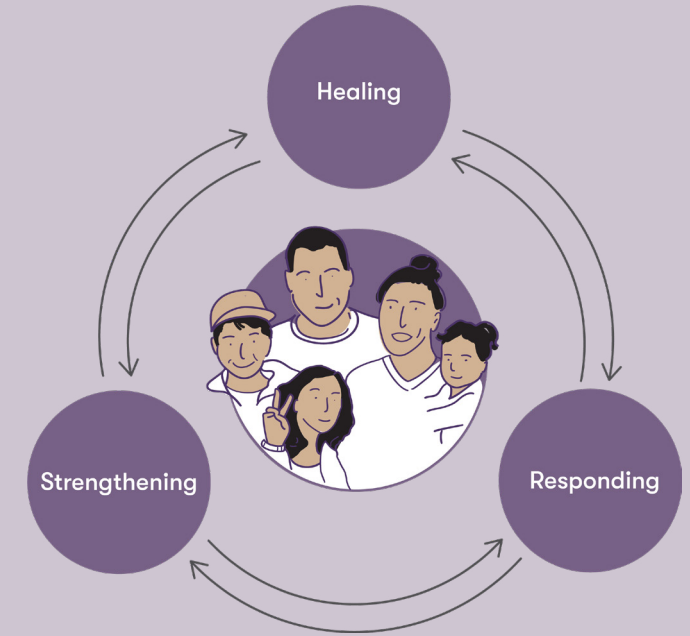


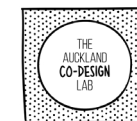
TE TOKOTORU CASE STUDY

This is one of a series of case studies sharing how Te Tokotoru is being used by government agencies to rebalance action and investment to what makes the difference for whānau.



Translating whānau realities to government: The use of Te Tokotoru in Family Court redesign in Kaitiāia.

A case study developed in conversation with Rangimārie Mules from Oi Collective.



Introduction

About this case study

This case study shares how Te Tokotoru was used as part of a process in Kaitiāia to redesign the Family Court system to work better for whānau.

Te Tokotoru informed the design of a restorative process for whānau with experience of the Family Court system, to convey that experience and changes they would like to see to government, in a way that could be readily understood and acted upon.



Te Tokotoru is an evidence-based approach to investment that increases the long term impact of public sector funding through a more balanced and effective allocation of resources.

Te Tokotoru reflects seven years of learning from The Southern Initiative and Auckland Co-Design Lab, working alongside whānau in south Auckland on what supports wellbeing. It reflects practice-based evidence and research about what matters and makes the difference to whānau.

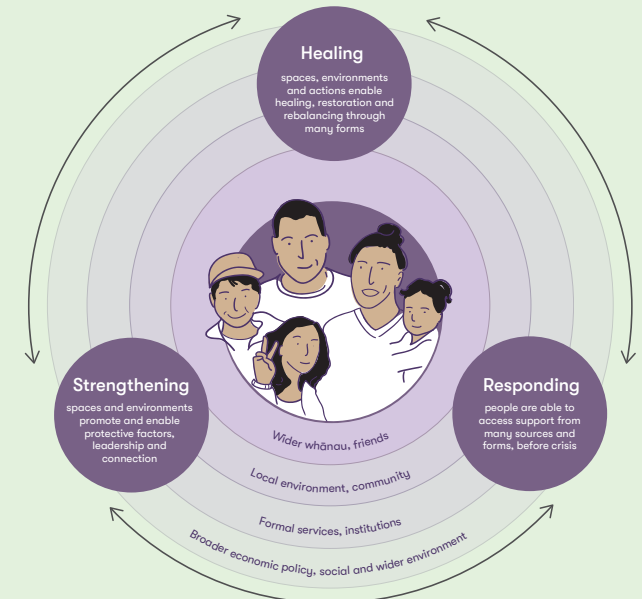
Te Tokotoru moves the public sector from a deficit focused, service-led, crisis response cycle, to focus on what matters to communities in place.

It recognises the importance of supporting the knowledge and networks that are already in communities, investing in locally led responses, and in what strengthens, heals and restores long term.

Our current service systems are not delivering for families, and Te Tokotoru provides an alternative investment approach, to achieve better outcomes over time.

Te Tokotoru can be used on the ground with whānau to identify what would make the difference for them, including how to enhance existing strengths, support restoration and address root causes of harm.

It can be used by government systems and service settings to rebalance action and investment to what matters to whānau, and to work in more joined up ways across the three connected domains of strengthening, healing and responding:



Te Tokotoru (Unbreakable Three)
A systems approach to wellbeing.

Family Court Redesign

"There is so much hunger from government for rural insights and mātauranga ā-whānau. My ongoing question is, why are they so far removed from these realities? Te Tokotoru helped me intentionally close this gap."*

Oi Collective's Rangimārie Mules is leading a Ministry of Justice contract to redesign the Family Court system in Kaitiāia to better meet the needs of Te Hiku whānau, hapū, iwi and communities. This kaupapa is part of [Te Ao Marama](#), a judicially led initiative which aims to improve the experience of all who engage with the District Court system of Aotearoa.

As the first region to implement this initiative, Rangimārie needed a framework to act as a translation device between the worlds of whānau in Te Hiku o Te Ika (the Far North) and government in Te Ūpoko o Te Ika (Wellington). Te Tokotoru acted as a bridge and translation device between community and government:

"Te Tokotoru helped to frame my own thinking. I had to create a structure to translate the vast and complex experiences of whānau and move that into the context of system responses. Te Tokotoru was a fit-for-purpose vessel I could fill up with whānau lived realities."

In reality, the worlds of whānau and judiciary hardly ever touch each other, apart from in a courtroom. Te Tokotoru helped me to describe super complex realities and experiences, like the complexities of the justice system, and that it's about reorienting the system to meet whānau rather than vice versa."

There was no need to talk to whānau or anyone in Te Hiku about Te Tokotoru; Rangimārie used it as a background tool:

"Te Tokotoru didn't need to be mentioned or branded; it gave me a structure to move information from one context to another without corrupting the integrity or authenticity of whānau lived realities."

Whānau were asked to take photos in response to eight questions mapping their experience of the Family Court process. Questions included:

- How do you describe your overall experience of the Family Court?
- How did you feel at the beginning of the formal family court process? At the end of the process?
- What or who was your greatest support? What kept you ora or well?
- If you had total creative license, what would the Family Court look and feel like?

Whānau were then asked to provide captions or descriptions of their photos that told their unique stories.

A public exhibition entitled Nanaiore displayed the whānau photographs and shared these stories and experiences of the family court system with the wider community. The exhibition was used as the basis of Te Hiku community workshops, utilising the Te Tokotoru structure of strengthening, healing and responding.



* All quotes throughout are from Rangimārie Mules.

Rangimārie notes that the current landscape of the Family Court, like so many other centralised services, is focused on responding to crisis, or being the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff. This photo and exhibition process helped reframe the Family Court system as not just about responding to crises but working proactively and preventatively, in ways that promote existing strengths and support healing within whānau, hapū, iwi and wider community contexts.

Te Tokotoru helped to design a healing experience with whānau. As everyone had a phone and were practiced at taking photos, existing resources and capabilities were utilised. Whānau directly interpreted their own photos with minimal input by others, which kept whānau voice closer to the source and held whānau at the centre of the process for longer. This methodology meant that whānau stories weren't being extracted, reinterpreted or decontextualised. By minimising the distance between whānau and their data and viewers, the exhibition had a raw, emotive and very real impact on viewers, which included whānau, the local community and people who work in the justice system.

Given the competitive nature of government funding, especially in lower socio-economic provincial areas, Rangimārie was careful to avoid critiquing current service provision or getting into new service design. Instead, Te Tokotoru helped unpack the current landscape and lift the conversation up into how we might improve the justice system to foster restoration as a collaborative process - with the ultimate goal being for whānau to pursue conciliation over litigation, by having equitable access to information, knowledge, support and empowering relationships.

The workshops looked at three things, keeping an eye on all three elements of Te Tokotoru throughout:

- How do we empower whānau with fair and inclusive practice, knowledge and relationships (strengthening)?
- How do we intentionally invest in respite, recovery and restoration for whānau (healing)?
- How are we sharing power and control (responding)? What do we "keep", "stop", or "start"?

Te Tokotoru helped design a process to keep whānau voice at the heart of the system, and in a way that those working in government settings could understand, digest and reflect on, in terms of their current response.

An early response from within government was to block aspects of the process (e.g. not wanting to give access to key data, not trusting the methodology and questioning the robustness of the research methods), yet after seeing the quality and authenticity of whānau voice emerging, people within government responded far more supportively (for example by agreeing to fund the exhibition costs).

This showed the power that an authentic process can have on a government system and that system change can be made up of many small subtle steps that create change over time.

Rangimārie discussed with Penny Hagen how to convey *"The beauty and energy and 'up the guts' style of Te Taitokerau to a Wellington office."* Penny spoke of the Auckland Co-design Lab's experience working with policy analysts from Wellington and becoming a direct part of the translation process. After some negotiation:

"Three senior Māori Policy analysts came to our exhibitions and workshops. Their role was to take notes and in real time identify policy levers and potential, 'how might we?' questions, and areas of policy relating to findings. We also asked them to ring their bosses every day - as they got excited by the momentum with the exhibition that was super humming, they could relay their own experiences as a human."

"In this way, our relationship with the system changed - from shutdown, which comes from a place of hurt, crises, protection and rigidity, to including the system in the process and translating it back to them in real time, through real people and emotions."



After the workshops, the key actions arising were distilled with Te Hiku Iwi Development Trust into two key pragmatic actions, that together will create a foundation for snowball effects.

Rangimārie notes that you cannot meet complexity with complexity, and that seeking a small number of practical changes is more likely to create shifts than multiple, less tangible recommendations. Decisions on these are in process and should occur by early 2024.

A suggestion to strengthen Te Tokotoru is to ask whānau and the system to agree on language that works for them for the terms strengthening, healing and responding, and to provide more examples of how it can be used. A further suggestion was to find a metaphor or image for Te Tokotoru that people can relate to, in a similar way to the [whare/house for Te Whare Tapa Wha](#).

Summary

Te Tokotoru helped Rangimārie hold a restorative space for whānau, draw out whānau realities and relay them into government settings in a way that they could be understood and acted on, and that retained the authenticity of whānau lived realities in Te Hiku o Te Ika (the Far North).

Te Tokotoru helped to collapse the distance between whānau and the crown and reorientate the system towards greater equity and wellbeing for whānau in Te Hiku o Te Ika – in this case a more restorative and empowering family court system.

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge all who have contributed to the development of Te Tokotoru. We continue to develop and learn with Te Tokotoru and how it can support us to work differently in service of equity and intergenerational wellbeing.

If Te Tokotoru is informing your mahi and you would like share what you are learning please contact penny.hagen@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

Our special thanks to Rachael Trotman and Deane-Rose Ngatai-Tua for developing the Te Tokotoru case study series.

