants,” recalled Kelvin Davis, a member of the Māori Selection Committee.

“Disappointment was inevitable; as there was never going to be enough money to go around,” another remarked. “There were big debates in the selection process about the geographical location of groups submitting expressions of interest, because suddenly we were faced with an overwhelming number of applications from the North. In the end we agreed to try for a good distribution across the region.”

“On one occasion, when our collective passions were centred on language,” recalled Erza Schuster, a member of the Pacific Selection Committee, “I questioned whether the Trust had a duty of care to those communities closely associated with the New Zealand territories, in particular Tokelau, Niue and the Cook Islands. In another cultural context, I would never have put out this enquiry so directly, but in this setting I felt free to ask the ‘dumb’ questions and challenged to ask the ‘hard’ ones. Our duty of care also required us to debate issues rigorously so that we could be more certain of doing justice to the applications. Throughout the process, I was guided by the Samoan notion of tautua, meaning ‘to serve’ and the analogy of a Samoan fine mat, which reminded me that things are not always yours to keep. Sometimes, things are given to you to care for, treasure and hold for a time so that they may be passed on to others who can do something good with them for the benefit of our communities.”

But discussions never stayed serious for too long.

“We accepted the pecking order of our cultural hierarchy,” Ezra further reflected, “which from time to time allowed the aunties among us to engage in humorous and endearing cultural banter. ‘Be quiet, Ezra, and go make a cup of coffee for us!’ my auntie would say to me. Wilmason and I would often joke after meetings about which one of us was growled off by our aunties today and that no matter how many letters after your name, the cultural hierarchy sits there and will always override your professional or academic achievements! We also knew we were well served by the cultural hierarchy in our group; those more senior than us were people of very high calibre whom we respected greatly.”

Combined gatherings of the selection committees created a fresh dynamic of rigorous debate.

“Our Māori colleagues provided another filter through which to view applications and introduced a new layer of critical enquiry,” Ezra Schuster continued. “We saw a need for trade-training in the 21st century, recognising the shortage of qualified technical tradespeople, and for mentoring in our communities to support the

We all tried very hard to play things straight down the middle, to do the job as well as we could and to be fair to all applicants.

development of a new generation of ‘gold-collar’ workers. Our Māori colleagues pushed for higher academic achievement and questioned whether our aspirations for our Pacific communities could stretch higher, intellectually and academically. They were seeking applications that showed the promise of innovation and would treat our Pacific and Māori youth with the dignity they deserved by aiming high. At times, the debate was challenging but always it caught our attention.”

The expression of interest process

When the Trust called for a 400-word expression of interest in January 2008, the mid-April deadline seemed months away. But suddenly it arrived on the heels of hui and fono.

In their expressions of interest applicants were asked to summarise their dream for their community and how they would go about implementing it.

“We didn’t want community groups investing a lot of time and energy in applications that weren’t likely to make the first cut,” recalled Professor Elizabeth McKinley, a member of the Māori Selection Committee. “A two-round approach aimed to minimise unnecessary work for community groups, who often have limited resources to dedicate to grant-seeking purposes. Only applicants who got through the first stage had to submit an indepth proposal that demonstrated a strong fit with the philanthropic priorities of MPEI.”

Initially trustees and staff expected around 80 applications. As the deadline approached the number crept up in their minds to well over 200. By then it was readily apparent that word was out across the region and a sense of excitement was animating interest in MPEI among Māori and Pacific communities.

No-one anticipated 307 expressions of interest arriving in the mail.

When confronted with this avalanche, we were all gobsmacked: trustees, staff and selection committee members.

“What do we do with them all?” one staff member said to another, looking bewildered and feeling overwhelmed.

There was nothing to do but process each one.

“How will the Trust deliver on the high expectations it has raised in our communities?” Ezra Schuster asked Moi Becroft, the project manager.

It was the question on everyone’s minds, and in the momentary pause that follows a good question Ezra found his own answer.

“Moi, in my view, the Trust doesn’t have to apologise to applicants because the initial stages of the grant-making process were undertaken with dignity and honesty. The Trust was clear about its purposes in establishing MPEI, and in the world of funding applicants know that many, if not most, will miss out and those who do get through are unlikely to receive everything they ask for. Undertaking fono showed our Pacific communities that the Trust was seeking to act in a culturally appropriate manner, but with hindsight the Trust could have communicated more clearly that only a very small number of groups would receive funding. Perhaps next time the Trust might consider whether undertaking fono is the best path to take given that, in the case of MPEI, those gatherings did push community expectations very high.”

Whether formal or informal, such deliberations encouraged staff and trustees to pause and reflect on the Trust’s action.

Round one decision making

Trust staff reviewed all expressions for compliance and grouped applications in terms of the following categories: ‘yes’, ‘no’, ‘maybe’.

Selection committee members received three huge books of expressions of interest to review, catapulting their workload into the air.

“Selection committee members went through each application looking carefully for innovation and ‘the next kohanga reo’, as distinguished from ‘business as usual’ approaches,” explained Mokauina Fuemana Ngaro, a member of the Pacific Selection Committee. “When the selection committees met – which we did a number of times because there were so many applications to consider – we went through our own selections as well as reviewing staff selections. It was a very thorough process; we were able to hear different thoughts and the various reasons behind each person’s decision making. Where there was some disagreement, we treated the application as a ‘maybe’. If a number of applications focussed on a similar approach then we clustered them together as a group. Where applicants were interested in creating resources (such as a language resource) then we grouped these together under ‘resourcing’.”

“What makes you think this project will work?” we challenged one another.

“How do you know? What’s the evidence to suggest this or that project is more likely to be effective in lifting student achievement than others?”

A close study of the applications suggested that most applicants were not used to writing tight 400-word project proposals, and found the task very hard. Producing a succinct outline requires a compelling idea and competency in writing.

To add to the complexity, some applicants included piles of information neither sought nor relevant. This posed an ethical challenge for selection committees: ‘Do we take the additional information into account, or not? And if we do, will others, who followed the rules, be disadvantaged?’

When it became obvious some groups were proposing similar projects, there was an attempt to cluster applicants, with the hope they might produce proposals for collaborative initiatives. There were six clusters, each made up of several applicants and a lead agency.

While promising in theory, the idea never worked – for various reasons. Applicants based in different communities faced different challenges that prevented a joint initiative. Others didn’t trust the lead agency, which suggested we had not always made appropriate choices. Personality dynamics played a part. We also encountered competition among schools, and resistance to joint approaches: ‘Why should we co-operate with others when we might be able to secure the available funding for ourselves?’

“I thought clustering would help fine-tune ideas and pull together a more compelling application,” Professor Elizabeth McKinley later reflected. “Instead, people held on to their ideas, and in one instance came back with three separate project proposals, none of which received funding. Did we explain ourselves clearly enough or were the attachments to certain ideas too strong for individual applicants to let go? It certainly didn’t work to put the challenge back to groups to produce a combined proposal.”

“Looking back,” Moi Becroft observed, “we thought we had happened upon a smart formulaic answer. Instead, we proved the axiom that board, management and conference rooms often generate ideas that communities should action but in practice will not work for a many reasons, not least of which the communities had little or no say in them!”

Of the 307 expressions of interest 37 were accepted, far more than originally expected and heralding a far greater workload than anyone had imagined.

In all, 270 applications were declined.

It is usual practice in many philanthropic or funding organisations to leave the letters of decline for staff to process. Kevin Prime, then Trust chair, held another view.

“We invited people to express their interests,” he explained, “and many felt they had something valuable to offer. I felt strongly that since I had sent out the letters of invitation for expressions of interest, I should also send out the letters of decline. As chair, one has to exercise leadership and if necessary take the knocks when they occur. I nonetheless found it difficult to sign so many letters of decline, when so much interest had been generated within Māori and Pacific communities in our region.”

The letter of decline communicated that the Trust valued its relationship with Māori and Pacific communities. Unsuccessful applicants were advised to consider other Trust funding streams and directed to the Trust's website for further information. This information was also communicated to those who contacted the Trust by phone, following their receipt of a letter of decline.

But questions lingered after applicants were shortlisted; a measure perhaps of the weighty sense of accountability resting on the shoulders of all those engaged in the selection process.

"Could the Trust have done more with the information gained through the expression of interest process?" staff asked themselves. "Could the Trust have found a way to forge partnerships with other funders to enable more applicants to receive some funding?"

Other matters troubled members of the selection committees.

"Did we miss an idea that wasn't well articulated but full of promise? Did we overlook something truly innovative because it was poorly expressed? We had to accept that in grant making some applicants will always miss out because they do not articulate their ideas as well as others. But, in responding to the unexpected avalanche, why couldn't the Trust decide to allocate a portion of the total fund over three years to smaller initiatives in addition to the handful of larger projects?"

"The criteria did not allow for more modest but worthwhile community aspirations to be funded," Mary Foy rsm later reflected. "At that stage we were looking for the 'silver bullet' – something big and innovative that would substantially turn the tide on the low achievement record of Māori and Pacific students."

Indepth proposal and business case

In August 2008, 37 shortlisted applicants were advised to submit an indepth proposal and business case by January 2009.

Knowing it was a huge leap to go from a 400-word expression of interest to an indepth business proposal, the Trust offered a planning template and, when a need became apparent, a consultant to assist applicants to produce the necessary documentation.

"We worked hard on the application," an unsuccessful applicant later reported. "We knew the competition was hot and the Trust had a limited amount of money to grant. We had framed our thinking for our project over many years and now had to reframe our ideas to suit Trust specifications. We were asked to deliver a 20-page business case, but with the relevant appendices we submitted an inch-thick document. Looking back, it was an amazing amount of work, requiring mental agility, and it took some weeks to pull together.

"We were hoping for the best outcome," this unsuccessful applicant continued, "but also preparing for the worst – and just as well, because we missed out. We were bitterly disappointed but also accepted that perhaps we did not convey our proposals adequately in writing. In any case, our declined application won't stop us from supporting the kaupapa of other MPEI initiatives; we praise those applicants for pushing all the right buttons. We do feel however that if we had had an opportunity to present our proposal to the selection committees we could have expounded on our written submissions and convinced them of the merits of our project."



Round two decision making

Of the 37 applicants invited to submit a business case, eight were shortlisted.

“It was obvious that many applicants put a colossal amount of work into their proposal and business case applications and it must have been heart-breaking for them to receive a letter of decline,” reflected Frank Leadley, a member of the Māori Selection Committee. “It was inevitable that some good proposals would be declined, and in all honesty it was a close call for quite a few applications. Easily two or three could have gone either way. We reached consensus on the final eight but it was very, very hard to make decisions. Each applicant had something of real merit to offer and I found gems in each one.

“We faced an enormous challenge,” Frank continued. “Our brief was to try to find something completely new. As I reviewed the proposals it occurred to me that everything builds on something that has gone before in some form or other. While the decision making wasn’t easy, the process was robust and very humane; everyone had their say. I would doubt that anyone in the selection committee would feel that they hadn’t been listened to and that their concerns had not been addressed. Maybe our shared commitment to listen to our colleagues and to understand their diverse points of view was responsible for the whole process going on so long.”

Various factors influenced the responses of declined applicants. Applicants invested their proposals with huge excitement, hope and faith. Knowing the intense interest in MPEI, some were philosophical. In at least one case Pacific cultural values came into play when interpreting the decline: *“If you don’t value something I value, then you don’t value me.”* In another, a Māori applicant explained that they had received positive feedback from the Trust during the hui process, and feeling encouraged their group had undertaken community consultation to earn a mandate for their proposed MPEI initiative, raising community expectations that they were left to manage.

Presentations to selection committees

Shortlisted applicants expected to hear the final outcome after submitting their indepth proposal and business case. Instead, in March 2009, the Trust invited the eight shortlisted candidates to deliver a 10–15 minute presentation to selection committees and MPEI staff in the board room of Allendale House. Granting large amounts of money to a handful of projects required a high level of due diligence.

For applicants, the presentation was a daunting challenge and yet another hurdle to cross.

For selection committees, the presentations cemented our confidence in particular projects, or, in one case, our apprehensions. Face-to-face presentations were critical for projects raising doubts or, where there were questions, needing clarification. The presentations added knowledge to the decision-making process; all were interesting and valuable but not all were necessary. Some applicants were able to convince us of the merits of their approach in writing.

The presenters were open and honest; some going so far as to reveal things they weren’t capable of doing – which signaled perhaps a level of trust not usually on display in a highly competitive grant-making process. These shortlisted applicants strengthened our faith in community, reinforcing that there are good people in the community doing very good work. Regardless of whether or not projects would be funded, all the applicants expressed their ongoing commitment to their visions. The humble and inspiring presence of the women who began their initiative in a garage and later founded the Rise UP Trust showed that there is hope for the future.

Witnessing the presentations reminded us that a project like MPEI is not all about money. Although the funding is crucial, MPEI was also about having faith in community to come up with solutions to the problems they face.

While this third-party review added to the administrative costs of MPEI, it also provided an objective view of the organisational capacity of applicants to inform the final decision-making process.

A third-party organisational review

The process didn't end with the presentations. Due diligence again required the Trust to undertake an independent organisational review to assess the capacity of applicants to manage a large grant.

The Trust took advice from The Tindall Foundation, which had earlier sponsored the SCOPE Pilot Project, a capacity-building initiative matching experienced consultants with small not-for-profit organisations.

Moi Becroft, MPEI project manager, then pulled together a small team of experienced external consultants to work together to undertake the review. This team was comprised of Sharon Shea, Robert Soakai and Dave Booth.

"We came from three different backgrounds, brought complementary skills and shared a common goal," reflected Dave Booth. "The team mix was very good and we worked well together. The good dynamics among us were fuelled by our passion to make a difference, and a shared sense that 'We may only have one shot at this' but 'the planets are in line on this one' so 'let's go for it and do our best to make this work'. We recognised the importance of the assignment and believed it was a unique opportunity to make a difference."

Applicants had to complete a survey, produce a file of organisational documentation and participate in an extended onsite meeting with the most suitable consultant.

Consultants then prepared what they termed an Organisational Capacity Validation Report, using a traffic-light system to assess organisational capacity. A red light meant no capacity to proceed; a green light signalled full capacity; an amber light indicated an organisation in the early stages of building its capacity; a yellow light suggested some capacity but the organisation might not have what was required to deliver the project they aspired to implement and may need other professional support to achieve their aims.

Between mid February and mid March 2009, a consultant spent, on average, about 40 hours with each group.

We, the consultants, adopted a straightforward approach when meeting with the shortlisted applicants, asking them to reply honestly to this question: "You guys are on the short list; what are you doing well, what work is in progress and what's on your 'to do' list?"

We also kept in mind the organic and invitational approach of MPEI, which had invited groups to 'tell us your dream'. We therefore didn't expect organisations to be fully functioning and robust at this early stage of project development. But we were on the lookout for 'telling signs' of organisational capacity such as good networks, good people and evidence of delivering 'on the smell of an oily rag'.

"While this third-party review added to the administrative costs of MPEI," concluded Sharon Shea, "it also provided an objective view of the organisational capacity of applicants to inform the final decision-making process."

Final decision making – round one

Of the eight applicants, seven were awarded MPEI funding.

The Trust had set out to find a handful of innovative projects and by the end of the first grant-making round had allocated a total of \$NZ10 million to a small number of promising projects with some risks around them. If projects carried no risks, communities could rightly charge that the Trust had been conservative in its decision making, when all along it had said that MPEI was designed 'to actively support innovation'.

"We decided on seven projects in all and we made ourselves jump through hoops to get them!" Waitai Petera remarked. "We went for the gold standard of decision making rather than mediocrity because we wanted the best for our people. Some projects funded through MPEI are marked by a profound simplicity; the simplicity is staring at you, and when you look at it it looks back at you. These projects seek to enable youth to



regain their mana; this approach grabs you because it goes to the heart of the problem, which inspires confidence that ‘this will work’. Mana enables one to be an upstanding person, as in Tu Tangata. These projects seek to bring that mana back into the person. For us, as Māori, mana is matauranga; if you know what you are talking about, you will talk well; whereas if you don’t know what you are saying, you will talk poorly. Restoring mana in our youth will hopefully enable them to stand tall, and fit into society as Māori and as New Zealanders, instead of them standing on the outside. The thought that went into MPEI was simply this: to lift educational achievement you have to restore the mana of the person; and if you restore the mana of the person they will feel like they have been reborn; and if they feel like they have been reborn they will begin to feel their potential; and when they begin to feel their potential they will want to strive towards it.”

There were powerful moments in the decision-making process.

“When we were talking about final shortlisted projects I questioned whether the government should fund one of the projects. Is this project the core business of government or is it the kind of project that the Trust should be funding?” recalled a selection committee member. “Jennifer Gill made it very clear the Trust didn’t want to fund initiatives that should be funded by government as part of its core business. One of my colleagues shed tears during this discussion and made an impassioned plea. ‘But it’s what we need,’ he said. ‘This project responds to a real need in our communities. Perhaps government should be funding this project but currently it’s not a priority area so there’s no government funding available.’ The tears of my colleague suggested passion and desperation. His tears told me that government is not letting communities speak for themselves. For me, that moment signified the complexities and compromises facing our Māori and Pacific communities. An intensity of feeling flooded the room and you could feel the passion to make a difference where one was truly needed. I took the point and supported the project.”

Failing to cross the final hurdle was devastating for the declined applicant.

“We believed we had a brilliant idea but needed more help with the business proposal and our final presentation,” the declined applicant later said. “We knew our proposal needed more work but we still hoped to get through. I accept that the final result was fair; the Trust had bottom lines to manage and obligations to fulfill. Having gone through all the steps in the grant-making process, we’re clearer now about what the Trust needed from us in order to fund our project. Overall, we would have appreciated more concrete feedback from the consultants and advice on alternatives, such as seeking another organisation to umbrella the project. The way things concluded left a dampening feeling. We all knew each other so well and our application was the only one in the final group of eight to be declined. Perhaps organisational protocol discourages follow up with declined applicants on the basis that ‘no means no’. In receiving the decline, we would have appreciated a more personal approach with a phone call followed by the letter. A personal touch would have acknowledged the relationship between us.”

From Associate Professor Manuka Henare’s point of view, “the grant-making process was so good it made the final decision making easy. The process delivered substantive proposals and allowed us to meet all shortlisted applicants. Final decisions were made swiftly. By then our values and ideas had cohered and our decisions were based on the promised outcomes of each project rather than on the force of an argument for or against its merits.”

Groups funded through round one of MPEI

Below is a brief account of each project funded through round one of MPEI. Their stories and website links can be found on the ASB Community Trust website.

Sylvia Park School, Mt Wellington

Sylvia Park School is implementing Mutukaroa, a school and community learning partnership. Mutukaroa aims to shift the emphasis from the school to the child and their learning. A project manager liaises with parents and staff, undertakes and manages assessment interviews with parents, maintains individual files and develops relevant resources for parents to use with their children. Mutukaroa focuses on student achievement and fosters the active engagement of parents through the learning partnership.

The Leadership Academy of A Company, Whangarei

He Puna Marama Trust has established a leadership academy for young Māori men at secondary school, with academic ability or talent in any field. The academy draws strength and direction from its links to the 28th Māori battalion and instils a military ethos that emphasises a sense of purpose, discipline, routine, personal responsibility, leadership training and strong, supportive relationships. The academy is developing leadership through an innovative residential programme, customised learning and partnering with local secondary schools.

C-Me Mentoring Foundation Trust, Otahuhu

C-Me Mentoring Foundation Trust is implementing Trades At School, a two-year programme for secondary school students in years 12 to 13 aged 16–18 years. The purpose is to facilitate and manage their successful transition from school, to tertiary education, trade training or paid employment. Motivated students attend polytechnic one day a week and complete industry-based work experience placements during school holidays. Each student receives mentoring and support to achieve their goals.

Rise UP Trust, Manukau

Through its Building Learning Communities project, the Rise UP Trust works with Pasifika and Māori children, parents and families to lift educational achievement and achieve their aspirations. Rise UP programmes are aligned to the school curriculum and offer inquiry-based learning, encouraging parents and children to be active participants in the learning process. Rise Up educators strengthen family connections with school and offer individualised support to ensure positive outcomes.

Ideal Success Charitable Trust, Manurewa

Now 10 years old, Ideal Success Charitable Trust is implementing Huarahi Tika (the right pathway). Designed for children aged 10–15 years, Huarahi Tika supports their transition to primary, intermediate and secondary school. It offers programmes and services that inform, motivate and support Māori children and empower their whanau to prioritise actions and behaviours that result in educational success.

The Unitec Graduate Diploma in Not-for-Profit Management, Henderson

Unitec's Graduate Diploma in Not-for-Profit Management is a level seven qualification aimed at strengthening the management, leadership and organisational capacity and capability of the not-for-profit sector. Skilled tutors facilitate interactive and practice-based learning, making it an ideal programme for Pacific learners. MPEI funding provides scholarships and pastoral care support aimed at growing Pacific leaders and managers for the early childhood sector.

In March 2009 the Trust gave approval in principle for the following applicants to receive MPEI funding, subject to the achievement of certain capacity-building milestones.

Sylvia Park School, a state primary school, received MPEI funding to implement its vision of Mutukaroa: a School and Community Learning Partnership.

C-Me Mentoring Foundation Trust was funded to further develop and implement its Trades At School Programme.

He Puna Marama Trust was funded to create The Leadership Academy of A Company.

Rise UP Trust was granted MPEI funding to progress its Building Learning Communities Project.

Ideal Success Charitable Trust received funding to develop Nga Huarahi Tika, a programme that empowers whanau Māori to succeed through their youth.

Unitec Institute of Technology was funded to provide scholarships and pastoral care for Pacific managers and board members in the early childhood sector to enable their participation in the Graduate Diploma in Not for Profit Management, delivered through the Department of Community and Health Studies.

Another applicant was also awarded MPEI funding but this grant was eventually withdrawn due to ongoing capacity concerns.

A capacity-building bridge

Having decided on the successful applicants, the Trust was faced with a new question. When do we make the announcement of the successful applicants?

“Wait,” MPEI consultants advised.

“In the world of business, we would work with groups to build their infrastructure prior to investment,” Dave Booth explained. “Our business experience had taught us that when there’s a lot at stake, prudence calls for a proactive approach to risk management. We felt strongly that the groups needed to do more work before receiving their grants. Although it was never part of the original brief, we asked the Trust if we could continue to work with the groups ‘under the radar’ to support further capacity building. Taking this approach, when announcements were made at a later date, the groups would be in a better position ‘to hit the ground running’. We were happy to finish the job but also appreciated the Trust might want to make an early announcement or choose other advisors.”

The Trust welcomed the idea, and Sharon Shea and Dave Booth continued working with the groups, along with another experienced consultant, Judy Whiteman.

“We’ll fund you in principle,” the Trust told each of the successful applicants, “but a condition of your receiving MPEI funding is the achievement of certain milestones. To support your delivery of these, we will provide you with milestone payments and capacity-building support.”

The capacity-building milestones related to the domains highlighted in the review process (governance, programme delivery, personnel management and financial control), and in particular to gaps in performance. Groups were asked to determine the substance of the milestones and timing of payments, and these were developed in discussion with Moi Becroft and MPEI consultants. The milestone payments would be approved on the basis of a funding plan and, if necessary, budgets could be reworked.

Experience soon revealed that the value of drip-feeding funding based on the achievement of milestones had to be balanced with the need for bigger chunks of money to move projects along, such as for hiring personnel.

Over the next six months an intensive phase of capacity building ensued. Arguably the cost of consultant time was offset by the cost savings made through the budget process. MPEI consultants encouraged groups not to rush into rolling out programmes, but instead to focus on bedding down their organisation.

“Our role as consultants,” Dave Booth noted, “was to ask difficult questions, offer professional advice, suggest options and potential cost savings, extend moral support and encouragement, provide a listening ear and a sounding board and draw attention to a big-picture business development perspective. Ours was a tailor-made response to unique capacity-building needs and not a generic vanilla approach. A consultant who arrives with all the answers and a package deal is unlikely to achieve the results of a more flexible approach.”

As we worked closely with MPEI groups over time, we expected them to mature and need less advice from us – and our hopes materialised. During six months of intensive capacity building, each of the applicant groups grew enormously and we recognised many signs of maturity in organisational functioning. Groups communicated confidence to deliver their programmes, and asked different questions such as: ‘When we do get funding, how do we spend our money to get the best value?’ If announcements had been made earlier, groups would have been under pressure to perform and, without adequate processes and systems in place to support programme delivery, some would have struggled.

At times MPEI groups needed a reality check.

“If you don’t do this,” the consultants said, “you won’t get funded.”

The funding was the carrot on the end of the stick, constantly in view. It was important, however, to grow a relationship of trust so that our challenges took place in a context of mutual respect. We also learnt to pull back when groups indicated we had pushed too hard.

“Looking back, a distinguishing factor of MPEI was the capacity-building support for applicants who were in the early stages of organisational development,” Sharon Shea concluded. “The decision to invest in capacity building represented another shift in the philanthropic approach from grant making to investment. The Trust changed the usual grant-making model from funding service delivery to funding provider development alongside service delivery.”

4





Looking through the eyes of successful applicants

Ideal Success Charitable Trust

For us the MPEI grant-making process was unforgettable. In early 2008, while scanning the daily flood of emails, one captured our attention. ASB Community Trust was seeking to fund innovative projects aimed at lifting the educational achievement of Maori and Pacific youth and it was looking to community for the answers. Was a philanthropic organisation inviting community groups to present their ideas for solving a significant social problem in our country? Government policymakers usually claim that right. Stranger still, existing groups could apply, as well as people willing to work together to create something new.

News of MPEI spread quickly through community networks. When the Trust sent an invitation to a hui at Papakura Marae, Maori and Pacific communities responded. The huge wharenui was full of dreamers like us and we knew many faces. The breadth of community participation – including ‘high flyers’ and gang members – reinforced that MPEI was far outside any funding norm. Projects had to support education in the home, in the school or in the community. Beyond these broad terms there were no boundaries. MPEI offered huge scope and excitement swept across the room.

Perhaps the Trust was ahead of its time. MPEI hui occurred prior to Whanau Ora, a Maori Party initiative taken up by the National-led coalition government. Whanau Ora invited whanau-based approaches and offered integrated funding, not unlike that which MPEI proposed.

As a charitable trust we often face the challenge of describing our programmes in the language of funders and have to adapt our objectives to meet changing government and philanthropic priorities. But MPEI allowed us to use our own terms and to seek funding for work we were already doing in the community and doing well. In our expression of interest we presented a scenario showing how our whanau-based, kaupapa Maori approach worked and what it could achieve over five years. Our main message to ASB Community Trust: ‘If you want the best value for your funding dollars, you need to think of the whole family, not just Maori and Pacific youth’.

The grant-making process couldn’t end there. The next step was a business case, and the Trust called a hui to discuss its requirements. Held in an old school house in Mangere, we felt the ‘wow’ factor when we walked in the door and were honoured to be among this impressive gathering of shortlisted applicants. The challenge now was to expand our scenario into a feasible plan so that selection committees would think: ‘This is possible; this can be done and should be done by Ideal Success’.

We expected to give a presentation to the Trust but weren’t prepared for over a dozen people sitting around the Trust’s large circular board table. ‘This is scary,’ we thought when we walked into the room. ‘We’ve only got one chance; this is not the time to say the wrong thing!’

“How does your project respond to the need in your community,” a trustee asked.

“A recent newspaper reported that our local high school needs a police officer onsite, at a cost of \$60,000 to the taxpayer,” our chief executive replied. “For that money we could hire two social workers for three days a week and achieve greater results.”

The grant-making process kept going and going. MPEI consultants conducted a third-party organisational review. Three years earlier Ideal Success was one of 12 Auckland providers chosen to undergo a stringent audit as part of a government initiative. Organisational strengths were noted and shortfalls addressed. We knew we were in a strong position. The MPEI review affirmed our ability to manage a large grant but raised a concern about trustees acting as staff. As Maori we saw strength in a close-knit operation and were confident of our organisational and professional integrity. But we knew outside perceptions could impact on organisational capacity and the ability to access funding. We followed advice and made changes.

When MPEI funding was confirmed, we felt a huge sense of achievement. We also began to create new systems for the programme we call Nga Huarahi Tika.



Sylvia Park School

Looking back, ASB Community Trust's commitment to MPEI told us it was in touch with the realities of Maori and Pacific communities and ready to invest good money in support of its stated commitments. Going in search of innovative initiatives suggested that the Trust was building 'a logic framework' for what makes a difference in raising student achievement.

Along with over 300 other hopeful applicants we submitted an expression of interest focused on implementing our vision of Mutukaroa: a school and community learning partnership. At the time we had no idea how things would proceed and, looking back, the expression was an easy entry into what would become a long and rigorous grant-making process.

Sylvia Park School was invited to submit a business plan. The Trust provided a planning template and a consultant to help write it. The consultant was a good fit and quickly understood our intentions and school context. We were unfamiliar with business planning and the consultant was able to explain and clarify what was required. During planning sessions, the consultant got us talking, and when we went off track, brought us back to the task at hand. The whole time our thinking was focused on concrete outcomes that would lift student achievement. We eventually produced a 30-page business plan with appendices, including specific targets we wanted to achieve.

Next the Trust invited us to make a brief presentation to MPEI selection committee members. To awaken our audience, we chose to model our presentation on a television programme – Dragons' Den – and came armed with a flip chart. Walking into the Trust's commanding board room and seeing over a dozen people seated around the large round table was a daunting experience. Our three representatives gave their best effort to the presentation and words came easily. They had planned thoroughly, and each spoke from a different viewpoint (governance, management and teacher/mother perspectives). They knew what they were talking about and felt passionate about Mutukaroa.

The 15-minute presentation was a good challenge but the process itself offered no feedback. From our perspective, some immediate positive feedback could have acknowledged the effort of presenters, without compromising the decision making that was to follow.

Just when we thought we had completed all the requirements of the grant-making process, we were presented with another hurdle to cross in the form of an external audit.

We felt a momentary sense of confusion. But we also understood the Trust's obligation to ensure the school's ability to manage a significant level of financial support.

From our point of view, the school was in a good position to receive major funding because it had sound infrastructure and systems in place. We rose to the challenge, and the 'traffic-light system' used by the external auditors was a useful tool to assess organisational competency and capacity.

Looking back, the whole process took a long time but the high level of scrutiny was understandable given so much money was at stake. The staged approach and timeframes allowed us to put together a convincing application over time. We would have been overwhelmed if asked to prepare a business plan first up. The Trust was incredibly supportive from the outset. A sturdy scaffold supported each stage of the process and Moi Becroft was always on hand to offer advice and answer questions.



Unitec Institute of Technology – Graduate Diploma in Not for Profit Management

We saw MPEI advertised on a mailing list and immediately recognised synergies between the strategic intentions of ASB Community Trust and our diploma. We contacted Moi Becroft, MPEI project manager, to check if Unitec would fit the criteria and were advised to submit an expression of interest.

Our initial expression sought scholarships for Maori and Pacific Island practitioners working in the wider not-for-profit sector. Rather than decline our application, the Trust came back to us with these questions: ‘We want to support the early childhood education sector, how can you help? Are you able to customise your programme so that early childhood education participants can benefit, and if so, how?’

We believed there was a way to address these issues and provide a stimulating and collaborative learning environment through the diploma programme.

The Trust invited us to a meeting to discuss the vision of MPEI and how Unitec could contribute. We were told that the MPEI Pacific Reference Group recognised early childhood education as a foundation for Pacific Island achievement. Members saw value in fostering the professional development of Pacific early childhood education centre managers and board members as a means of strengthening their capability and capacity to respond to the needs of their children, families and communities. The Trust also recognised the absence of management and leadership training tailored to the Pacific early childhood sector, and was familiar with the reputation and credibility of our diploma programme, including its track record of successfully engaging a high number of Pacific students. Looking back, the meeting gave us an opportunity to reframe our application so it was more closely aligned to the outcomes sought by the Trust. We felt honoured by the Trust’s direct engagement with us and valued its confidence in our ability to deliver.

Our department is based in a large institution. Due to the field in which we work we are very familiar with funding requirements. MPEI was an organic process, with many hoops to jump through, which we were able to take in our stride.

Still, when it came time to give a presentation to MPEI selection committees we felt daunted like others. We’re experienced presenters but only had a short amount of time to deliver a convincing and interactive presentation. We invited members of the selection committees to work in pairs to list the issues facing Pacific Island not-for-profit organisations. Then we delivered a slide show that demonstrated how our programme could address each of the issues listed by the groups. There wasn’t time to engage in lengthy dialogue, but we were asked challenging questions and had to explain why a large Pakeha educational institution, albeit offering a programme that engages a high number of Pacific students, deserved MPEI funding.

We didn’t know the organisational capacity review was coming until it arrived and the timing wasn’t ideal for us. In the midst of our own accreditation and audits we were called at short notice to a meeting with an MPEI consultant to engage in a comprehensive capacity review exercise that for us was largely about ticking boxes. A number of the questions did not fit our organisational reality and were, understandably given other MPEI applications, more relevant to smaller not-for-profit organisations. Rather than a community-based governance board, for example, we have a council, and our organisational policies, procedures and finances are enmeshed in the larger infrastructure of the polytechnic.

Once our application was approved in principle in 2009, we worked on budgets that went back and forth to the Trust a number of times. The Trust gave us an amount of money to work with, and we quickly established how many students would be able to receive support through MPEI. The Trust’s willingness to be upfront about available funding saved us a lot of time and work, and again indicated its genuine commitment to a partnership approach.

C-Me Mentoring Foundation Trust

“I had never encountered the philanthropic arena before,” recalled John Kotoisuva, chief executive officer of C-Me Mentoring Foundation Trust, “but when MPEI entered the frame unexpectedly I was utterly convinced that the vision of C-Me matched its funding criteria. All we needed was an opportunity to present the vision.

“ASB Community Trust invited a 400-word expression of interest and I quickly became unstuck! I was used to expressing the vision by means of stories, metaphors and strategies. When faced with the confines of a tight word limit, I struggled with words. Determined to overcome this hurdle, I engaged a writer to work with me to document the vision in a succinct and compelling manner. In my mind, if the spirit of the vision was well portrayed, the chances of getting through to the next stage were quite high. I had no idea then that over 300 expressions were submitted, and realising this two years later reinforced what I already knew about the solution we are seeking to bring forward in our vision, ‘It’s worth the investment because it will work’.

“The Trust accepted our expression and invited us to put forward a business plan. Suddenly, I was faced with a new era of accountability. Welcome to the world of business! We had to walk the talk and like our students knuckle down to hard work.

“I needed help, and the Trust offered consultants to help put together the business plan. The plan was approved and the Trust invited C-Me to make a brief presentation to the MPEI selection committees. It was our first visit to the Trust’s offices at Allendale House and I recall seeing a big round table in the board room with a sea of many faces. I went with three of our board members ready to convince the selection committees. They gave us 15 minutes to tell them why they should give us more than \$1 million over a five-year period and I was ready.

“I had waited a long time for this moment. By now, I was totally possessed by the vision of C-Me and determined to make it a success. Talking about it for years had normalised its merits in my mind. Faith encouraged our confidence to believe that the people around the board table would feel the impact of the vision presented to them, along with our conviction to make it a reality. In that moment I saw myself as a steward and carrier of the vision. I told the selection committees why this project needed to be done and why they could have faith in us to do it.”

“There were challenging questions from the floor.

“It’s all very well concentrating on trades,” a selection committee member said, “but what about students who want to become lawyers or doctors?”

“Students operating at that level already know what they want to do,” I answered. “The youth we’re working with need a helping hand to help them find their purpose.

“I left the room feeling spent, much like an athlete who trains over a life time for the peak performance of his or her career. A lot was riding on our presentation and I knew we had to perform. We gave it our all. Our board members left the room on a high; they witnessed the impact of the vision and saw others embrace the convictions, principles and values underpinning it. The hard questions asked of us that day set out to either reveal the stability or instability of our application. We gave them stability and, in time, they gave us the money!

“Next was an external organisational review. The Trust had to be sure we had enough infra-structure in place, or with further assistance could soon develop it, to manage a large grant. They invited the shortlisted applicants to workshop the review templates put together by the external consultants. I appreciated meeting other applicants but was mainly interested in doing whatever was required to receive the grant so we could get on with implementing the vision.

“C-Me received approval in principle for an MPEI grant a year after we submitted our initial expression of interest. Setting out, I never imagined the process would take so long, but nor did I fully appreciate the due diligence required before awarding substantial funding.”



He Puna Marama Trust: The Leadership Academy of A Company

From our perspective, the MPEI grant-making process developed organically. The initial expression of interest challenged us to define the nub of our vision in 400 words so that members of the selection committees would understand our aspirations. Having passed that hurdle we were invited to produce a comprehensive business case. This was followed by a presentation and then, unexpectedly, an external organisational review.

As an established organisation we were familiar with rigorous funding requests and managing large contracts. Our chief executive had performed management roles in government departments and was adept at paperwork, finances and communications. But the grant-making process went on much longer than expected and required patience.

Over time we recognised ASB Community Trust was trying hard to get the process right and stay true to its vision for MPEI.

We were questioned about possible conflicts of interest arising from ‘too many members of one whanau involved in developing the academy’.

“We’re all connected,” explained Adrian (Telly) Warren, our Trust chair. “That’s who we are as Maori. For us whanau involvement is a strength; it carries higher expectations because our people expect greater accountability from whanau. Establishing an initiative like the academy requires significant voluntary labour, and in our experience only whanau are willing to invest those long unpaid hours. Whanau do the time willingly because they believe in the vision and trust one another to see things through to completion.”

We produced policies and evidence of audit processes and reporting procedures, to show He Puna Marama Trust’s commitment to transparent and rigorous decision making.

“When we report, we over report,” explained Raewyn Tipene, our chief executive. “Whether the information is required or not, we provide financials and other records to show the details of decision making and a clear paper trail of monies spent. For us, integrity is very important and we’re committed to doing things as they should be done. We’re always thinking of our tupuna and creating a legacy through our work that enhances their mana.”

Following notification of our MPEI grant we forged an open relationship with ASB Community Trust based on trust and respect. We recognise it has invested funds and faith in our vision, allowing us precious time and a rare opportunity to test ideas and establish systems without being questioned at every turn.

While our engagement is not all hurdles and barriers like many other funding processes, it does provide the necessary protection measures that benefit both parties. We communicate easily with the MPEI project manager and talk freely about the challenges. A transparent approach saves time and enables us to invest our energy where it’s most needed.



Rise UP Trust

When ASB Community Trust announced MPEI we knew immediately it was an incredible opportunity for a project like ours. The timing was perfect and we believed we were doing the kind of work that would interest the Trust. Before MPEI we found it hard to fit into existing funding categories. Rise UP Trust was new on the scene with no track record. To our amazement we didn't need a track record to apply for MPEI funding; we needed a compelling dream and a convincing business plan.

In February 2008 we attended an MPEI fono. We didn't know what to expect; we came from the classroom and fono was the kind of thing they did in community. Most fono participants had been working in community for many years and their organisations were well established, whereas it was all new learning for us. Hearing the journey of MPEI told by trustees and staff encouraged us to pursue this rare funding opportunity, and despite the huge interest we felt quietly confident.

Our main challenge in completing the expression of interest was deciding what to include and what to leave out. We knew what worked for our children and were confident that Rise UP was addressing a strong need in our communities. The stories of families taking part in our programme convinced us of its merits. Academic research underpinned the programme and an evaluation component guided developments and ensured we kept on track.

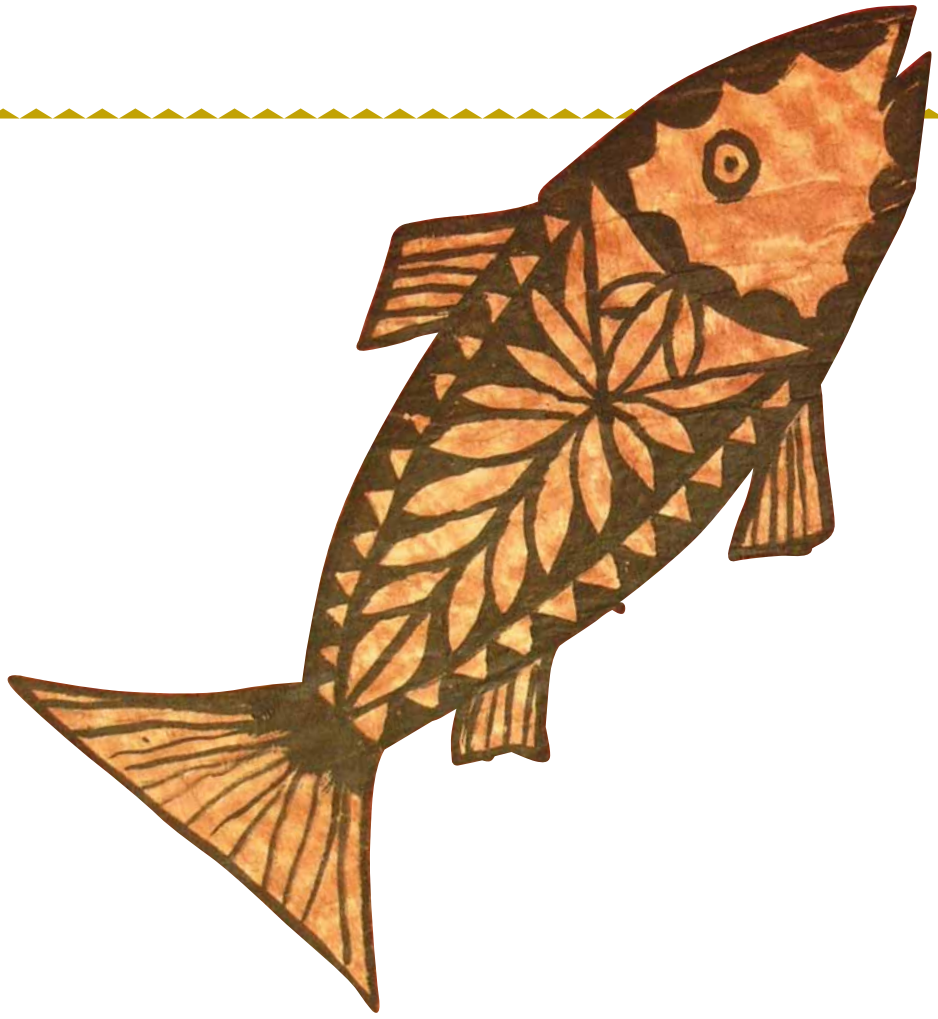
Next we had to submit a business case and soon got stuck. The Trust was willing to walk this unknown journey with us, and arranged for a consultant to work with us to articulate and refine our goals. During this period we became more aware of conflicts of interest, and reviewed our board's membership. We expected to hear the outcome of our application after submitting the business case. Instead Rise UP faced two more hurdles: the presentation to MPEI selection committees and the external organisational review.

We felt anxious as we walked into the Trust's board room to deliver our presentation. For us it was like walking into parliament. As primary school teachers we had almost no experience of speaking in front of a large group of adults who were leaders in their fields. But we felt a sense of privilege in being able to share our vision, which represented hope in response to the grim statistics of the educational underachievement of our Pacific and Maori youth. In our minds these statistics represented the failure of the state education system to meet the learning needs of our youth. We believed that creative community initiatives like ours were needed to help address this problem and we knew Ministry of Education officials who agreed with us.

The external reviewers conducting the organisational review understood the requirements of best practice and appreciated the challenges we faced in wanting to develop and deliver programmes that could be duplicated around the country. There were tough moments in the review process as we came to grips with what was required. For our idea to become a reality we needed systems and structure to focus and organise the people involved in our initiative.

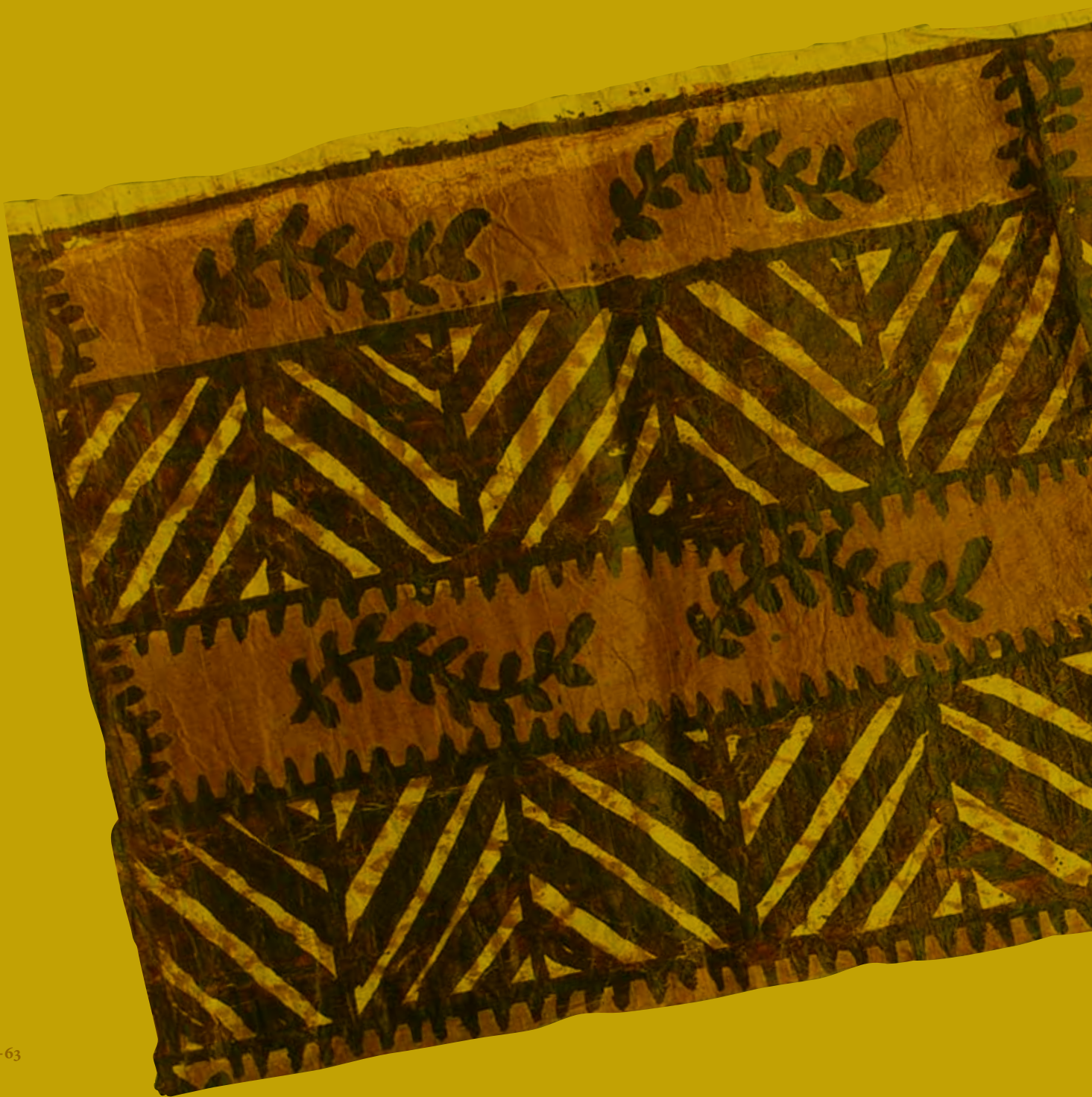
We were overjoyed by the news of an MPEI grant and thrilled to be one of a handful of groups to receive significant multi-year funding. We could now put a more professional touch on our work and further develop and deliver our programmes. First we had to prove sufficient organisational capacity to manage a large grant.

The Trust appointed a consultant to work closely with us. Over the next six months we developed a work plan and budget, and the organisational infrastructure needed to provide our programmes. We found it challenging to define our goals in more concrete terms and drill down to milestones. Our programme was raw but parent feedback convinced us the potential was big. We developed three distinct programmes from our original modules, and our trustees and staff also participated in professional development opportunities, including governance training. The consultant challenged us to the core but also ensured we met our milestones. Eventually he and other advisors took us over the finish line.





5





Getting somewhere together

Making it this far in an ongoing journey

After the final decisions of the MPEI round one grant-making process were made, a poroporoaki was held at the Trust premises.

Led by Kevin Prime, this farewell ceremony was attended by trustees, staff and selection committee members. For so long, the prospect of this gathering had seemed so far away and at times beyond reach. Suddenly we were here.

Emotion swelled in the hearts of many that day. We all expressed a huge sigh of relief and felt a sense of satisfaction that we had finally made it or, perhaps more precisely, had made it this far on an ongoing journey.

Associate Professor Manuka Henare, who often embraced the venerable role of stirrer and challenger in the Māori Reference Group and the Māori Selection Committee, spoke eloquently.

“There was always an elegant dialogue when we came together,” he later recalled. “It was, more precisely, an elegant and sweet dialogue in a spirit of conviviality. The journey was like a long symposium that embraced relationship building, companionship, conviviality and important dialogue. Māori and Pacific Island peoples believe that when the process is good, you bring the future into the present. And when you do that, you know things will go well.”

Looking back, the MPEI grant-making process was guided by community development principles that favoured an organic approach, collaborative leadership and genuine community engagement. Some steps were determined by reference groups and others by staff.

In retrospect, Kristen Kohere-Soutar, chair of the Māori Reference Group and the Māori Selection Committee, spoke for many when she said, “I see growth and accept that there will always be things that could have been done better. I recognise that I am only one of many contributors and that regardless of outcomes we have good reason to celebrate as a group our getting somewhere together. An important achievement, in my mind, was that our relationships with one another remained intact; along the way there was due regard for keeping an appreciation of each person’s contribution.”

“When I look back,” reflected Wilmason Jensen, the chair of the Pacific Reference Group and the Pacific Selection Committee, “I realise that whenever I experienced fear, courage came forth to lead the way. All along, it was as if my touchstones were saying: ‘Let’s test our courage. Let’s take the hard route because it’s the right thing to do. Let’s be honest and admit we don’t know the answer; maybe they’ll want to help us. Let’s follow through with the promises that we make; maybe they will trust us. Let’s listen and speak to them with respect; maybe we’ll get the right answer.’ What I will take away from this journey is a willingness to continue to test my courage, and a commitment to serve my people with humility, respect and integrity. I also hope that this organisation, having put our trust in those things alone and arrived at a point that no-one could have predicted, will take courage from it and continue to practise courage in all areas of our business. These things, above all, are what matters to the communities we serve.”

Our journey together reinforced that the process of community governance must have its own integrity. “You have to give your best at the time you’re engaged, and accept the process will endure beyond your term,” said Pat Snedden. “The next crop of trustees will be people of good faith who will also bring their own insights and values to the process.”



The pivotal role of staff

The journey could have gone quite differently had Trust staff not fully embraced the challenge that trustees put before them. Staff played a pivotal role and worked as a team, learning from and supporting one another in a multitude of ways. Jennifer Gill and Moi Becroft, in particular, each made a crucial contribution to MPEI during its foundation.

At all times and to all parties, Jennifer Gill, the Trust's chief executive, conveyed the strategic importance of MPEI to the Trust. "We've got to get this right," she'd say, leaving her door open to the enquiries and concerns of MPEI contributors. Aware that the reputations of Māori and Pacific contributors were on the line, Jennifer never took for granted the commitment they made to the initiative, and in return she offered unwavering support. Her seamless integrity, her compassionate and tough heart and her intellectual leadership were recognised by all.

Ever gracious and always astute in her judgment, Moi Becroft, MPEI project manager, provided adept project and relationship management. When tackling complex dynamics and unexpected developments, Moi put her faith in the vision, her mind on the task and her trust in the ability of all concerned to co-design a way forward. By her own example she encouraged us to go the extra mile, and doing so made all the difference.

Annie Johnson (MPEI project administrator), Keri-Anne Wikitera (MPEI research adviser/project administrator) and Efeso Collins (MPEI research adviser/project administrator) brought passion, enthusiasm, humour and professional skill to MPEI, enabling each to make valued contributions.

"Whatever the limitations or lessons learned in this journey, the commitment of staff made all the difference," commented Soana Pamaka, speaking for many. "The fact that staff totally embraced the vision of MPEI made a whole lot of things possible that might otherwise have eluded us. At times, when things seemed too difficult, staff persevered, pushed on, expressed their passion for the vision and kept things going. A journey like MPEI requires particular people. As a trustee, it makes a big difference when you feel that you're well covered and that the people charged with implementing the initiative won't give up. I'm grateful for the many contributions of staff and their willingness to take up the challenge to share the passion for MPEI and impart it to others."

Trustee involvement in the selection process

A unique aspect of MPEI was the involvement of some trustees in the selection committees. These trustees had to manage a significantly increased workload along with their other Trust duties and day-to-day jobs. The Trust allocated meeting fees and travel expenses, but this financial contribution did not cover the amount of time invested. At times staff also felt their grant-making expertise was overlooked because of the extended involvement of trustees.

There were however many gains.

"Being involved in the selection process allowed me to walk in their (staff) shoes," reflected Soana Pamaka. "The process taught me that it takes significant time to undertake a carefully considered review of grant applications. I experienced firsthand the high expectations of those seeking funding and the difficulty in making recommendations when there are many worthwhile applications on the table competing for limited funding. I felt an increased sense of respect for the amount of work done by staff on behalf of the Trust and for way they manage community expectations. As trustees we were able to develop a fuller understanding of staff roles and responsibilities and, as a consequence, I believe that staff felt more valued and appreciated. Mutual understanding helped to support more effective working relationships and foster respect for the contribution we each make."



Doing things differently next time

Innovation comes at a price and the price is risk taking, trial and error. Could we have done this or that better? And if so, what, how, when and why?

There is so much to be said on this subject that the Trust published a companion document: *He Akoranga He Aratohu: Māori and Pacific Education Initiative lessons to guide innovative philanthropic and social practice* (MPEI contributors and F. Hancock, 2012) mentioned earlier.

“Anyone taking on an ambitious initiative like MPEI is likely to encounter a number of pitfalls and perils,” responds Jennifer Gill. “Working with complexity means you simply can’t know everything you need to know in advance. I will be the first to stand up and defend the robustness of the MPEI process. Next time some of the processes may be different but I hope we would still embrace and value an organic approach.”

The MPEI grant-making approach promotes a donor relationship based on trust, and requires a deep understanding of communities and community development. Things can go horribly wrong or become unnecessarily difficult without a donor relationship based on trust. Government departments in New Zealand are often criticised for engaging in consultation exercises that lack integrity or for demanding an unreasonable level of accountability for relatively small amounts of funding. They are also criticised for withdrawing funds when groups unexpectedly hit a pothole and find they have a flat tire but the engine is fine. Our journey shows that it takes time to develop and maintain relationships, and managing expectations is a constant challenge.

The expression of interest process created huge expectations the Trust couldn’t meet. Perhaps the misunderstanding could have been avoided if we had examined our assumptions more closely before approaching communities, and communicated differently when we met with them, to get across a clearer message. The process also raised the matter of how well (or not) community groups can represent themselves in text, and how might community groups be assisted to complete written applications so as to better represent their case.

“With hindsight,” reflected Professor Elizabeth McKinley, “community groups needed to be better guided through the process, perhaps through a series of questions aimed at helping them to express themselves better” – and suggestions can be found in our lessons document (MPEI contributors and F. Hancock, 2012: 36).

Would we run another expression of interest process given the unexpected avalanche the first time around? Yes we would, but with improvements. Arguably it was the fairest way forward. To uphold the principle of fairness sometimes demands the courage to risk disappointment. In the context of a relationship of trust, disappointment can be tolerated without questioning the integrity and honesty of the process.

At times our timelines and workloads were pressured. This created stress, and potential innovations (such as collaborative proposals) fell by the wayside as a consequence. But a tight time frame ensures that important milestones are achieved and the work programme stays on track.

An alternative approach could have taken the Trust 20 years to identify ideas worth funding. But one could argue that MPEI was already 20 years too late in seeking to address the significantly low educational achievement levels of Maori and Pacific youth. When we set out none of us expected a recession. A new government came to power keen to implement its own policy directions. Pat Snedden retired as trustee during the development phase. There will always be unforeseen events and anticipated changes to manage in developing a major initiative like MPEI. Such things go with the territory.



Tracking a new course

Through MPEI, ASB Community Trust is tracking a new course. But as Soana Pamaka has cautioned; “We must not lose sight of the expectations of our Māori and Pacific Island communities, because their expectations for this initiative arise from the needs of their children. Their overwhelming response suggests that we were on the right track and that there are important lessons to learn from the journey we have taken. Hopefully, such lessons will help to guide the Trust in its future grant-making initiatives.”

“There’s a lot riding on this initiative,” agrees Jennifer Gill. “I am not aware of another philanthropic initiative like this anywhere else. I felt very excited when the decisions were made but I also paused to consider. What, if any, gems may have rolled onto the floor during this process? Did we miss something along the way? Did we miss the very thing we were searching for? These questions underline the burden of decision making in a major philanthropic initiative like MPEI. I’m certain MPEI projects will address the issue of educational underachievement, but whether they’re sufficient to lead a vanguard of change, only time will tell.”



Our touchstones

There is a Māori saying, “What comes last, cradles everything that has gone before”. When reflecting on the touchstones of our journey together, many of us highlighted the leadership of individuals who inhabit this telling of our journey together.

“Who were they? They were the ones who not only helped us to keep focused on our purpose as we walked the journey together but also generously bestowed their mana upon the whole initiative,” recalled Moi Becroft.

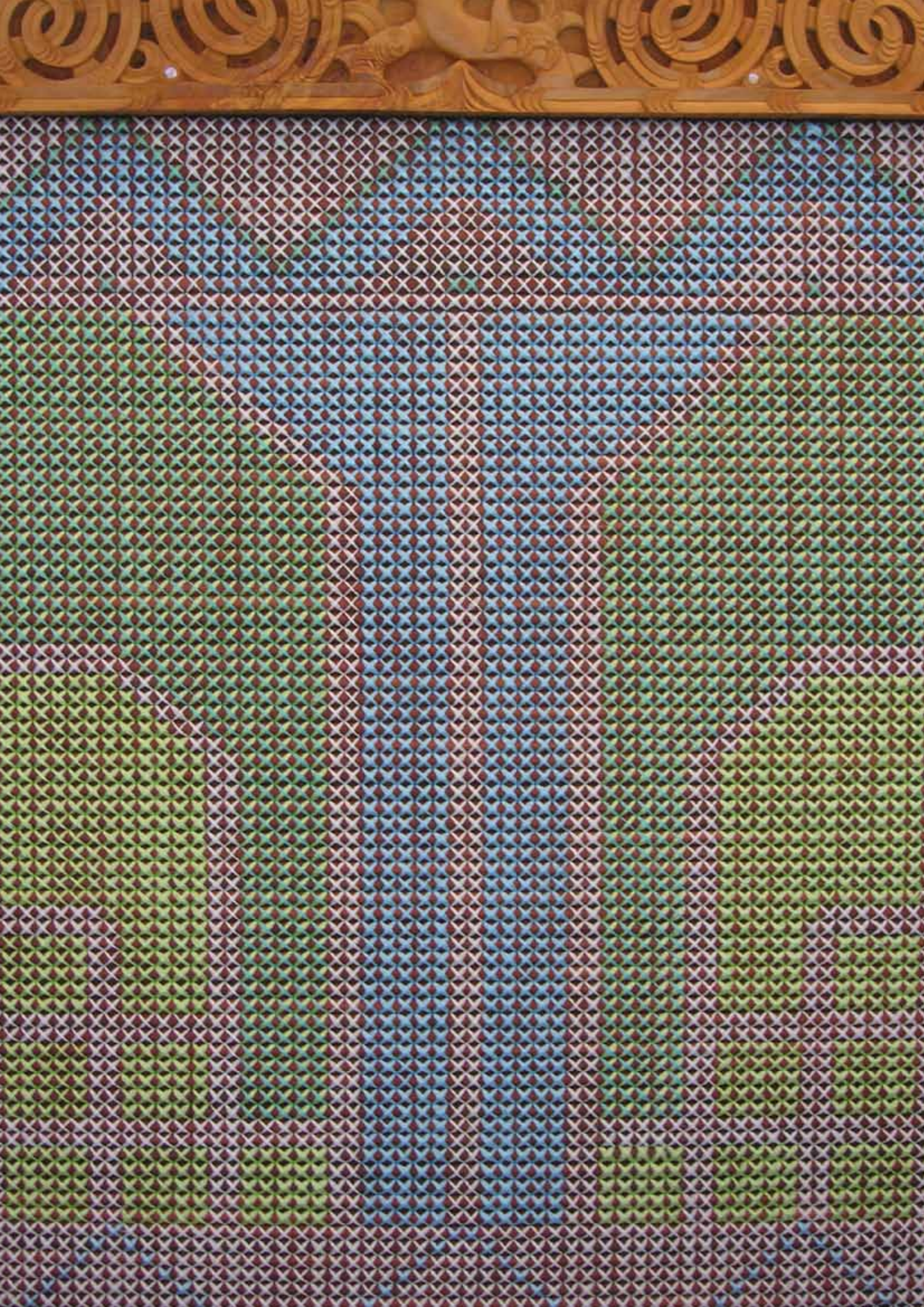
Some pointed to the clarity of vision guiding MPEI and its call to integrity. One named the call to walk into the unknown with the Trust and, quite unexpectedly, being moved spiritually, personally and professionally by the whole experience. Engaging critical enquiry in the grant-making process was named as another touchstone. A staff member cherished the warm family atmosphere and sense of fun alive among the MPEI project team. Others appreciated the emphasis on innovation and valued the Trust’s intention to support a movement of change in the footsteps of kohanga reo. Many set their sights on student achievement, looking out for scalable projects that would turn the tide. Everyone expressed hope for a better future for Māori and Pacific Island children and better educational outcomes for Māori and Pacific Island youth. All of us relished being on the journey together; a journey that is ongoing and will impact on how the Trust does business in the future.

As we come to the end of this account of our journey with the MPEI grant-making process, we look to Kevin Prime, former Trust chair, to offer the last words.

“As I look back along the trail we walked together,” said Kevin, “I see that there were a number of different stages in our journey. Jenny Kirk asked a compelling question that ignited the imagination of Pat Snedden, who brought the idea of a major educational initiative to the Trust, and the trustees bought into it. Once approved, the process was in train. Māori and Pacific leaders brought their expertise to the Trust and co-designed MPEI with us. Jennifer Gill, Moi Becroft and other Trust staff worked hard to implement its vision, and things seemed to follow an unfolding path. Over 300 applicants cast off with an expression of interest but only 37 made it through to the next stage and, of this number, only seven projects were ultimately funded. Hard decisions had to be made at each step of the approval process. The decision making required the consideration, buy in and participation of all the trustees, but on reflection it also provided us with an opportunity to show that we were really committed to and supportive of the initiative.

“I suspect that years from now I will always remember the decision that our trustees made at Long Bay to embrace Pat’s visionary proposal. While the decision was ratified on the spot, it was not taken lightly. Rather, it followed an afternoon of considered reflection during which challenging questions were posed, diverse points of view raised and deep concerns discussed. Afterwards I wondered if my colleagues would back off; would this radical decision be rescinded at the next meeting of the Trust? I expected some to remain very supportive and others to have second thoughts. As it happened no-one spoke against it or turned away.

“My touchstone was, and will always be, the potential fruits of our labour. My hope is that some time in the future we will look back and see many positive outcomes for our Māori and Pacific children. Only then will we feel assured that MPEI has lived up to the many aspirations invested in it. If as a result of MPEI, more Cook Island children are speaking their own language fluently and thriving educationally; if many more Māori children are excelling in kaupapa Māori programmes and achieving nationally recognised educational credits and academic awards; and if Māori and Pacific youth who have benefited from this funding have gone on to find their place in our society and to contribute fully to its future at all levels, then and only then will we know that we were on the right track.”





Afterword

*Professor Daved Barry
– Professor of Creative
Organization Studies,
Department of Management,
Politics, and Philosophy,
Copenhagen Business School*

In some ways the MPEI decision-making processes will be familiar to investors and recipients everywhere, whether they are members of a city board contemplating a new neighborhood development, an entrepreneur asking for start-up capital or a government considering economic reform in dialogue with its constituents. There is always a journey of sorts, starting from some uncertain beginning and ending in something that's more certain, usually after many judgments, meetings, decisions, actions, and reports.

Like other big initiatives, this one had (and continues to have) a large cast of characters, many sub-initiatives, hiccups and worries, champions and losers, lots of meetings, analyses and decisions. Its level of complexity is at the macro-organisational level, and from a systems point of view, such things are quite complex indeed given that any human system that involves more than one person is necessarily more complex than any of the individuals in it.

Such complexities remind me of the blind men and the elephant parable, where one grasps the elephant's leg and thinks it's a tree, while another feels the trunk and worries it's a snake. In such situations, we can only understand what's happening in our own sphere, and can only get a bigger picture through hearing about what the others are seeing and touching in theirs; trying to imagine how all these different reports might fit together—to imagine an elephant that's far bigger than any one of us.

And this is where this account becomes unusual—its story-like way of telling gives us a lived and felt account that is quite different from most reports on large, complex investment processes. It has a kind of god's-eye view but because it is told from the ground with plain language, it pulls the complexities and abstractions down to ground level as well. Like a good dinner conversation, it weaves the various MPEI complexities into something touchable, memorable and human-sized, which makes MPEI efforts more graspable and engaging

than the usual 'big initiative' reports. The story is also peppered with questions and movement, turning what could have been an inedible boulder into something we can, as readers, become more a part of.

Does this pave the way for a new kind of organisational recounting? Should we think of how to re-do our annual reports, vision statements, and evaluation studies? In some ways, I think the answer is yes. Wouldn't it be nice if we had more recountings of organisational actions where we as participants felt seen, heard, and understood, and as a consequence were better able to see, hear, and understand our fellow journeyers as well?

But in some ways, the answer might also be no. What Frances Hancock put together here took nothing less than a Herculean effort, involving countless interviews and undoubtedly many possible drafts and storylines. I know her to be a very fast typist but to get the account to this level of coherency would be a really big job for even the world's fastest writer. And of course, she has a writer's knack, something that normally isn't seen in a lot of organisational settings.

That said, there are devices here that could be used to good effect by any organisational writer—for instance, staying away from bigger-than-life rhetoric, boiling down abstractions into more touchable words, asking questions from time to time and not presenting everything as if it were written in stone, revealing the doubts and fears as well as the uncertain hopes. In philosophy, Richard Rorty did these things, and by so doing he managed to open up philosophical engagement to a much larger world community. If both he and Frances could manage it, perhaps the rest of us should give it a go.

Glossary of Māori terms

- hapu:** collection of families with common ancestry and common ties
- hui:** gathering, meeting
- iwi:** tribe, nation, people, collection of hapu
- kai:** food
- kapa haka:** Māori cultural group, Māori performing group
- kaumatua:** respected elder (male)
- kaupapa:** purpose, underlying philosophy
- karakia:** prayer/s
- kawa:** the protocol relating to formal activities
- koha:** gift
- kohanga reo:** a total immersion Māori language family programme for young children from birth to six years of age
- korero:** discussion, talking things over
- kuia:** respected elder (female)
- kura kaupapa Māori:** Māori-language immersion schools where the philosophy and practice reflect Māori cultural values
- mahi:** work, job, task
- mana:** reputation, integrity, uprightness, prestige, power, authority
- manaaki:** bless, to support, take care of, give hospitality to, protect
- manaakitanga:** hospitality, kindness, cherish
- mana whenua:** tangata whenua living in their own area, having authority over an area
- Māori:** an indigenous person or the indigenous people of New Zealand
- matauranga:** knowledge
- matua:** Father, uncle, elder (male)
- marae:** the spiritual and symbolic centre of tribal affairs; literally, village courtyard
- mihi:** greet, greeting
- mihimihī:** welcoming speech
- moemoea:** vision
- nga maumaharatanga:** the recollections, the memories
- Pakeha:** New Zealander of European descent
- poroporoaki:** a farewell
- powhiri:** a welcome
- putea:** a fund of money
- rangatahi:** youth
- tai tokerau:** the area north of Tamaki river Auckland
- tangata whenua:** the indigenous people – people of the land
- taonga:** treasure
- tapu:** sacred
- te moana nui a Kiwa:** the Pacific Ocean
- te reo Māori:** the Māori language
- tikanga:** custom, rule
- tino rangatiratanga:** autonomy, self-determination, absolute authority
- tu tangata:** standing tall, a strong and confident person
- tupuna:** ancestors
- waiata:** song, chant
- wairua:** spirit, soul, spirituality
- whaikorero:** a formal speech in Māori
- whakapapa:** genealogy, lineage, descent
- whakawhanaungatanga:** relationship building; relating well to others
- whanau:** extended family
- whanaunga:** relative, relation, kin, blood relation
- whare:** house, building, residence
- wharenui:** meeting house, large house – main building of a marae where guests are accommodated

MPEI contributors

Toleafoa Sina Aiolupotea-Aiono

Sina's parents came from Samoa in the early 1960s; her father's family, Aiga sa Aiolupotea, are from the village of Falelima, Savaii and her mother's family, Aiga sa Unasa, from the village of Faga, Savaii. Raised in South Auckland, Sina continues to work and live in the area. With her husband she is raising four beautiful children. She has a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Auckland and is now doing a Masters in Educational Leadership at Auckland University of Technology. She is the manager of Pacific development at Manukau Institute of Technology and her interests in community development, Pacific leadership and education and local government are reflected in various memberships, including as an Auckland Council Pacific Peoples Advisory Panel member, a trustee of COMET (City of Manukau Education Trust), an Ako Aotearoa Pacific caucus member and a Leadership Pacific network member. She wants Pacific communities to succeed educationally so that the huge and valuable contribution of Pacific communities, their cultures and values can add to the richness and diversity of New Zealand society and economy. Sina was a member of the MPEI Pacific Reference Group.

Linda Tinai Aumua

Linda is part Fijian, from the Province of Tailevu, and part New Zealand European. Her background is in education; she started as a primary school teacher and moved through to the tertiary sector. Currently, Linda is the director of Pacific student and community engagement at Unitec Institute of Technology. She is a member of various committees and boards in the education sector both locally and nationally, and was a member of the MPEI Pacific Selection Committee. Linda and her handsome Samoan husband have three children (hence the Aumua surname).

Moi Becroft

Before joining the Trust in 2006 Moi worked for the Department of Internal Affairs for 11 years, doing community development work and co-ordinating Auckland COGS committees. With Nga Puhi connections through her mother (a Beazley), she grew up in Kaipara's Port Albert as a fifth-generation Albertland settler on her father's side. Moi is well networked and known within Auckland's social service sector. She has a profoundly deaf daughter, which also connects her to the deaf community. Moi is the project manager for MPEI.

Dave Booth

Dave is a graduate of Massey University in business studies. He later completed a management graduate programme and accountancy studies. His diverse professional background includes managing a hostel for youth at risk, providing research and training for middle managers and serving in various finance roles in the television industry. He established a highly successful internet business in the United Kingdom with friends, and when the company was sold turned his attention to arts-related projects in Europe. Returning to New Zealand in 2006, Dave was a consultant for The Tindall Foundation's SCOPE capacity-building pilot and is now a generalist advisor and mentor to the not-for-profit sector. He is also a business mentor for and member of the Business Angels at Icehouse, an incubator for young, start-up companies. Dave is involved in arts-related projects and is the main benefactor of the Levin Organic River Festival. Dave was an external consultant to MPEI.

Efeso Collins

Efeso is of Samoan and Tokelauan descent (Satupaitea, Malie, Fakaofu), and has worked with young people for almost 15 years. He is a former student of Tangaroa College in Otago, and in 1998 was the first Pacific Island president of the Auckland University Students Association. He worked for the University of Auckland for six years, is a Universitas21 fellow and founded the Pacific Islands Dream Fonotaga in 2002. Efeso is passionate about Pacific education, and is a youth mentoring consultant. He has an MA Hons in Education from the University of Auckland and is enrolled as a doctoral student at Te Wananga o Awanuiarangi. Efeso co-owns Catalyst Solutions Ltd. Efeso participated on the Pacific Reference Group before taking up the role of MPEI research adviser and project administrator.

Kelvin Davis

Kelvin Davis was born and bred in Te Tai Tokerau, where he has lived most of his life. His tribal links are with his hapu of Ngati Manu and his marae in Karetu in the Bay of Islands. Kelvin became a principal after six years of teaching. He was then seconded as an advisor to principals and boards of trustees in schools north of Whangarei; a 12-month stint at the Ministry of Education followed. In 2001 he became principal of Kaitia Intermediate School, considered the school most 'at risk' north of Auckland. In 2004 Kelvin received a Woolf Fisher Fellowship to pursue his interest in indigenous education, visiting schools in the USA, Canada and the UK and attending a school leadership course at Harvard University. More recently, Kelvin was a Member of Parliament, entering politics to improve outcomes for Māori. He is passionate about Māori education as a pathway to success. He loves sports and is married with three beautiful, intelligent, respectful children. He was a member of the MPEI Māori Reference Group and MPEI Māori Selection Committee.

Pila Fatu

Pila's family migrated to New Zealand from Samoa in 1977 when she was seven years old, and she grew up in Otago. Pila earned a Bachelor of Management Studies from Waikato University and then worked in government, predominantly in community development and funding roles for the Department of Internal Affairs, Department of Labour and Child, Youth and Family (Ministry of Social Development). She was a school travel co-ordinator for Auckland Transport and is now working for the Ministry for Cultural and Heritage in the Going Digital Project. As a volunteer, Pila has contributed to various community groups, including as the chairperson of Yendarra School, the Otago Boards Forum and Vaiola Budgeting Services. She is a member of the Northern Region Pacific Advisory Group to the Ministry of Education and is on the advisory group to COMET (City of Manukau Education Trust) for Te Whanau Ara Mua programme. Pila was a member of the Pacific Reference Group for the MPEI initiative. She is married to a wonderful Samoan man and they have three lovely boys.

Mokauina Fuemana Ngaro

Moka was born in Pagopago on the island of American Samoa, and is of Samoa, Niue, Cook Islands and Irish descent. Moka is a trained and experienced clinical practitioner. Until recently Moka was employed as a counsellor at Unitec Institute of Technology. Her professional work includes counselling, family therapy, child mental health, clinical and cultural supervision and community engagement. Moka has a passion for developing indigenous models of care, healing and development. She has contributed to many government and community consultations and working groups. She is a member of the National Pacific Advisory Group for Family and Community Services, Ministry of Social Development. Moka and her husband Alfred have four children. Moka was a member of the MPEI Pacific Selection Committee.

Mary Foy rsm

A Sister of Mercy, Mary had a long teaching career before becoming a founding staff member at Monte Cecilia House, a not-for-profit organisation providing advocacy, support services and emergency accommodation for homeless families. She was the group's national spokesperson on housing issues for over a decade and held leadership roles in housing action groups such as the New Zealand Housing Network and the Shelter for All Coalition. Mary is the chair of Monte Cecilia Housing Trust. Following her term as congregational leader, Mary established Te Ukaipo Mercy Initiatives for Rangatahi, now a community development initiative of Nga Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand, where she continues to work with others to provide advocacy and support services for children and at-risk youth. In 2000 Mary was made a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit (CNZM). Mary was a trustee of ASB Community Trust for eight years and a member of MPEI reference groups and selection committees.

Jennifer Gill

In 2004 Jennifer became chief executive of ASB Community Trust after 10 years as executive director of Fulbright NZ. Her career in philanthropy began in 1985 when Sir Roy McKenzie appointed her as the executive officer of the Roy McKenzie Foundation. She was subsequently appointed as a trustee and chair of the J R McKenzie Trust. She was a founding member of the board of the Wellington Regional Community Foundation and the Funding Information Service. Jennifer is currently in her second term as a member of the board of Philanthropy New Zealand, and in 2009 completed a five-year term as chair. Jennifer is also a trustee of two small but innovative family trusts that focus on reducing disadvantage in New Zealand. From 1994 to 2004 Jennifer was the chief executive officer of Fulbright New Zealand and served on the board of the Ian Axford fellowships. Jennifer has spoken and written widely on the role of philanthropy. She is the co-author of a chapter "Innovation in Philanthropy Downunder" in *Global Philanthropy*, published by the Mercator Fund, Network of European Foundations in April 2010. She was also a board member of the Asia Pacific Philanthropy Consortium from 2007 to 2011.

Associate Professor Manuka Henare

Manuka's tribal affiliations are with Te Rarawa and Te Aupouri iwi. He earned a PhD in Māori Studies with a focus on Anthropology and History from Victoria University of Wellington. In 1996 he joined the University of Auckland Business School and is now the Associate Dean Māori and Pacific Development, founder director of the Mira Szász Research Centre and academic co-ordinator of the Huanga Māori Masters Graduate programme, Graduate School of Enterprise. He has received a number of awards, including the Auckland University Business School's Distinguished Contribution Award in 2010. Manuka is a member of the Institute of Directors and holds ministerial appointments to the Council of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa and the Council of the Manukau Institute of Technology. He was a board member of the Environmental Risk Management Authority for eight years, has advised government departments, local authorities and other institutions, and has served on many government advisory committees. Prior to his university career he was involved in international development, justice and peace work, and has travelled extensively through Asia and the Pacific. Manuka was a member of the MPEI Māori Reference Group and the MPEI Māori Selection Committee.

Wilmason Jensen

Wilmason spent his early childhood in Samoa; his father is from the village of Vaiala and his mother is from Sato'olepai. He won a music scholarship to Kings College in Auckland, and went on to attend the University of Auckland where he graduated with a Bachelor's degree in law and the arts. Wilmason is passionate about improving the health and educational outcomes for Pacific peoples. He is the Pacific Health Manager, ProCare Health Ltd, a primary health organisation that serves over 100,000 Pacific peoples in Auckland. He is married with a eight-year-old child. He was a trustee of the ASB Community Trust (2004–2010) and chair of the MPEI Pacific Reference Group and the MPEI Pacific Selection Committee.

Jenny Kirk

Jenny Kirk, MNZM, is a former Member of Parliament (1987–1990), North Shore City councillor (1995–2001) and community board member for both Birkenhead-Northcote and Glenfield districts. Jenny has been a journalist, and has had considerable experience in the management of not-for-profit organisations as the chief executive of the National Foundation for the Deaf and North Harbour Employment Resource Centre. She has been a trustee with Women's Health Action Trust, an advisor to the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Trust and a member of Northart. She served two terms as a member of the Auckland Conservation Board and on the Cadestral Surveyors Licensing Board. Jenny was a trustee of ASB Community Trust (2003–2011) and a member of the MPEI Pacific Reference Group and the MPEI Pacific Selection Committee.

Kristen Kohere-Soutar

Kristen is of Ngati Porou, Rongowhakaata and Ngai Tahu descent. A graduate of Auckland University, Kristen began her career in large corporate organisations, as a solicitor on Treaty of Waitangi claims for Rudd Watts and Stone (now Minter Ellison) and a consultant for the accounting and management advisory firm KPMG, working in the area of Māori and iwi organisational development. She ran her own consultancy for 10 years, providing professional advice and leadership to the Māori health and tertiary education sectors, local government, Māori providers, iwi authorities and private sector companies in New Zealand. She now works for Kiwibank as the head of specialist markets strategy and development, and is a director of the Aotearoa Credit Union. Kristen is well known in Māori performing arts as a performer, judge and tutor. She is married, and she and her husband have five children between them. Kristen has served on the ASB Community Trust since 2004, and was the chair of the finance and administration committee. She was chair of the MPEI Māori Reference Group and MPEI Māori Selection Committee.

Frank Leadley

Frank was a secondary school principal for 22 years, and was awarded a Queens Service Medal for Public Services in 2001. He was a founder and former member of Runanga Kaumatua o Pewhairangi and the foundation president for the Secondary Principals Association of New Zealand. Frank was also a founder of the Education for Enterprise (E4E), the Young Entrepreneur and the Northland Enterprising Teachers programmes. Frank was Northland regional co-ordinator for the Young Enterprise Scheme and a Northland Enterprise Education director. He was a commissioner at Kaitiāia Intermediate School and Te Kura o Awarua and Rawene primary schools. Frank is a former member of the Northland Regional Council Community Trust, the Bay Of Islands Electric Power Trust, the ASB Recreational Centre Trust, NZ Historic Places Trust, the Bay Of Islands Maritime and Historic Parks Board and the Northland Grow Trust. He has been a member of Rotary International for 42 years and is secretary for Northland Youth Development Trust. Frank was a member of the MPEI Māori Reference Group and the MPEI Māori Selection Committee.

Tuiataga Faafua Leavasa-Tautolo

Faafua's educational career spans more than three decades, covering all sectors from early childhood to tertiary. Her career includes over 21 years as a classroom teacher in primary and secondary schools, administration and management at senior level in secondary schools, the Department of Education, the Early Childhood Development Unit, the Pacific Islands Education Resource Centre, the Education Review Office, and until her retirement in 2009 was an education consultant. A keen sportswoman, Faafua now spends more time on the golf course, and enjoys the company of her numerous grandchildren and her first great granddaughter, Peleina. She is happily married to Toalepai Lui Tautolo. She is very proud of her Samoan heritage, and values the opportunities that living in New Zealand has provided. She enjoys good health and believes in a balance between work and leisure. Faafua was a member of the MPEI Pacific Reference Group and the MPEI Pacific Selection Committee.

Professor Elizabeth McKinley

Elizabeth is of Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa and Ngāi Tahu descent. She has an extensive background in Māori education in New Zealand, and her career in education, both teaching and management, spans 30 years. In secondary schools she specialised in teaching bilingual science classes (Māori and English), and for more than 10 years held lecturing and management posts at the University of Waikato. Before joining the Starpath Project as director in 2007 and becoming a professor in 2011, Liz was Associate Professor Māori Education at Auckland University's education faculty, and was previously the Assistant Dean Māori Education at Waikato University. A graduate of the University of Otago, her early Masters and PhD work explored the interaction between science and Māori culture. Liz is also a principal investigator for a project researching the supervision of Māori doctoral students, funded by the Ministry of Education. Liz was a member of the MPEI Māori Reference Group and the MPEI Māori Selection Committee.

Soana Pamaka

Soana has been the principal of Tamaki College since 2006. With a BA in Education from Auckland University and a Diploma of Teaching from Auckland College of Education, she began her long association with the college as an assistant English teacher in 1990. By 1998 she was deputy principal of this 650-pupil, multicultural school. Soana is a respected community leader in Glen Innes, known as a strong community and youth advocate. She has been involved in many local initiatives and was on the board of the Langafonua Community Group for a number of years. Soana was a Sunday school teacher at St Mary's Cooperating Parish in Glen Innes, where she is a parish council member. She is also a member of the Teach First New Zealand Board and was trustee of ASB Community Trust. Soana was a member of the MPEI Pacific Reference Group and the MPEI Pacific Selection Committee. She is married with four children.

Waitai Petera

Waitai Petera is the Māori Development Officer for the country's largest intellectual disability service provider for Māori, Te Roopu Taurima o Manukau. Waitai holds a Master of Management from Auckland University. With tribal affiliations to Northland's Te Aupouri and Ngati Kuri, he is the former chief executive of the Te Aupouri Māori Trust Board, of which he is still a member. He was an iwi representative on the Maritime and Seafood Educators Association of Aotearoa and a Te Aupouri Iwi negotiator for land and fisheries settlement claims. Waitai also represented Te Ohu Kaimoana, the statutory organisation dedicated to future advancement of Māori interests in the marine environment, was on the Māori Caucus Seafood Advisory Committee and the Aquaculture and Seafood Advisory Group. Waitai is a former trustee of the ASB Community Trust. He was a member of the MPEI Māori Reference Group and the MPEI Māori Selection Committee.

Kevin Prime

Kevin is a commissioner with the Environment Court, and as a farmer and forester has a good understanding of the rural sector. Kevin's tribal links are with Ngati Hine, Ngati Whatua and Tainui. He is a fluent speaker of te reo and has an in-depth understanding of tikanga Māori. He has been involved in governance for over 30 years in marae, Māori development, health, conservation, education, sport, justice, forestry, philanthropy and environmental issues. Kevin was the former chair of the ASB Community Trust and a member of the MPEI Māori Reference Group. In 2010 he was invited by the Trust to serve in the role of kaumatua. Kevin is married to Margaret and they have 13 children.

Ezra Schuster

Ezra is a proud Samoan, born and raised in South Auckland. He is passionate about developing Pacific leadership in New Zealand and advancing the educational achievement of Pacific, Māori and special needs students. Ezra is the Manukau district manager for the Ministry of Education and was its national Pacific manager. He is a trustee at the New Zealand Commonwealth Study Board and on the alumni of the Emerging Pacific Leaders' Dialogue. Ezra is a member of a number of advisory groups, including Young Leaders Day NZ, and has developed several educational and youth leadership initiatives at secondary and tertiary levels. He has worked and lived in Thailand, Japan and Samoa, and has a Masters of Educational Management. Ezra is married with five children. He was a member of the MPEI Pacific Reference Group.

Sharon Shea

Sharon's tribal affiliations are with Ngati Ranginui, Ngati Hine, Ngati Haua and Ngati Hako. A graduate of Oxford and Auckland universities, she was a lawyer at Kensington Swan (Auckland) before taking up senior management roles focused on Māori health improvement in government and non-government organisations. Since 2002, Sharon has run a successful consulting business, acting as a director and principal consultant. She is widely recognised as a leader in the field of health sector strategy, outcomes framework development (applying Friedman's Results Based Accountability™ Framework), quality assurance and systems design, particularly with respect to issues affecting Māori and reducing inequalities. Sharon holds board memberships for both private and public/not-for-profit organisations and fulfils Ministerial-appointed roles as requested. Sharon was an external consultant to MPEI.

Pat Snedden

Patrick Snedden is a 59-year-old Pakeha who began his professional life in publishing after graduating in 1979 from Auckland University in accounting, economics and anthropology. He has been self-employed since 1984. For 20 years Pat was a business adviser for Health Care Aotearoa, a primary care network of Māori, Pacific Island and community groups in the not-for-profit health sector. From 1982 to 2008 he worked as an economic adviser to the Ngati Whatua o Orakei Māori Trust Board and was part of their Treaty negotiation team. He has been a corporate director for many years and was a founding director of Mai FM, this country's first Māori commercial radio station. He now has roles in public sector governance. Until 2010 he chaired the Housing New Zealand Corporation and the Auckland District Health Board. Currently he is a director on Watercare Services, a wastewater and water company for Auckland and chairs the Maniakalani Education Trust. He was deputy chair of the ASB Community Trust until 2009 and played a leadership role in developing MPEI.

Pita Tipene

Ko Motatau te puke, ko Taikirau te waikeri, ko Motatau te marae

Ko Ngati Te Tarawa te hapu ririki, ko Ngati Hine te hapu.

Pita's professional background is in secondary teaching, national qualifications and curriculum design. More recently he has been involved in hapu and iwi development, and is currently project manager for Ngati Hine Health Trust. He is a husband, father of three children and grandfather of four mokopuna. Pita was a member of the MPEI Māori Reference Group.

Keri-Anne Wikitera

Keri-Anne's tribal affiliations are with Te Arawa and Ngapuhi. She is currently undertaking doctoral studies on indigenous tourism at Auckland University of Technology, where she also lectures. Keri-Anne's professional background focused on Māori women's health. She previously managed the Auckland Cervical Screening Programme and the Auckland Māori Breast Screening Programme. Keri-Anne was an inaugural member of the Kaitiaki Group which advised the Minister of Health on the appropriate use of Māori health data. She has two children and two mokopuna and thus has a keen interest in Māori education. She was an MPEI research adviser and project administrator.





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