

# Activating Our Values

Insights from InsideOUT Kōaro staff and  
volunteers in the Young Activists Project

# Haere mai tātou!

This resource has been developed in a collaboration between InsideOUT Kōaro and researchers from the University of Otago. Between September 2018 and June 2020, the researchers explored the experiences of young activists involved with six organisations working towards social change in Aotearoa New Zealand. One of these groups was InsideOUT Kōaro. In this resource, we share some of the experiences of InsideOUT staff and volunteers who took part in interviews for the research. The quotes included in this resource are from these interviews.

This document outlines the kaupapa and structure of InsideOUT Kōaro. We share some insights on the values that young activists in our organisation have identified, and how we aim to enact these values in our practices. We believe it's important to document InsideOUT's values throughout the different layers of our organisation — in policies and resources through to living out these values in our everyday practices. These values guide the people within and around our organisation to bring their full selves to InsideOUT Kōaro and sustain our mahi.

In this document, we refer to our members and staff as 'young activists', which is what the research team called the research participants. We know that the term 'activist' might not resonate for everyone and some people prefer terms like volunteer, change-maker or advocate. What we mean by 'activist' is anyone who is part of a community striving for positive change.

The information in this resource reflects the experiences of InsideOUT Kōaro over the past few years, and it's important to note that volunteer and staff experiences may change in the future as InsideOUT Kōaro grows. These findings can be seen as a 'snapshot' in time, documenting an important stage of the organisation's life.

We hope that this information will be helpful for you and your organisation when working with young people and volunteers. You can find out more about our mahi and resources on our [website](#).

# Ko wai mātou?

**InsideOUT Kōaro** is a national non-for-profit organisation founded in 2012. We provide resources, information, workshops, consulting and support for issues relating to takatāpui and rainbow young people in schools, workplaces and community organisations.

**Our vision** is that all takatāpui and rainbow young people in Aotearoa New Zealand have a sense of safety and belonging in their schools and communities.

**Our mission** is to work with young people, whānau, schools, community groups, youth services, government agencies, and other relevant organisations to provide safer schools and communities for takatāpui and rainbow young people. We develop and provide resources, education, information, hui, and relevant tools that work to improve the health, wellbeing, and safety of takatāpui and rainbow young people.



# Honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi

InsideOUT Kōaro is a tauwi-founded organisation, committed through its operations and practice to honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi. We strive to uphold te tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) of tangata whenua, as we see this as integral to working towards creating equitable outcomes for rangatahi Māori and takatāpui. We recognise this is an ongoing journey in which we all have a role to play.

**Here are some of the actions we are currently taking to uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi through our organisation:**

- Developing our Te Tiriti o Waitangi strategy, and ensuring that all relevant policies give effect to principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi
- Employing kaimahi Māori and supporting opportunities for them to come together through a Māori caucus
- Having dedicated Tangata Whenua trustee roles on the Board
- Developing resources for kura kaupapa Māori and rangatahi takatāpui
- Providing Te Tiriti training for staff, volunteers and board members
- Integrating tikanga me te reo Māori into our practices, such as karakia, whakatauki and whakawhanaungatanga
- Creating a caucus for tauwi (non-Māori) staff to discuss their work as tangata tiriti.



*I think InsideOUT is really great at kind of checking themselves and seeing whether or not they're honouring the Treaty. And the volunteers as well, not just the organisation as an entity, but the people. I think there's a real emphasis on trying to incorporate te reo as much as we can and focus on inclusivity and diversity. So intersectionality, I think, is really important.*

# How We Roll: InsideOUT Kōaro's operational model

When InsideOUT started out in 2012, most of the mahi was done by volunteers aged 27 or younger working alongside the Managing Director. As the organisation has grown over the years, our mahi is now shared across the Board, staff and volunteers. We now have a small team of paid staff in leadership roles who look after different teams in the organisation - these are our Managing Director, School Services Manager, Workplaces Services Manager and an Operations and Engagement Lead.

The **Board** consists of up to nine youth trustees under 27 years old and up to four executive advisors over 27 years old. Two youth trustee seats and one executive advisor seat are reserved at minimum for tangata whenua. The Board works closely with the Managing Director. The role of the Board is to make sure that things are running smoothly at all levels of the organisation. Members make governance decisions collectively about such things as developing the organisational strategy, employing staff, making financial decisions, and writing and reviewing policies.

InsideOUT has a growing team of **staff** working across Aotearoa with schools, kura kaupapa Māori and wider communities to support whānau and rangatahi, facilitate workshops and organise campaigns. Our Volunteer Coordinator works to engage and support volunteers within the organisation.





As of 2023, we have around 130 **volunteers** around Aotearoa who generously give their time to support InsideOUT Kōaro. Volunteers are rainbow young people or allies under 27 years old. Volunteers are central to InsideOUT's mahi, and are involved in various activities such as assisting with school visits, co-facilitating workshops, supporting at events, co-hosting SpeakOUT (our radio show), graphic design work, photography, writing, sharing personal experiences and contributing in a range of other ways to achieve our organisation's vision.

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*I'm a volunteer with InsideOUT, so basically if there's anything that the organisation needs, people to help with facilitating workshops or coming up with ideas to help young people, or if there's any events to do with the LGBT community or any extra support that's needed, it gets thrown around to a bunch of volunteers and we get to choose if we wanna step forward to do something or not, and whether it will work with our schedules or not.*



# What our volunteers value about InsideOUT Kōaro

Here we share some of the aspects of InsideOUT, which Young Activists participants found valuable. These include:

fostering community

flexibility

reciprocity

centring self-determination

The InsideOUT Kōaro participants told the Young Activists researchers that these values led to a sense of mutual care and had positive impacts on wellbeing among InsideOUT members.

Through sharing how these values are enacted in InsideOUT, we hope that you may reflect on your organisation's values and how you also support people in your organisation to sustain their mahi. **As you read through, we encourage you to reflect on how your organisation documents and enacts its values.**

## He pātai mōu:

Are your values and mission written down somewhere for people within and outside of your organisation to refer to?

How would your staff and volunteers describe your organisation's values in a nutshell?

How do your values relate to your organisation's kaupapa and goals?

# Fostering Community



*I have so many amazing friends that I've made through InsideOUT and it really does feel like a chosen family. Even if we don't all know each other, we all respect each other and we would all help each other if we needed it.*

Community, wellbeing and inclusion are central to InsideOUT Kōaro. We strive to welcome volunteers, kaimahi and the rangatahi we work alongside. Our Volunteer Coordinator plays a big role in creating a community of mutual care and support.

Though we work from different parts of Aotearoa, people at InsideOUT describe a sense of unity in knowing that our organisation is working towards a common goal: to improve takatāpui and rainbow young people's lives in Aotearoa. We find that creating a friendly and non-judgmental environment for all our people supports volunteers' wellbeing in other areas of their lives.



*Wellbeing-wise, InsideOUT really looks after its volunteers. I think even if you hardly ever signed up for anything and just wanted to watch or even just come in for one thing, they would really be welcoming.*

Some of the ways we aim to create a shared sense of community include starting hui and activities with an opening check-in round, where people can introduce themselves, their names and pronouns, and talk about 'what's on top' for them. We respect and use the language people determine for themselves. Our Volunteer Coordinator also provides opportunities for volunteers to connect across the motu, through monthly Zoom volunteer meet-ups and newsletters.



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***Our core is to make everyone feel included. We do our best to respect everybody's pronouns, everyone's sexual identity. It's predominantly to try and create a safe space and the use of language is a lot more open.***

We also aim to foster a sense of belongingness among the rangatahi we work with in school rainbow diversity groups. Our Schools Coordinators meet often with groups and support them to organise campaigns such as Schools Pride Week. They also work with schools looking to start a rainbow diversity group. Another important place we aim to foster community is at Shift Hui, our annual gathering for rainbow rangatahi across Aotearoa to connect in-person, learn more about rainbow communities and share experiences with each other.



# Flexibility



***[Volunteering with InsideOUT is] really flexible: if something comes up, an opportunity comes up, people can be like, “I’m free to do this,” or not, and so in that way, people can dip in and out.***

InsideOUT recognises that people have different levels of time commitment and bring diverse skills to volunteering. Some people love delivering workshops in front of an audience, while others are skilled at designing resources, helping with office administration or organising events.

Our volunteer programme aims to be flexible so that volunteers can choose which activities best match their skills and strengths, and to opt in or out of volunteering at any time. Volunteers have described the value of being able to “come and go” in the organisation, rather than feeling any obligation to commit to a regular activity or set period of time.



***You get the opportunity to do what you want to do and what you’re comfortable with and you make a positive change through that. Not just for people like me that feel comfortable standing up in front of people and talking about stuff but also for people that can make websites and that sort of thing. There is space for everybody with all of their skills.***

We think having this flexibility is an important part of looking out for ourselves and each other, to curb burnout or “compassion fatigue”. Taking care of our mental wellbeing is important for everyone, and especially important when working with groups from marginalised communities who tend to experience lower mental wellbeing due to discrimination or erasure in wider society.

# Reciprocity

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*I've learnt how to work with people, and I've learnt how to write stuff, and I've learnt how to speak up. And, I think this is quite a key learning: that we teach our young people that we are capable.*

Some of the ways we try to show how we value our volunteers and supporters include providing kai on the table at gatherings, offering koha, and reimbursing volunteers' travel costs. InsideOUT also aims to make sure that volunteers can develop new skills or experiences through being part of the organisation. Newer volunteers are often supported by those who are more experienced in the organisation, and many have gone on to support other volunteers and the organisation in different ways.

Throughout the Young Activists project, InsideOUT volunteers shared that they valued the opportunities to develop their facilitation, leadership, time management, and communication skills. Volunteers also have the opportunity to set goals with their volunteer work, and it is part of the Volunteer Coordinator's role to help them achieve those goals.

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*I've had opportunities being involved with InsideOUT which I wouldn't have otherwise, things like that — going to Hui Takatāpui and giving workshops and stuff like that.*

# Centring Self-Determination



***With InsideOUT I think it's really important to respect all people from all cultures and that's really brought into what we do and we give people a spotlight about their own culture, and what they know about that.***

InsideOUT recognises that people occupy many diverse and intersecting identities within takatāpui and rainbow communities, and each has unique experiences of privilege and marginalisation within our wider rainbow communities.

Because a lot of our mahi involves educating people outside of rainbow communities about takatāpui and rainbow people's experiences, it's important that people within our organisation determine how their knowledge and stories are told. This means, for example, that we prioritise trans and non-binary people leading the resource development and education on content related to gender diversity, and tangata Māori leading the mahi tikanga Māori and takatāpuitanga.

It is our collective responsibility as an organisation to ensure that no group is spoken over or about, and to provide the resources for our staff and volunteers to lead these conversations in a safe way.

We do our best to support our volunteers to be able to tell their stories by giving them the tools that they need. For example, our Volunteer Coordinator has recently started a series of sessions called FigureOUT, for volunteers to learn about how to set boundaries when telling our stories, and setting boundaries in general.



***I think we, as a team, at InsideOUT, are good at supporting one another to take care of ourselves. It's not like we have this culture that's valorising working yourself to the bone; we're an organisation where we're promoting taking of yourself and taking the rest that you need so that you can actually serve your community in a way that's valuable. Because you can't pour from an empty cup.***

# He pātai mōu:

What does your organisation do to foster a sense of community among your staff and volunteers?

How does your organisation adapt to your volunteers' needs and commitments?

In your organisation, what types of activities and opportunities can you offer your volunteers to develop new and existing skills?

In what meaningful ways can you reciprocate your volunteers' commitment?

How can you support your volunteers to safely and comfortably tell their story, if they choose to do so?



# He kupu aumihi

**The development of this resource was led by Alex Ker, with the support of:**

Jude Sligo, Karen Nairn and rest of the Young Activists research team at the University of Otago who provided feedback on drafts and undertook this important research. To learn more about the Young Activists project and the other awesome groups involved, check out their website, book, and a research article that InsideOUT Kōaro co-wrote with Young Activist researchers.

Tabby Besley, Neo Kenny, Edie Freeman and all volunteers, staff and Board members who provided invaluable feedback.

Special thanks to Ray Oakley for designing this resource and to Jaye Barclay for the illustrations.

