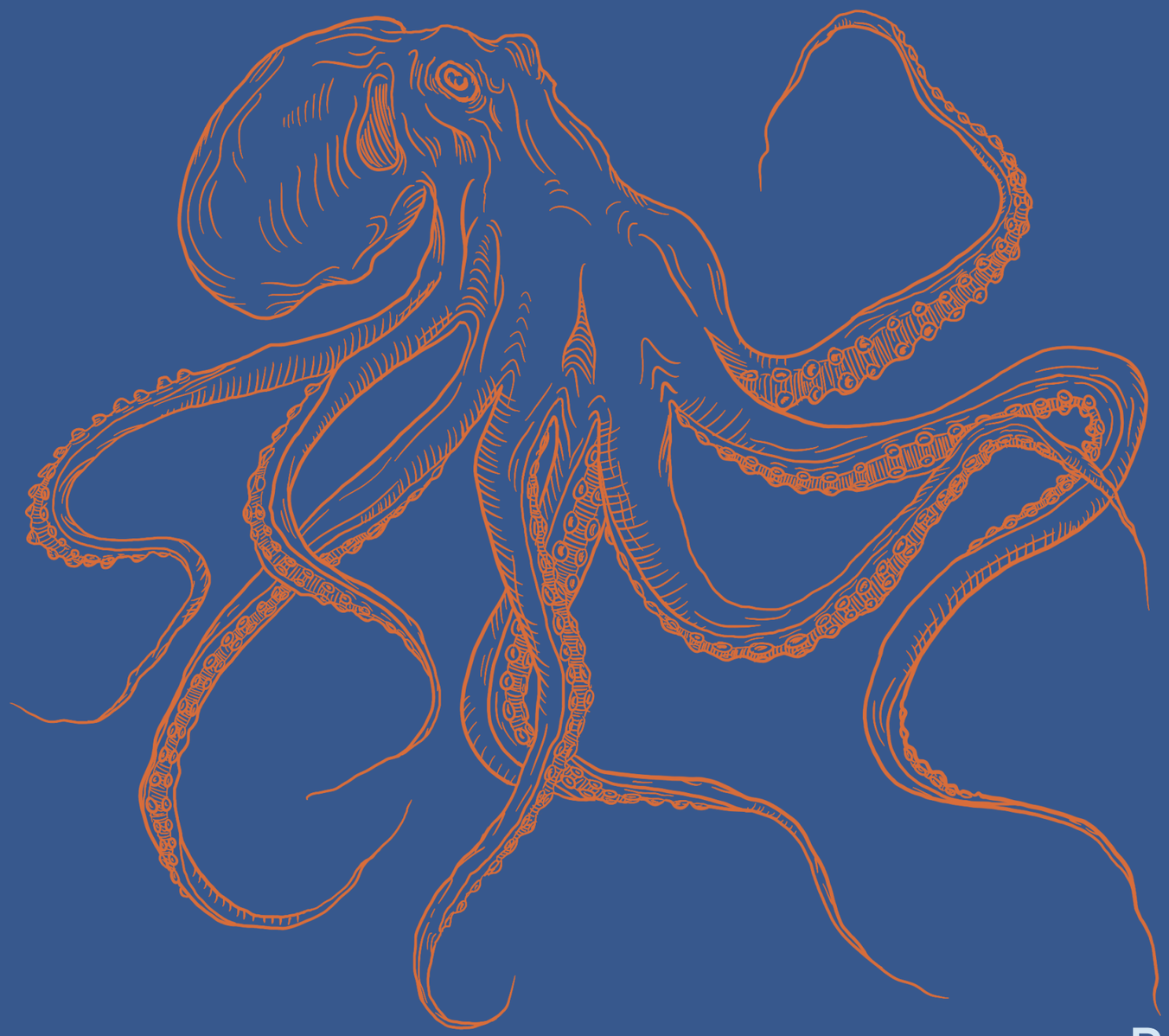
TENTACULAR KŌRERO



JOURNEYING WITH TE WHEKE; RAINBOW RANGATAHI PERSPECTIVES ON RELATING AND RELATIONSHIPS

E Mihi

He karakia mā te hāpori

E ngā rangatira, ngā tūpuna, ngā tuākana uenuku
Whāngaihia ō tātou wairua hei mahia te mahi nui.
Nā rātou i whakatakoto te ara
kia māmā ake te haerenga mā tātou ngā mokopuna.
Kia kī ō tātou manawa i te aroha o te hapori uenuku.
Mā ngā rangatahi e ārahi
Kia tau te wāheke
mā te tika, me te ora, me te pono, me te aroha
Koia rā e Rongo whakairia ake ki runga kia tīna
Tīna
Haumi e, hui e,
Tāiki e

To the leaders, the ancestors, the rainbow elders
Nourish our spirits so that the important work may be done
It was them who laid down the path
To make the journey easier for us, the descendents
May our hearts be filled with the love of the rainbow community
It will be the youth who lead
so that the future may be calm/peaceful
For the correctness, the wellness, the faith, and the love
Rongo, suspend high above us
Draw together, affirm!

Dedicated to Angus Hayes (Ngāpuhi)

This project was close to your heart and you remain close in ours.
For your manaakitanga and dedication to relationship and community, we pick up the wero of your life's work. May we continue in the labors of growing communities capable of care, aroha and transformation.

Contributors

The first authors of this document are Te Wheke and the rangatahi advisory rōpū.

This collective document was facilitated and collated by Johan Kettle on behalf of InsideOUT Kōaro, RainbowYOUTH and The Rainbow Violence Prevention Network.

Our words were brought to life by Yujin Shin, designer and illustrator.

Contents

A note on language:

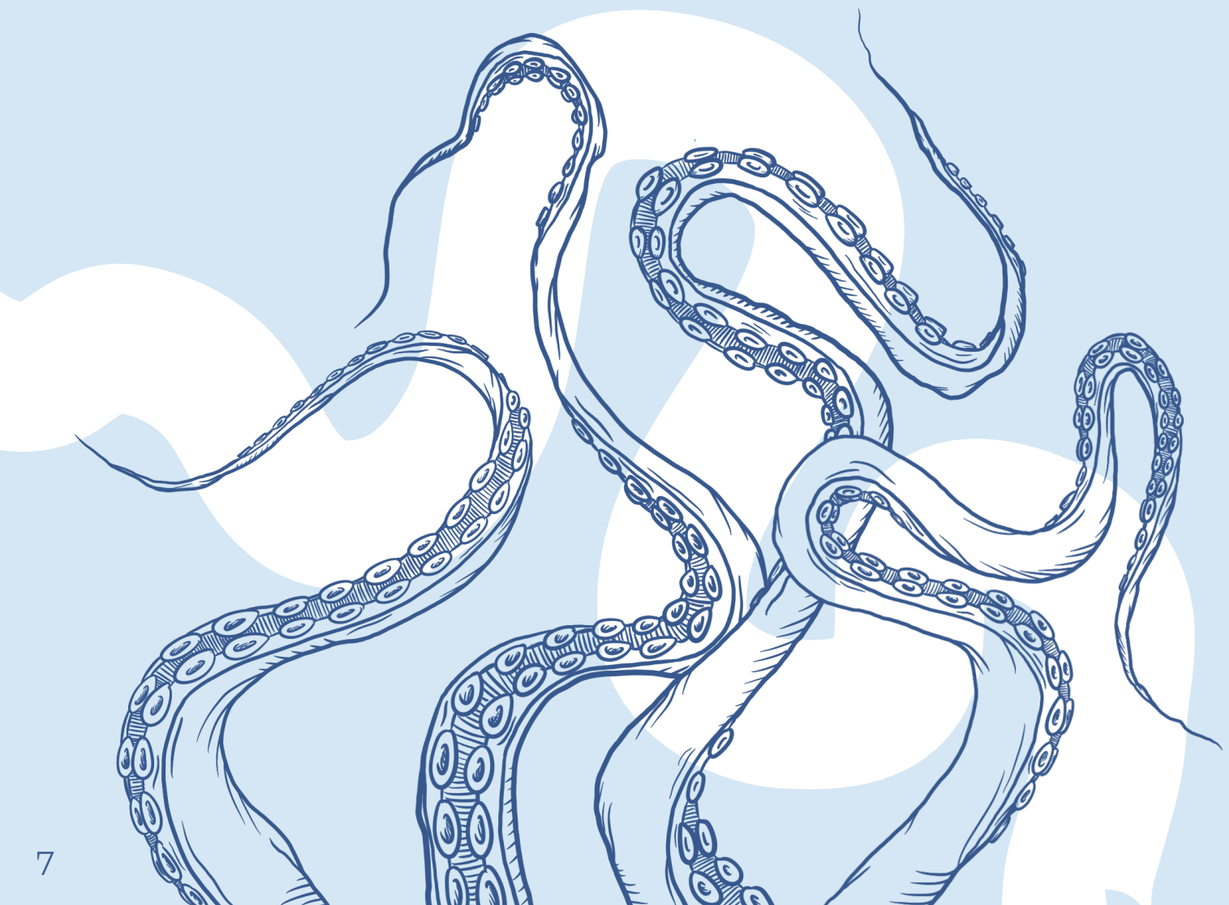
We have encouraged our rangatahi to use language around experiences of harm, violence or abuse that felt most right for them. We also explained that we, the facilitators, intentionally use the terms; person or people causing harm and/or person or people experiencing harm. This is to steer clear of attaching fixed labels to people's experiences and/or behaviours. This also invites us to use language outside of the criminal justice lexicon such as perpetrator or victim. We however did not conscript anyone to follow language when describing their own personal experience(s). We have been gratefully guided by the Creative Interventions ToolKit, 2012 (https://www.creative-interventions.org/toolkit/).

This document openly traverses dialogues around violence. Including but not limited to; rainbow-specific experiences of violence, intimate partner abuse, state violence, white supremacy and colonial violence. We extend our aroha and advise readers to take care.

Who are we?

We are rangatahi living across the whenua of Aotearoa. We belong to the rainbow community and/or identify with what is most commonly known as the LGBTQIA+ community. We are aged 16-23 and our belongings and experiences span across cultures, religions, genders, sexualities, classes, spiritualities and disabilities. Our lineages are woven from Aotearoa including Kai Tahu, Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Awa, Te Arawa, Waitaha, Settler Pākehā lineages, and too from Afghanistan, India, Việt Nam and Tonga. Our rōpū was co-facilitated by Te Wheke, Johan Kettle (Te Āti-Haunui-a-Pāpārangi) and Dando.

We were brought together by our collective dream to make respectful relationship education possible for all rainbow rangatahi in Aotearoa. And what is more, provide greater possibilities for rainbow rangatahi to experience loving, nourishing and safe relationships.



Purpose of this document:

The purpose of this collective document is to make transparent the process by which the Respectful Relating Programme came to be. It is to share with our wider community the whaakaro, kōrero and mauri that has been gifted to us by the Rangatahi Advisory Rōpū. Our intention for this programme is for it to be made by and for the community. In this we actively share in decision making and whakamana rangatahi knowledges, ideas and desires for their pedagogical learnings and knowings around relating and relationships.

"Ka pū te rūhā, ka hao te rangatahi
Once the old fishing net is worn,
it is put aside to make way for the new fishing net."

(Kukutai & Webber, 2017)

We wish to problematise and untie the knots of the nets of the past; Find the learnings of what legacies we are inheriting and in that, those we wish to continue growing, those that may need repair or attention, and those that need to be cast aside altogether (R. Davis, personal communication, 2022).

When reading this document be aware that the ideas and whaakaro shared are not made to be perfect or complete. We are thinking through together, in contemplation and unraveling. We have embraced a tikanga that allows for the messy and half-baked to rest in their emergence (Haraway, 2016). These ideas and knowledges are not finished products because ideas and knowledges never are. They represent, and present a moment in time on this wānganga.

In our efforts to rid this research of capture and extraction (Tuhiwhai-Smith, 1993); this document serves as an honouring of our rangatahi knowledges and how they were formed from their own lived experiences, social locations and in conversation together. It is a mauri stone to be respected by the organisations that hold and are responsible for

the continuation of this work. This collective whakaaaro is born out of relationship. Six months of experimental kōrero, questions and growing our collective mauri to bring a respectful relating programme for rainbow rangatahi into Te Ao Mārama.

What is a collective document?

The methodology of gathering and sharing our collective kōrero comes from the narrative practice of collective documentation. Collective narrative documents are co-created by narrative practitioners, therapists, community workers and the individuals, families, groups and/or communities they are working alongside (Denborough, 2008). Collective documents are a way to savor, share, mark, and be in ceremonial acknowledgement of our stories and what they might reveal about our experiences, skills, values, responses and ways of being in resistance (Denborough, 2008). It provides a means by which people within a community or who share similar experiences might find solidarity, connection or lessons as well as a reflection back to those who contribute towards the document; A gifting back to participants in their own words. Collective documents have often been made in response to collective experiences of trauma or conflict. David Deneborough (2008) writes,

> **"Often, in our work, we are responding to effects not only of individual trauma, but of collective trauma. This is true in situations of genocide, disaster and military occupation, but it is also true in women's experience of men's violence, those experiencing mental health struggles, and so on. The traumatic experience that many individuals face is often shared in some way by a broader collective. And yet those who have been subjected to trauma routinely experience a profound sense of isolation from others. Developing collective methodologies that not only address the effects of trauma but also the effects of this isolation, seems a significant task.**
>
> (p.27)

Our topic looked at the collective queer experience of navigating relationships. Living in a settler colony that historically (and continues to) diminish, ignore, delegitimize, pathologise and demonize our identities and ways of being, it is of resounding community knowledge that we need rainbow-specific relationship education (Pihama et al., 2020). There is collective scarring that exists from this exclusion and there also oozes from our communities creativity, imagination, and adaptiveness that has come from creating relational worlds outside of cis-heteronormativity.

We sat with the big questions of; How does the colonial project impact the ways in which we relate with one another and the lands we live on? How do larger systems of power recruit us into violent and/or harmful ways of relating? What do healthy rainbow relationships look like, feel like, sound like, move like? What community education is of priority for rainbow rangatahi to grow in their skills, knowledge and abilities to experience safe and loving relationships? And how can we respond as a community when the people we love are experiencing abuse and/or are causing relational harm?

We resonated with the methodology of collective documentation as it spoke to our wanting to embody values of reciprocity and tino rangitiratanga within our group. Our primary intention with this document is to gift back to the rangatahi their voices and conversations, and provide a physical manifestation of our time shared together. We wanted to honor the sharing of rangatahi knowledge, experiences and stories and provide evidence that they are valued, influential in our decision making and worth sharing. In here you will find beauty, truths, wisdom and magic. It is our hope you can feel the mauri of our rōpū and resonance with their stories.

Mihi to Te Wheke and Whaea Rose Rangimare Pere

Our learnings and creating together were shaped and led by Te Wheke. Te Wheke, the octopus, celebrates the ancient teachings of Hawaiki. The whakaaro of Te Wheke invited our kōrero into its eight dimensions and within this, bent, elongated and reshaped linear constructions of time. Straight lines of past to present became tentacular and intelligent; time shaping, changing and creating of themselves and of us.

The knowledge of Te Wheke has been shared with tangata te tiriti and tauiwi through tohunga, Whaea Rose Rangimarie Pere. She received and learnt from her forebears that belong(ed) to Ngāti Ruapani, Tūhoe Pōtiki, Ngāti Kahungunu (Pere & Nicholson, 1997). We pay our respects to the privilege of being guided by this mātauranga; Mātauranga belonging to a lineage of 12,000 years of teaching and transmission (Pere & Nicholson, 1997). As stated by Whaea Rose Pere, we recognise *what has been shared is only a small part of what is known.* (Pere & Nicholson, 1997).

When we worked with this knowledge we worked with a collective tikanga to be in reverence and gratitude for it being shared with us. This reverence included listening to the teachings of Whaea Rose Pere and not rushing towards translation but rather being in a patient receiving.

Poet Natalie Diaz (2020) writes,

"'Aha Makav is the true name of our people, given to us by our Creator who loosed the river from the earth and built it into our living bodies.

Translated into English, 'Aha Makav means the river runs through the middle of our body, the same way it runs through the middle of our land.

This is a poor translation, like all translations.

In American imaginations, the logic of this image will lend itself to surrealism or magical realism–

Americans prefer a magical red Indian, or shaman, or a fake Indian in a red dress, over a real Native. Even a real Native carrying the dangerous and heavy blues of a river in her body.

What threatens white people is often dismissed as myth. I have never been true in America. America is my myth."

(p.30)

This tikanga ensures we do not disrespect or dishonor Te Wheke through a colonial impulse to myth-make or appropriate (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2022). For this reason, I have included in the latter tentacular kōrero direct quotes from Whaea Rose's Celebration of Infinite Wisdom and her speeches to elucidate Te Wheke to you, (the reader), rather than engaging in any re-storying or translation of our own.

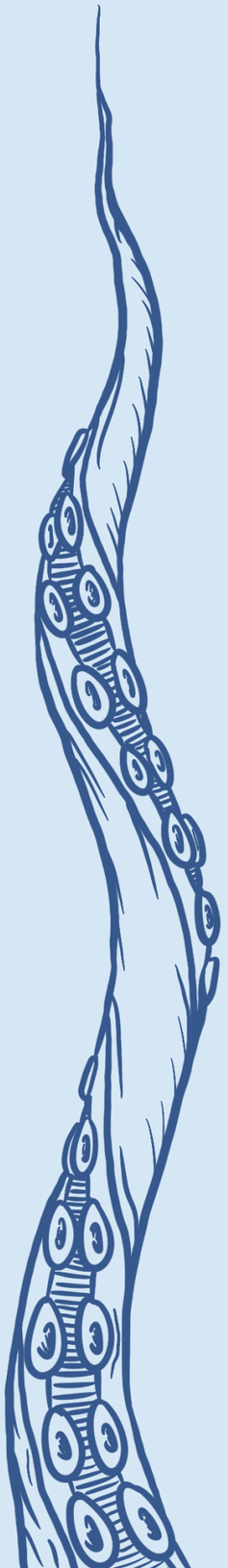
We share with you what has emerged in our rōpū consciousness and kōrero from being led by Te Wheke.

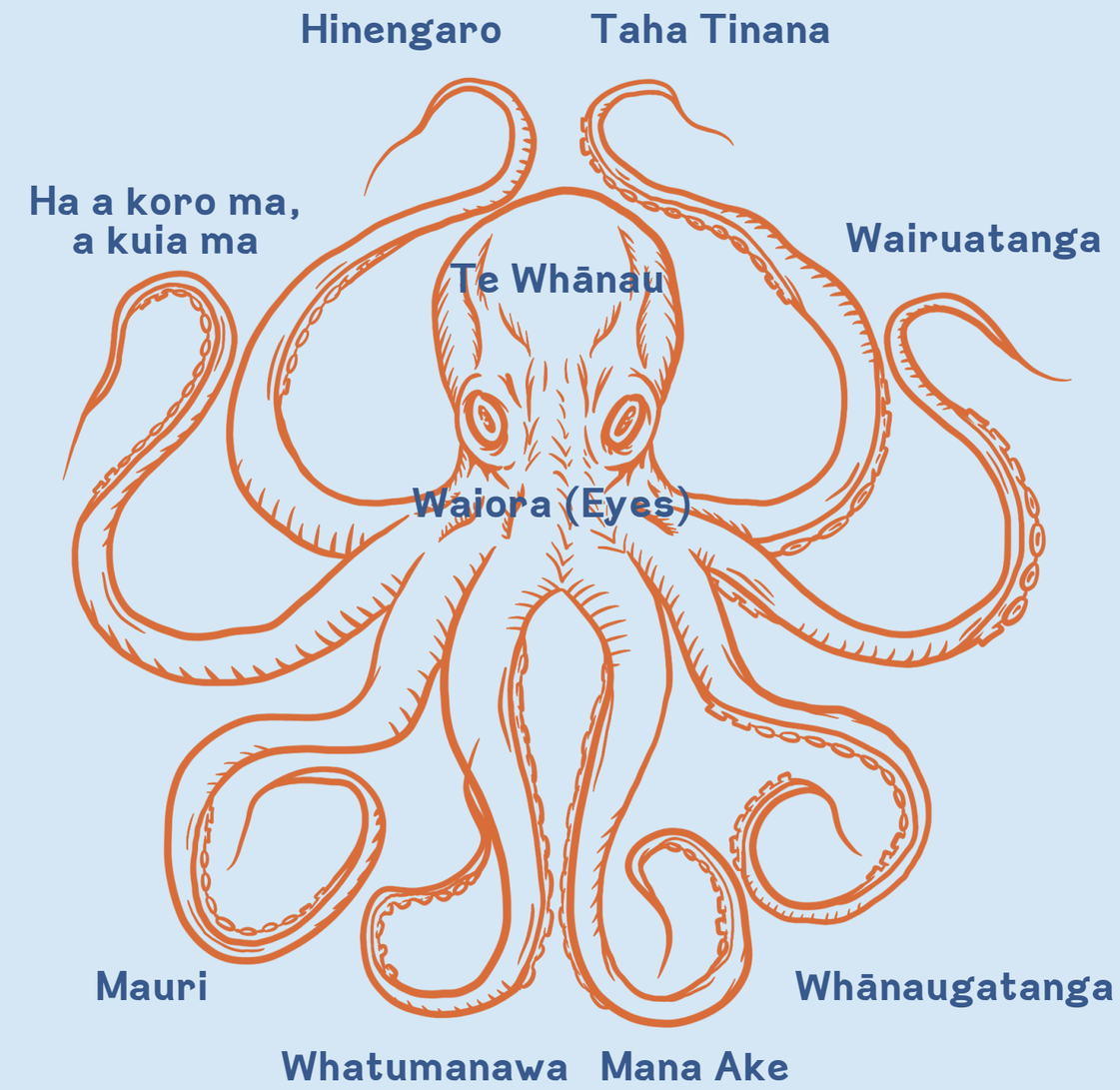
First Author, Te Wheke

Whaea Rose Pere (1997) gives the following representation and explanation:

The head represents the child/family. Each tentacle represents a dimension that requires and needs certain things to help give it sustenance to the whole. The suckers on each tentacle represent the many facets that exist within each dimension. The tentacles move out in an infinite direction for sustenance when the octopus moves laterally. The tentacles can also be intertwined so that there is a mergence, with no clear cut boundaries. The dimensions need to be understood in relation to each other, and within the context of the whole.

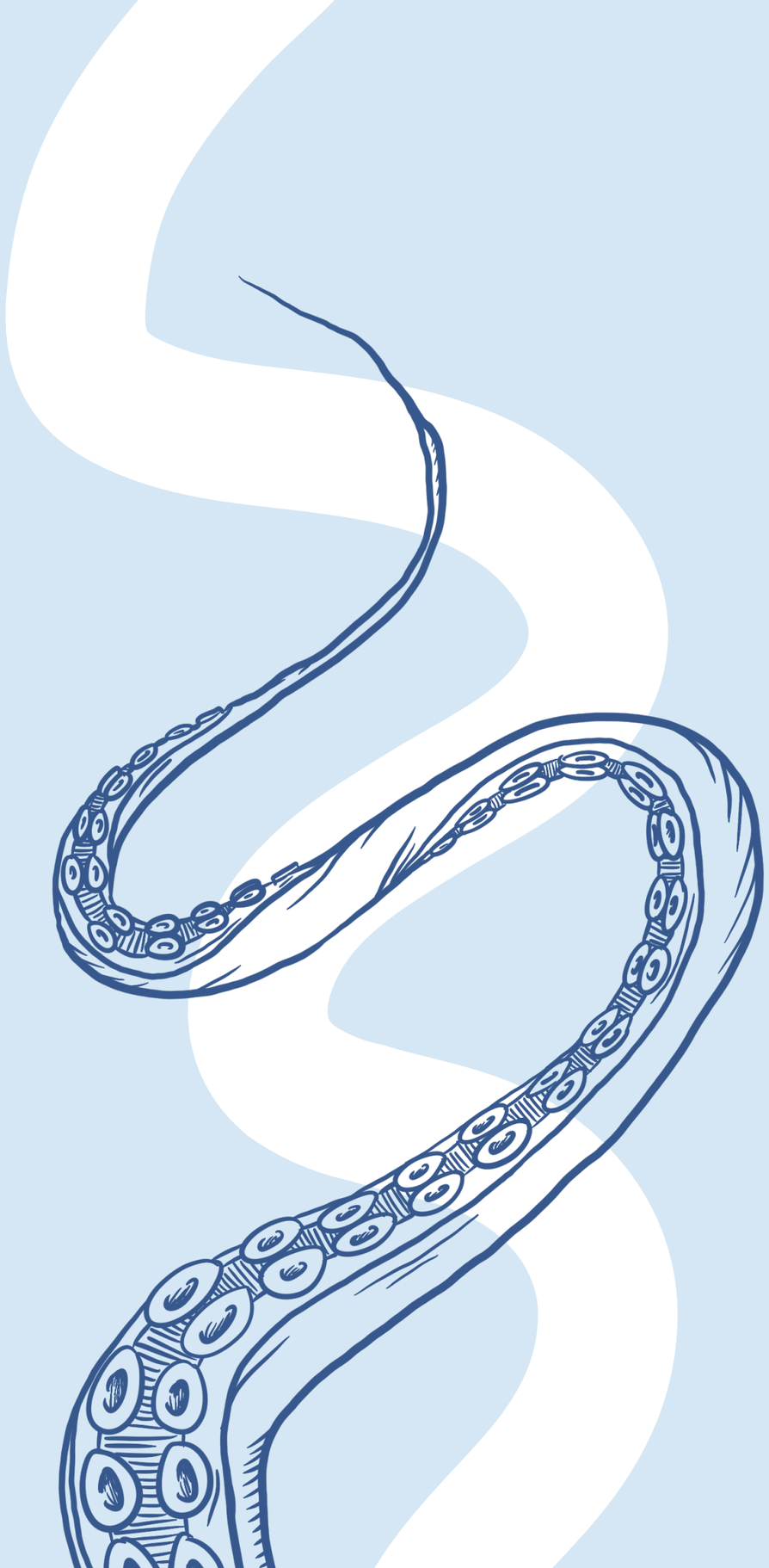
(p.4)





Each session our kōrero bought into focus two elements or tentacles of Te Wheke. The questions while coming from us as facilitators, must be mentioned they were also coming from Te Wheke. While Te Wheke was not "physically" posing questions, they have offered entry into the eight dimensions to make these dialogues possible. We therefore position Te Wheke as the **first author** of this collective document (Country et al., 2014) .

The Colonial Project and Respectful Relating



It has been a priority of this programme to go to the roots of violence in Aotearoa/New Zealand. We collectively recognise within this group the ongoing forces of colonisation and how it pervades not just our past but its' persistence in our daily lives, our behaviours, how it interrupts love and the possibility for respectful relationships between friends, lovers, whānau, community, humans and the more than human world (hooks, 2018). Before we journeyed with Te Wheke we first had to get to know the ground beneath our feet. How the colony imposes itself upon the soil of Aotearoa and how we are in response, resistance and relationship with the colonial project of New Zealand. To understand respectful relating, it was imperative we began here.

Q: What have we inherited from colonisation that might form our understanding of relationships and relating?

A: Colonisation encourages the idea that people are property. It shows us that we have the power to possess someone and mistreat them. Colonisation and all of its limbs enable some of us to feel that because we have power over others, we are entitled to destroy them too. Colonisation encourages and depends upon exploitation and as such, people learn to exploit others... and their relationships with them. How can people have the instinct for compassion when they're being exploited?

H: It is essential that we acknowledge that colonisation is an intentional, ongoing, unconsented process. It is not an accidental result of innocent behaviors, or an agreement. It is an act of malice control of indigenous people. Therefore, unless relationships are formed within spaces or contexts specifically designed by and for BIPOC folk, there will be colonised notions that the relationship or relations are formed. Relationships today in Aotearoa are often through a colonised lens; such as the cis-heteronormative romantic relationship, focusing on reproduction of children, often rooted in religious control (of which goes in tandem with colonisation). Western relationships are binary and structured by hierarchy. People are expected to be and act in certain, rigid ways, and if we linger from this there are punishments. We see this through the legislative and social violence Queer and BIPOC have and still face today.

C: Colonisation undermines indigenous and culturally diverse approaches to social systems and ways of relating. Colonisation also influences our systems of responding to people, while simultaneously ignoring the effects colonisation has had on people and their actions and behaviors towards others. Colonial relationships have a sense about them that lacks community; People focusing on what's in it for them, not what's in it for their people and communities. Monogamy is a colonial construct that was introduced to indigenous people. People slept together, raised children together. Monogamy and colonisation tried desperately to put an end to that. We have learnt to expect one person to meet all of our needs and this can break down a relationship because you set an impossible standard for them to live up to.

Queerness, in its many hues and textures, exists both because of and in spite of the suppression colonisation imposed upon all rainbow identities (Pihama et al., 2020). The arrival of settlers saw an invasion into Te Ao Māori ways of relating (Pihama et al., 2020). Same-sex lovers, trans and gender fluid folks, as well as our intersex whānau all existed and were accepted within Te Ao Māori (Kerekere, 2017). Colonisation imposed ways of relating that denegrated, pathologised, erased and criminalised rainbow, intersex and takatāpui ways of being (Pihama et al., 2020).

Oppression of queer identities is not shared nor experienced equally amongst our community. Folks within the rainbow community who belong to multiple identities or communities face and resist different forms of oppression and discrimination both within and outside of the rainbow community. In a recent report done by Addhikar Aotearoa (2022) states,

"...The dominant discourses and understandings of queerness in Aotearoa New Zealand happen within predominantly white spaces, within the white ecosystem, and reproduce the notion of queerness as whiteness. In doing so, the understanding that to be queer is to be of any ethnicity, is removed. Indeed, our participants told us that only 7% of them had access to ethnic queer stories when they first identified as LGBT+... As Lakshmi, an early 20s, Indian, lesbian, agender person told us: "it [queerness as whiteness make it] insanely isolating [for LGBT+ people of colour], I can't even put it into words". Shanaz, a late teen, Pakistani, bisexual/pansexual, cisgender woman, stated that: "the [LGBT+] community itself is predominantly white and isolating of ethnic queers..."

(p.57)

For our rangatahi to experience respectful relationships, it is crucial we understand how colonisation and white supremacy inform how they enact and experience relationships.

Q: How does colonisation interrupt, invade and infect Queer Love and community?

A: Colonisation is based on racism, classism, ableism etc. and because of intersecting identities, people have to adjust in and out of different groups depending on their identity...which parts of themselves are most accepted in different groups. It means that people don't get to have one big community, they have lots of micro-communities, and especially in the queer community... everyone should belong. The language and cultural context of each young person might be different to the next - we should consider this in the programme design.

C: Phobia is not inherent to Polynesian cultures. Phobia is implanted within the religions that have been thrust upon our poly communities and as a result, the phobia that comes from within Polynesian communities is the direct result of colonisation. People neglect to bring an intersectional lens to colonisation and the intersections of the community and queer love. Just because you're queer doesn't mean you're not-privileged by your skin color.

AY: People choose to believe that anti-queer rhetoric is mutually exclusive with their cultural values and religious beliefs when it doesn't have to be.

H: Colonisation has robbed me and my experience of queer joy, what queerness is now is different to what queerness could have been. This is not to say I do not experience Queer love and community - I definitely do. I have such incredible loved ones in my life, but it is still experienced through colonisation. My queer identity is labeled with a Pākehā term. I don't know what it actually is, hopefully one day when I am not exhausted I will find out. For now, I go by genderqueer or nonbinary. However, my experience of gender is starkly different to the ones of my Pākehā trans friends experience gender. I think a lot of them care about how they are perceived in society, which is fair, but I am too busy worrying about my safety as a brown person, or accepting the discrimination I will face. I look like a woman, I have long hair. I don't bind. I don't look 'trans' in this society, and sometimes that makes me feel like I belong less in trans spaces. This is because these trans spaces, unless stated otherwise, are - White - trans spaces, same goes for the whole queer community. My existence as a person impacted by colonisation, interrupts how I feel belonging in places that 'want' me.

Because I don't adhere to colonial notions, I feel like an outsider in and outside the community. But it feels really liberating to resign (as much as I can) from what society thinks from me. Internally I am the gender I am, and that makes me happy. I might feel like the most masculine person in the room but im wearing rather feminine clothes, and my long hair is down. I don't care if it doesn't make sense to Pākehā. My gender exists outside of the scope colonisers can perceive. I hope one day I'll be able to call it what it is.

This brief explanation of how colonisation interacts with my queerness is why I believe colonisation and the impacts of colonisation for BIPOC need to feed through the entire program, not just little bits of information or a small half hour session. The programme needs to be informed by it.

As H explains, it was collectively resonant that this programme must be explicit about the impacts of colonisation and intersecting systems of power have on our ability to experience healthy relationships as people living within very real systems of power that inflict, encourage and sustain violent ways of being in relationship (Tuhiwhai-Smith, 2022). Connected systems of oppression that bell hooks described as the imperialist~white supremacist~capitalist~heteropatriarchy (hooks, 2018).

Explorations into how oppression is connected are not to be additions to content, but embedded and necessitated at the heart of it. There was deep wanting to orient the programme away from normative forms of teaching racism and colonisation that are scarce if not entirely absent within healthy relationships education (Zoom Session 2, 2022).

It was identified that previous experiences of learning about colonisation and racism were made to cater for Pākehā needs and experiences, and on many occasions BBIPOC folk then had to hold cultural labour in unsafe and sometimes non-consensual ways (Zoom Session 2, 2022). This included Māori students having to do cultural labour such as karakia, waiata, or explain tikanga or mātauranga in ways that were extractive or inappropriate (e.g. the tauira did not hold that knowledge) forcing students out of their role as tauira and into responsibilities of kaiako or teacher. This was also echoed from ethnic, Pasifika and trans whānau being expected to teach about their identities (Zoom Session 2, 2022).

C spoke with clarity,

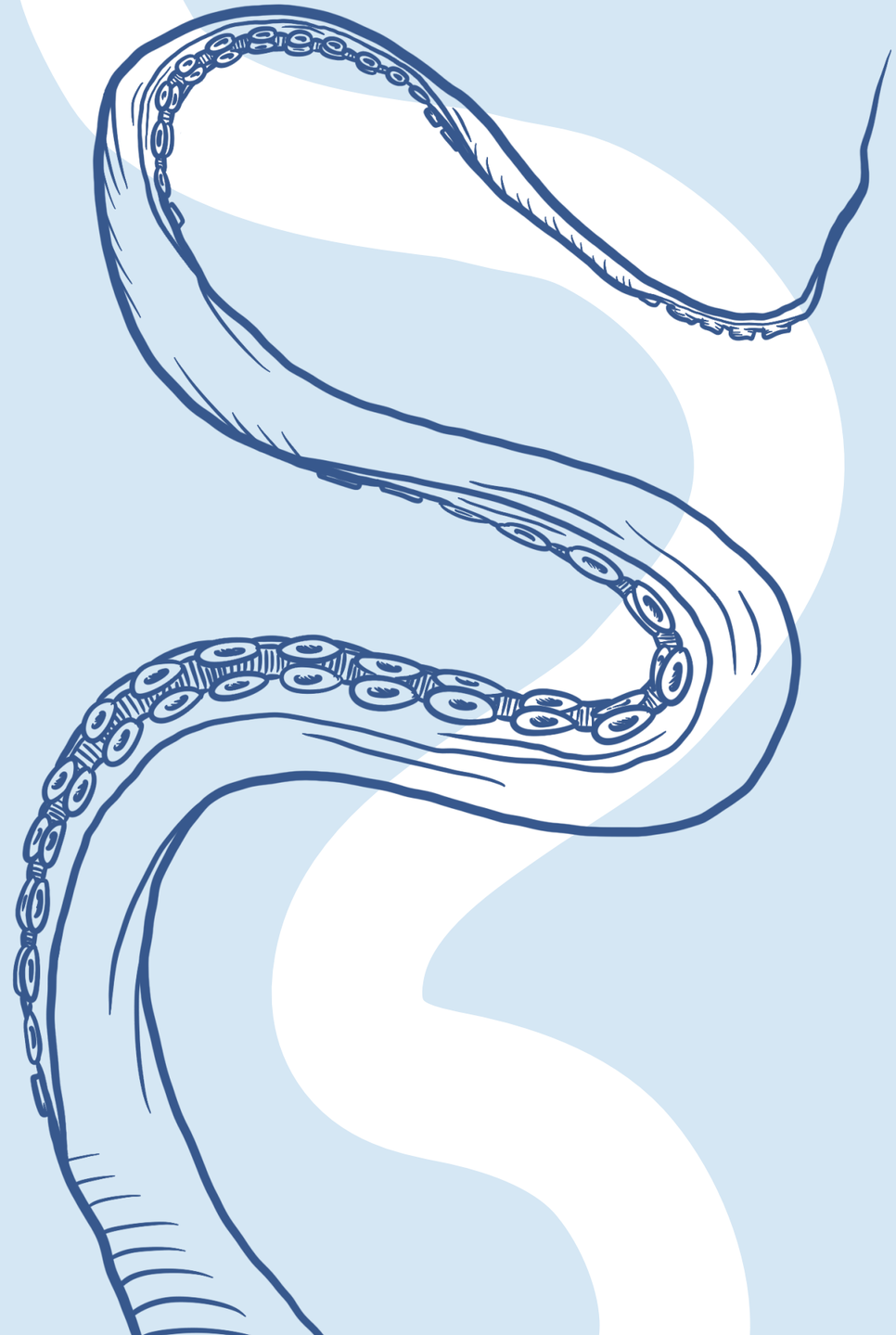
“We don’t need to be taught about racism and colonisation, we live it.”

Together we pose a question; What if we were to embed so strongly the weavings of anti-racist and decolonial pedagogy throughout this programme so that Pākehā could be invited into these ways of thinking and being, while centering the living experiences and cultural safety of BBIPOC (Black, Brown, Indigenous, People of Colour) rangatahi? This, we hypothesized, might allow for an un-settling and transformative learning. A kind of learning that has the possibility to sow a seed that might birth a new paradigm for participants. Paradigms that directly challenge the colonial project and illuminate how our liberation is interwoven with one another.

Importantly, during this rōpū we also heard the need to listen and take youth voices and knowledge seriously. This involves orientating into reflective facilitation rather than the euro-centric educational dynamic of teacher onto pupil. This, the rangatahi said, shares power and invites greater appreciation and respect of their living experience (Zoom Hui, 2022).

Tentacular Kōrero with Te Wheke

Whānau and Whanaungatanga



"Whānau means that everything that seeks sustenance from our mother in the four directions is family."

"Whanaungatanga is based on ancestral, historical, traditional and spiritual ties. It forms that strong bond that influences the way one lives and reacts to his/her/their/ ia kinship groups, people generally and the world, the universe. It is the area where one's aroha (unconditional love based on the same divine presence and breath of life is tested to the fullest extent....

The kinship network as far as the extended family is concerned, is one that gives feeling of belonging, value and security. Knowing ones genealogical ties is important to the Māori who identifies with his/her/their/ia own heritage. From as far back as the writer remembers learning about whanaungatanga, she heard and knew about her many ancestors, her many grandparents, her many parents, her many brothers and sisters across the universe. She learnt that everything in the universe is interrelated and is perfect until it is compared to something else, or is influenced by negative forces....The family that does something together that enables each member to feel that they have a niche and are important is one that engenders pride, unity, and a real sense of belonging."

[Pere, p.26]

Q: How do we support whanaungatanga to flourish within the programme?

G: Acknowledging the importance of the collective, and how colonisation undermines that.

W: Accessibility, inclusion, access to good kai, breaks, pouring aroha into the program adds up. It makes you feel like you're not choring over these workshops, you're being appreciated for your time and energy

Q: What makes people feel like whānau to us?

W: People with shared lived experiences to me who I can find community with. And if I don't share community with people that they are able to make space for me.

H: The definition of Whānau, from my understanding, is very different depending on people's experiences and the communities they are a part of. I think it is important to keep in mind what whānau means to us may not be the exact same for others.

Whānau to me are the people I trust and can have safe communication with. This looks like feeling comfortable to voice and listen to what needs more attention or what needs to change in a relationship to maintain it healthily. It looks like feeling safe in communities that represent me in my multiplicity - not just my queerness, or my youth, or my brownness - I am safe and seen as a person rather than my labels when I am with whānau. It is important to note that this is what Whānau is to me.

U: Comfort is what you have with your whānau. You don't have to say anything, you just have to be around them.

All liberation is connected; Rangatahi comment on violence unique to rainbow people in Aotearoa.

W: Transmisogyny is a key one. The experience of existing as a transfeminine person, and queer men and enby people who are having sex with men or nonbinary people experience unique violence through the channels of dating apps from a young age. Often we miss out on the "typical" experience of youth romance as the result of queerphobia and so we experience greater rates of harm with less access to support networks. People engage in predatory behaviors over online dating apps. Also high schools are unsafe for queer folk, especially queer folks of colour. They are isolating, particularly when they're in rural, socio-disadvantaged or conservative areas... this magnifies other "smaller" issues. There are less people to create a community with.

U: Violence can be both physical and verbal. Violence begins small, maybe in the format of bullying...and then the lack of accountability for microaggressions

and smaller incidence of bullying embolden people to engage freely in greater acts of violence. Unmonitored places and a lack of concern for queer folk create a microclimate that facilitates harm. Smaller acts of violence then become physical violence.

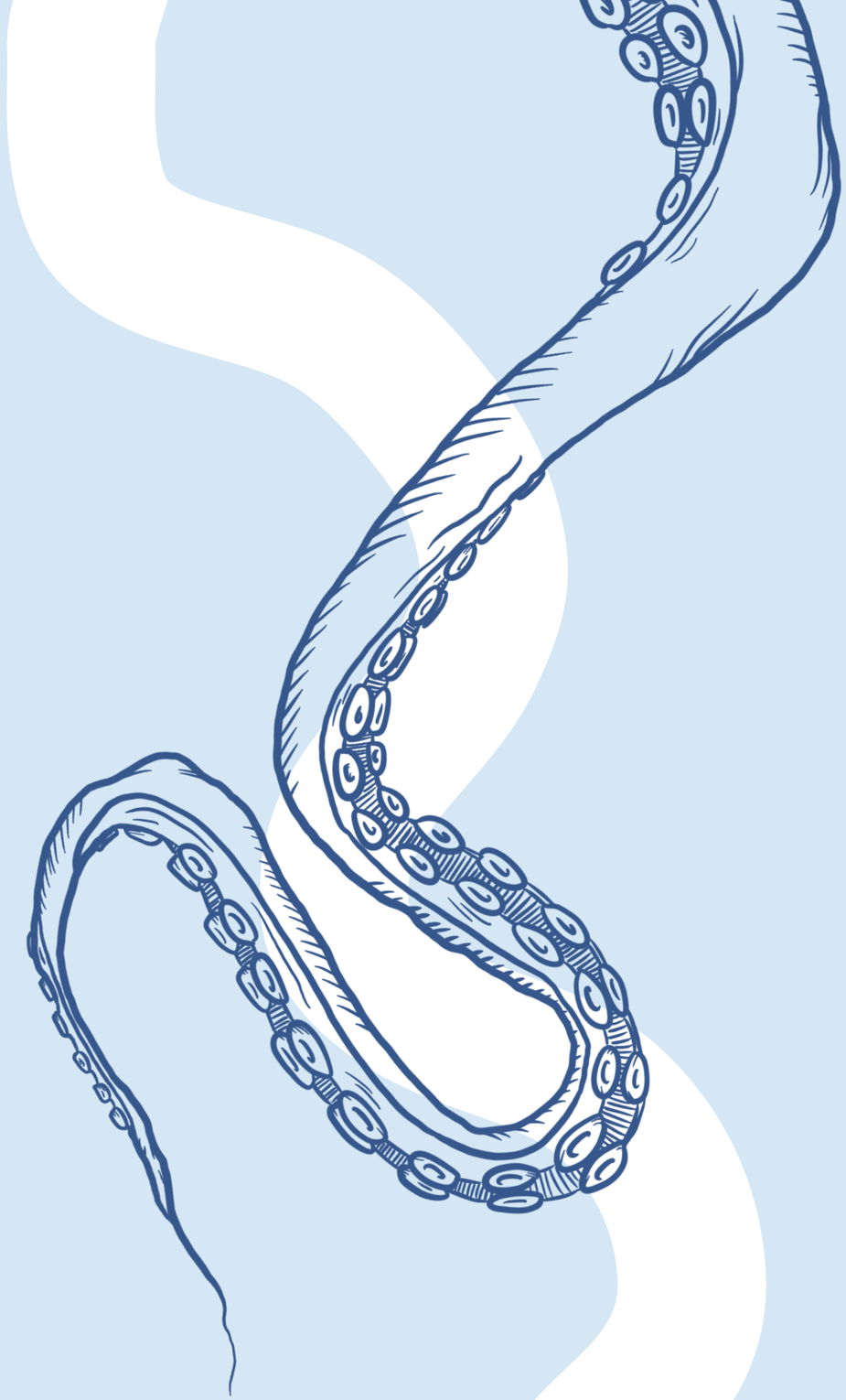
G: Emotional violence associated with the hyper sexualisation and fetishisation of lesbian relationships. These experiences are often minimisedd and not regarded as violence...they have an inherently homophobic tone because it is a reality that usually the people engaging in this behaviour are also homophobic. Lesbian relationships, in this context, are only accepted because they appeal to the straight cisgender man. This creates unsafe places for people. Involuntary festishisation is absolutely a form of violence.

R: Intentionally excluding some groups from important conversations acts to perpetuate harmful environments, which in and of itself functions as a form of violence: for example, in the context of sexual health education. Witholding information required to help us keep ourselves safe too.

H: Violence and the impacts of violence can be amplified at the intersections of marginalisation. For ethnic queer groups, and people with disabilities etc, these experiences of harm can be magnified due to compounding factors. People experience greater rates of violence because of their intersectional marginalisation.

A: Violence can come from our own families too. Sometimes it's because we're queer, but sometimes it's not.

Mana Ake and Hā a Koro ma, a kui ma



"Mana is a concept beyond translation from the Māori language. Its meaning is multi-form and includes psychic influence, control, prestige, power, vested and acquired authority and influence, being influential or binding over others, and that quality of the person that others know she/he/they/ia has.

The most important mana however is mana atua - divine right from ĀĪŌ Mātua. Every person has mana atua - no more, no less. This form of mana recoginises the absolute uniqueness of the individual. Everything across the universe has mana atua, in that everything was created by ĀĪŌ Mātua within the ancient teachings of Hawaiiki. A leaf, a blade of grass, a spider, a bird, a fish, a crustacean, all have the same divine right as a person. The challenge is to feel what that really means.

Mana ake is our absolute uniqueness, there has never been anyone like us and never will be...so we celebrate that and for me that is one of dimensions we alway uphold, mana."

(Pere, 1997, p.14)

Hā the breath from ĀĪŌ, Hā a Koro ma, a kui ma is connecting to the breath from our forebearers. To connect with Mana Ake and Hā a Koro ma, a kui ma we collectively practiced Lama Rod Owen's Seven Homecomings. This was to bring in our own Mana Ake and connect with the breath along the lines of our genealogies as well as those who belong to rainbow lineages that have made it possible for us to breathe.

(Pere, 1997, **p.)**

Alongside Mana Ake and Hā a Koro ma, a kui ma the rangatahi explored how belonging protects us from both experiencing and choosing to use violence.

Q: How does a sense of belonging protect our relationships?

R: With the context of what it'd be telling people in a workshop or a programme, just saying that you belong might not be an achievable thing. I think it's a good idea to define belonging as maybe finding belonging in a community that you create, or like a support network. So once people feel that they belong, in that sense, I think it protects their relationships from violence, because they know that they have other options. So this doesn't feel like the only person they can be with, or they at least know that they have support, and they can ask for help if they need it.

AY: Um, I think that if you're treated really well your entire life, you know, or like, more or less majority of the time.... and then when you see a red flag, then you actually see the red flags... you don't try to see it through rose coloured glasses or anything like you actually see it for what it is. You don't try to make excuses for that person, or that action or whatever it is, like you're able to identify it really quickly rather than letting yourself get into something that could go on for ages and just weigh you down over time until you literally think that this is the norm... I think it's really important to feel as though you belong somewhere in the world. Somewhere you feel at peace with yourself and you love yourself enough to identify those sorts of sorts of things and be able to say hey, I deserve better than this.

C: Because if you don't feel like you belong, you'll feel so much like you're in a very vulnerable position to be taken advantage of. If you have people in your circle and you, you know, you have people that you can go to, then your chances of experiencing violence is hopefully a bit slimmer or at least if the violence does occur, you'll feel solidified, you'll feel grounded enough to reach out to other people; obviously easier said than done. Because even if you do have this sense of belonging with other people, you know, so much stuff gets in the way. There's just personal barriers, you know, you started feeling like a burden...because you love these people that you belong with so much and you start getting into that mindset, like; Oh, I'm going to bother them or something, or I'm going to upset them.. that's my personal experience anyway.

W: I feel like from the point of view of the person who was creating harm, I feel like when you find belonging... which I think means a different thing to different people, you're also kind of creating accountability. And so therefore, it's like, when you have a strong standing within community, or like whānau, you have people who can pull you up and can recognise when you might be creating harm, and therefore you can have a wider set of skills around you, which can guide you on what to do, and how to stop creating harm, or how your actions are feeding harm...I think it's like, if you kind of have

community which you can consult, and you can have support and both from the point of view of the victim, but also the person who's creating harm. I think it can be beneficial for both parties.

U: Belonging is different to different people.. I think if I belong somewhere, I feel like I'm worth it. Like, I am part of the group. And if it's genuine belonging, then I assume that the other person or the people in the group also care about me, care enough, at least, to tell me that you should look into it, or, you know, this could be different or this is not right for you.

H: Violence and the extensions of it is amplified at the intersections of marginalisation. For ethnic queer groups, people with disabilities, and other marginalised peoples, these experiences of harm can be magnified due to compounding factors. Therefore, having community and belonging brings protection in a collective. It creates solidarity and backing during hardships and discrimination. It allows for an environment to live in with support away from violence. Not experiencing belonging, or being excluded and ostracised is a form of violence itself, alongside the forms of discrimination that comes with it; which is often facilitated by colonisation and the social norms it has brought.

Rangatahi then extended out into thinking about punitive expulsion of the Pākehā criminal justice system;

W: I think it's important to recognise it's a very kind of touchy subject, obviously, because I think a lot of us have experienced harm and quite serious harm from people. But it is important to recognise that no matter what happens, there is no stripping someone of their identity as a human being. And therefore, they are still deserving of certain basic values and are still deserving of having support and navigating things. And so, that can definitely become more complex the higher up you go in terms of harm. At the end of the day, when you choose negligence over support and community, it is just going to lead to more harm; It is just going to lead to these people not having the tools they need to make things right or go forward with that kind of knowledge they need to navigate things in the future. Like if you kind of just write someone off as a bad person and you leave them to deal with things by themselves, then it is just going to create more harm. I think there's a lot of opportunity and a lot of learning and growth that can happen... I think it's more complicated than assuming everyone is on an even playing field with their knowledge and their experiences.

U: ...If someone you know commits violence you just put them in jail, or give them this sort of punishment it doesn't sort of bring out the reason on why they did what they did. So understanding what caused them to choose violence in the first place can be a key factor in determining how they can be held accountable for their behavior.

H: Punitive justice does not equal accountability. Going to prison or dealing with the criminal justice system is

not a good way for accountability. There is little to no focus on rehabilitation or restorative justice. Punitive 'justice' is just that - punitive - it is punishment, not education, not restorative justice. It seeks to strip people from their sense of self and as an extension, their sense of belonging. It is not even a useful tool for crime or harm reduction because of its inherit reactionary nature. Rather, I believe what we need is preventive action. This looks like having a supportive community who can nurture and govern their own people, through the likes of education, mental health support, and restorative justice. This goes for people who have experienced violence or may want to be violent or have been violent before.

To me the only way we can reduce and prevent this violence is through having holistic support for people interacting with violence. This isn't to say it is easy to go and support someone who may have harmed you or a loved one, or anyone for that case. There is resentment and hesitation in this for sure - as someone who has experienced forms of violence directed at me, it isn't easy to think of those people being treated better than they have treated me. Therefore, I don't expect any victims to be supportive of non-punitive measures. Victims need their justice, they have to be one of the main voices in these conversations for sure. I just know that this would prevent future harms and future individuals from experiencing or enacting harm better than the current system in place. But its a hard thing to talk about, I think for me, it helps framing it by saying that: 'supporting people who commit violence, to not commit violence is a form of accountability.

C: One thing that our district court does really well is trying to place rehabilitation above imprisonment and other sentences. And one way that I've seen that they do it well, particularly with Māori, is getting them in touch with their culture. So if they get put on community work, you know, they'll do it at the marae, or they'll participate in programmes that have a kaupapa Māori approach. I've seen really positive benefits come from that. And the defendants in court seem to really respond to that really well. Again, like Hail said, I've had violence committed to me as well that has progressed into the justice system. It is really hard to try to have that compassion and self awareness about the other person and being like I support rehabilitation 100%, but when it's you, it's really weird. It's a really weird space to navigate. So, just wanted to tautoko that.

W: I think it's also important to recognise that with the way our justice system is currently stacked against minority groups, it means that with punitive measures, we aren't actually reducing sexual violence statistics at all. It'll just mean that the people who are going to be imprisoned for it are those who are disenfranchised by the justice system already.

How might experiences of [societal] exclusion expose rainbow relationships to violence and/or harm?

R: So I thought with being part of the rainbow community, you often feel like you don't belong. So then there are quite limited options for people for

you to relate to which can cause people to settle for abusive friendships or relationships because there's just not many options or it can feel like there aren't many options. Yeah, so people can settle for something which actually harms them.

G: When we don't feel we belong somewhere we kind of expect that in our future relationships... That can also tie into a sense of belonging or exclusion within our family systems. And just like when people don't feel accepted within their families, which happens a lot with queer individuals, it can impact upon how they feel they should be viewed in their future relationships...That ties in a lot to the theory of hurt people hurt people, because they kind of expect that to be what is normal within relationships. And so they (might) give that same energy back to others.

H: I totally agree with everyone else in terms of hurt people, hurt people. I'm thinking of it from a psychological point of view. In terms of absence of belonging, and exclusion, our social environment is so detrimental to our development as human beings, especially as young people. When we have impoverished social environments, because we don't belong and we're being excluded, or there's a lack of role models of what a relationship should be; there's more stress and trauma because you have so little to rely on or so little to be supported by. With exclusion comes a lack of healthy communication because you may only have like trauma bonds with people.

With a lack of healthy communication, there is an increase of violence because unhealthy or toxic communication to me is a form of violence. And I think that this is especially true for like initial relationships where people will have when they don't have a lot of experience on what a healthy relationship is, or what an unhealthy relationship is in my own experience, I know that the types of relationships I had when I was younger, are red flags to me now. You have to, unfortunately, a lot of the time you have to learn from these unhealthy relationships, because you have been excluded, and you don't know better.

C: A thing that came to mind was, how the abuser will feel like they need you more than you feel like you need them. So they desire this belonging or inclusion so much that they will feel like the only way that they can belong or feel included is by sort of trapping you.

AY: I thought it was really interesting if you experience something like a big loss as a kid, just before you're ready to experience that sort of loss or hurt, it makes you feel like the entire world is against you...wanting to leave somebody before they leave you because of what you're scared of, like, how happy you're feeling or how happy they're feeling... And you feel like it's going to end one day. So it's like, I'll get out before they can.

W: A lack of inclusion also means a lack of representation and so what that means is that cycles of violence continue a lot more easily when no one can intercept what's going on if no one is able to represent

their communities. And so what ends up happening is a lot of marginalized groups, especially, you know, like people who are affected by trans misogyny, or like indigenous groups or Black groups get trapped in this kind of bubble. All the violence that you might experience within relationships is also happening at a social and structural level so you are not listened to.. And then there is kind of no justice for the abused, but also sometimes for the abuser because the cycles of violence continue. We are quite quick to push the blame onto the abuser even though a lot of the time within these kinds of cycles of harm it's a result of things like cis-heteronormativity, patriarchy and colonisation.

Hinengaro and Whatumanawa

Whatumanawa relating to emotions and senses and our healthy expression of them.

"An important part of a child's development relates to their emotions. So much can be gained and learned from observing and reacting appropriately to children's emotional responses. Every child has innate creativity and the source of energy that stems from emotions can do much to develop this important part of a child... There is a time and a place for every emotion that a human being can have.... In Māori culture it is not unusual to see both men and women cry for sadness and sometimes joy. Tears are regarded as coming from the sacred pools of healing. No one is seen to be too emotional in these contexts - the emphasis is on the joy of being both human and divine."

[Pere & Nicholson, 1997]

Hinengaro - the hidden mother.

"Hine (female) is the conscious whole of the mind including ngaro (hidden) the closed consciousness. Hinengaro refers to the mental, intiutive and feeling seat of the emotions. Thinking, knowing, generalising, sensing, responding and reacting are all processes of the hinengaro - the mind."

[Pere & Nicholson, 1997]

Q: What are the most alive issues for rainbow rangatahi that affect their ability to enjoy a balanced emotional life?

R: The thing which came to mind immediately was when you are young, and you are perhaps just realising that you might be a part of the rainbow community, there seems to be so much pressure to find the perfect label, the perfect word, which summarises how you feel every single day, all the time, which for lots of people is completely impossible. And I think that's maybe just a part of realising that you're part of the community and wanting a word to describe yourself, but I think it can be quite stressful and confusing. And it can have an impact on your mental well being if you just think, oh, there's no word for me. What does that mean about myself? So I think it could be beneficial to tell people that there doesn't have to be a word for you, the whole meaning of the word queer is just not straight. And you don't have to know exactly how you're feeling all of the time, because attraction is fluid. So is gender. It doesn't have to fit into a box. So I think that it takes a lot of stress, potentially a lot of stress off people's shoulders, especially when they're young.

G: I'm sort of looping back to what R said about the whole kind of connection between trying to fit into like the label, and like the mental and emotional well-being. It is a really big thing especially when you kind of set yourself upon a label. If you are younger, and you'd feel like you can be certain on something... And then like, say something happens that it kind of like entirely changes your perception of your gender, or sexuality, etc. And it can be really jarring to kind of be like, Oh, maybe I'm not

the kind of person that I thought I was... So yeah, that definitely needs to be taken into account when it comes to how it impacts well-being.

H: What's top of mind for me is that for most young queer people there is a dissonance between how they exist in the world and how the world accepts them. This imbalance to me is one of the biggest inhibitors of Queer joy because no matter how we exist, how we show up, how we decide to react – there is always an underlying force of bigotry present in our lives. As well as this, the dissonance BIPOC Queers feel in the community as they are supposed to be able to find acceptance for their queerness, yet the same people who celebrate queerness will be the same ones perpetuating racism - and there are even more nuances for trans people (trans women especially). It is these dissonances that I believe affect our emotional balance. I believe that in this programme it is important to recognise this because healthy relationships with others are greatly impacted by our personal emotional health - but to have a balanced emotional health, we must look outward onto the stressors queer folk face on a daily basis. It is all interconnected and layered.

Kōrero then revolved around experiences of judgment and discrimination within the whānau and communities,

U: First thing that comes to mind is fear of being judged by family and friends or the community where you go.

G: The surrounding stress of whether or not you're going to be accepted by those around you. Because it's a really big thing, especially for those who are in queerphobic families...And those who don't have necessarily the right support networks in order to kind of feel comfortable in a queer identity in those spaces.

A: I think it's really important to know how to explain your identity in a cultural and personal way... to discuss with people how we can explain it in a cultural way.

H: Like mentioned above - it is the dissonance that sticks out to me. Whānau and community revolve around belonging, trust and acceptance, so when we are not accepted, instead judged for a part of our identity- as fundamental as our queerness - there is obviously an upset. It is scary to think that the people we rely on might turn us away or harm us for being authentic.

I think this is especially important when we think about the reasonings behind judgment and discrimination against queerness. The ones I have interacted with personally have stemmed from religious control and colonisation attempting to suppress ethnic queerness. Bigotry and hatred towards queerness is a macro-level issue that, I understand, was created to control society and make people adhere to specific norms. Knowing these big level ideas exist outside our front doors, and within our homes, within the hearts of our communities and people is soul-crushing and tiring. Because where do we belong then?

They identified the need to have access to healthcare as well as knowledge of how to navigate healthcare systems;

W: I was going to say accessing health care, and also just like, knowing what your options are. In general, I think there are so many amazing resources out there on what you can get through things like ACC or WINZ. But, unless you actively look for that information and talk to the right people, it is really hard to know what the plethora of options are available to you.

H: Accessing health care is important, but accessing health care that is competent in queerness, generational issues, and culture is vital. I think a majority of my friends have had at least one bad experience with the health system due to being patronised, discriminated against, or downright humiliated. This is not a system that welcomes our participation.

In the context of this programme, I think its a great idea to tell people whats out there, but also warn them that they might not have a perfect experience. I would suggest that facilitators, if they cover health care, strongly suggest that individuals have a support network around them while they interact with this system. Whether it be a friend in the doctors room with you, or a friend to take you out for tea after a bad counselling appointment. Support outside the system, to me, is necessary to keep up with the system.

We then asked if including self-care and collective care skills for mental health would be beneficial?

R: I had a suggestion for how we could navigate, like self care skills. Instead of maybe giving a list of things that the facilitators think could be helpful, opening up, maybe a mind map or something so that the participants can put what genuinely works for them into the things and then everyone else can see and try it out. Yeah, cuz for me, meditation is enjoyable, but it doesn't help me. But then for me, it really does. And everyone's just so different, that you can't give people a list and expect it to fit.

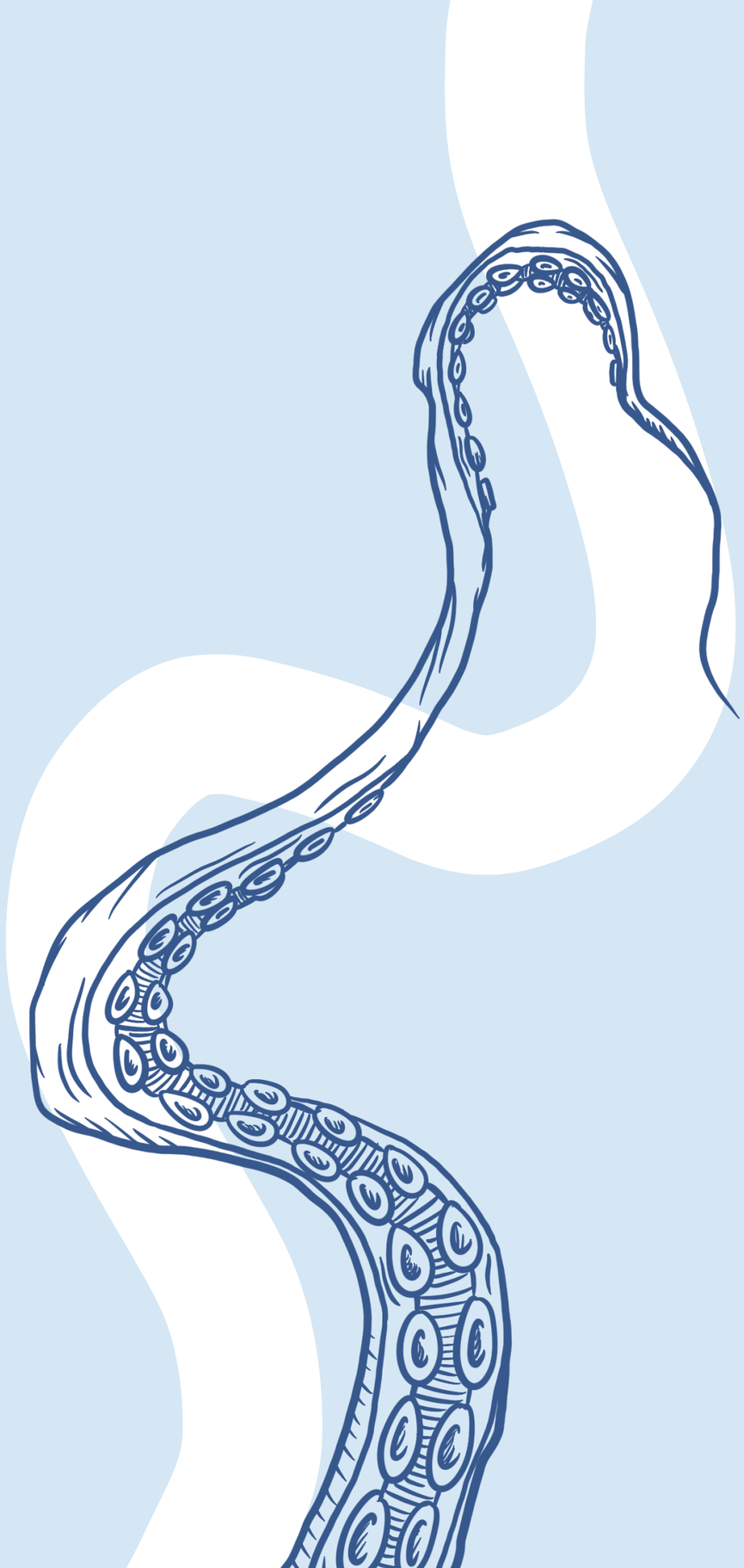
I feel as if people don't think of medication for mental health as a form of self care. And I think it is worth talking about, because for some people, it's purely genetic. You can do every self care thing in the world. And it still won't help you, for some people. So I feel like there's a lot of stigma around medication for mental health... for some people that's all that will work for them. And that's completely fine. You don't have to be doing the most natural alternative possible. It's just doing what is going to genuinely help you. And then my second point was, there seems to be this idea that if you're angry about something, you have to work on forgiveness, and you have to make yourself not angry, you have to relax. But when it comes to like systemic issues, you don't have to relax. You don't have to make yourself forgive the people who have created the systemic issues. You can if that helps you but I feel like it's completely justified to be angry and to feel anger towards the systems which have resulted in the oppression of your people for so long. I think there's

nothing wrong with being angry as long as it's not destroying you inside.

A: For me, self care is different for different people. It feels like professionals don't just prescribe pills but now prescribe activities. I want to be listened to and not told prescriptive "strategies". It feels really capitalistic and individualistic. I feel like everything is connected together, because we're an ecosystem. And so, you know, the well-being of grass is going to impact my well-being. It's all connected. Therapists sometimes don't value this.

H: Including self and collective care skills would totally be beneficial. I think it would be great to introduce them more as a holistic practice rather than only a reactive measure. E.g just telling people to go for walks when their sad isn't enough - talk about how self and collective care is more than that. It is also preventative measures that becomes a life practice. And that the practices aren't all perfect for everyone. What matters is you find ones that work for you. This is not to say reactionary care isnt important - it is. Having skills to deal with a depressive episode even though you've gone for a walk, had a shower, and did your brain journaling is important. Knowing that you can call up a friend or take that nap, or whatever it is to you is vital as well.

Mauri and Wairuatanga



“Mauri is an abstract concept and extremely difficult to define in English. It is a very important concept and affects our everyday lives, and living. Each individual has a mauri that remains throughout their existence. All living things, lakes, rivers, the sea, the bush and buildings have mauri that should be appreciated and respected. It helps to relate and care for everyone and everything across the universe. Mauri is an indepth term and is one that can pertain to an individual’s psych alongside other epople or it can also pertain to a talisman, the physical symbol of the hidden principle that protects vitality and fruitfulness.”

[Pere & Nicholson, 1997]

“AIO Wairua, the Divine Parent, the Great Spirit, the Creators of everything across the universe, are regarded as the presence and the breath of everything...Wairua is an apt description of the spirit – it denotes two waters. THere are both the positive and negative streamss for one to consider. Everything has wairua, for example, water can give or take life. It is a matter of keeping a balance.”

[Pere & Nicholson, 1997]

Q. What is the connection between your wairua and your rainbow identity?

C: I think of my tīpuna who are always around me at all times, and are takatāpui, you know. Our tīpuna we were doing that way back when they were getting with whoever they wanted to get with. They didn’t have these labels, you know, colonisation hadn’t come in yet and wreaked havoc and made being takatāpui with this taboo thing. So I definitely feel their presence around me and it sort of just encourages me to, you know, keep embracing who I am. Don’t have to be defined in these colonised Pakeha boxes, nē?

W: I personally feel I am my identity. And I’ve done a lot of reflecting. When I first kind of came out, I was kind of very focused on kind of like, moving into a white cis version of womanhood and the very kind of like, Eurocentric idea of like, what womanhood is.

And then kind of like, the more time I’ve spent kind of like reconnecting, with te ao Maori and my culture. It has really made me recenter myself and my ideas around womanhood around, like, what I actually want and what I want to be...I know, over the years have kind of become less and less kind of attached for label of trans-woman and more so being whakawahine because I feel like I can’t separate the kind of cultural identity that I have linked with transness. I can’t divorce the two from one another... to me being a woman is more about, like, connecting back with my culture, and my place in the world.

U: So I'm Indian. I came here a couple years ago with my family. When I think about spirituality and my queerness it is basically I think of spirit as being free. You refer to spirit as a male or a female or you know, as trans, the spirit is free. And it can choose who they want to be and they can express themselves. When I grew up reading ancient Indian texts, the historical texts and there are heaps and heaps and heaps of reference in those texts about, you know, the gods transforming themselves from male to female, and from female to male changing, you know, having different genders and a lot of my spirituality per se is built on top of the idea that if they are the gods and they had flexibility then why do you want to criticise people who were choosing to do the exact same thing?

A: For me, it connects to a lot of elements. Like I'm a nature lover. I like a lot of elements in nature...my imagination just goes to different elements in texture and color and stuff. It is here I see the embodiment of my gender. I need to try really hard to push myself into a space of neurotypical people to understand, you know, men, women, like, you know, all that kind of stuff. It is not my spirituality, because it's not where I feel safe, or comfortable. And so if I actually connect to my spirituality, I will understand none of that. And for me my identity, as a queer person, is very much through how I understand everything spiritually. My relationship with queerness is very spiritual.

H: My wairua or spirit or sense of self (im not sure what to call it) is something hard to explain. How I feel myself is very separate to how I am perceived, I believe a big part of this is because of my queerness. I am often seen as cis, and now and then as straight too. But in reality my gender and sexuality is more of an essence, it is fluidity. I write about my gender as if it is experiences that I am impacted by, or it is just something I encounter. Gender as it is known widely in western society is something so rigid - even when it comes to queerness. I've resigned from those expectations and it means I feel so much more liberated in myself. I decided this not because of my queerness, but because I am Brown and tired of White people. It doesn't always work, but when it does I feel so free in myself. It is like I have this essence or flame or something that moves without prediction inside my body that no one gets to see unless I let them in. It is different to how I exist sometimes, and sometimes it is the exact same - but I am the one who decides that. So, I guess to answer this question: My connection between my spirit and rainbow identity is defined through its shared, liberated, fluidity that I do not want or attempt to share with the world.

C spoke to the importance of integrating ways to nourish and care for our wairua in the programme:

When you go through unhealthy dynamics, or you've been you know, abused or assaulted, etc. It takes quite a hit to your wairua. And I think a big part of this relationship, this programme should be learning how to build that wairua back up after such experiences. Encompassing Aroha into that as well. That's a huge one. I try to do everything within pretty much all aspects of my life with aroha. You know, you want to treat yourself

with love, you want community care and community aroha as well. That all ties into your wairua.

Q: What are your thoughts on Mauri and healthy relating:

H: I want to preface by saying that as tauiwi I don't think it's my call to define what this (Mauri) looks like. But from the definitions that you've provided, this is what I interpret my personal answer to the questions are: I think recognition of how Mauri can fluctuate, and that's okay. And perhaps how that looks like in relationships and extending that acknowledgement into teaching kids how to respond to what fluctuation looks like, like, what do you do in a relationship when you're feeling languishing? Or when you're feeling unsettled? Or when it's flourishing? Like, how does that translate? How does your mauri translate into these relationships? And specifically to do with queerness, well, how to queerness related to mauri what does it look like? Is it like self empowerment of identity that helps people, like have the confidence to speak their identity and live their identity comfortably? Or is it like accountability of holding themselves accountable to interact in a healthy way in their relationships.

R: Mauri tau. Yeah, because balance in relationships is so important. And I think it's one of the most important things to teach people about is that you shouldn't give up your entire life, just to dedicate all of your time and energy into one person. I know, I feel like there's a lot of expectations to do that to drop everything for someone. But that's not how I think it should be, in my opinion... especially when you're young, and you're at school, and your effort can really make an impact on your future. And then there's all these ideas of, oh, you're in a relationship, you have to be spending every spare second with this person. And for some people that can be imbalanced. Taking care of yourself is also going to benefit the relationship, even if you're not directly interacting with them, if you're taking care of yourself as well, that will help you in every situation, including the your relationships.

U: There were a couple of things, you know, I read some time ago, and one of them was, you know, quite resonates with what we're talking about here. It was like, You should accept, if you want to be in a healthy relationship, you should accept the person for who he is, not who you can make them to be, or who you want them to be. Because if you have expectations of someone, it is definitely gonna...I don't know how to put it in words... but it's gonna make you do something different so that the person or the other person responds differently to you. And spiritually, you know, we have the saying in our culture that everything is one. We say we are different; we are, you know, physical people with different individuals, but essentially, spiritually, if you think about it we we all are one and at the same time, everyone has their own universe in and of itself. So if you try and ponder in someone else's universe, you're gonna get lost. So you take care of yourself and let the other person express who they are. And never break those boundaries.

A: Radical self love, and being able to recognise things you deserve. And if you notice any negative patterns, whether it be a romantic relationship or not. I think it's really important to understand that you as a person, not only you deserve better, but also recognising your own faults and realising that they also might deserve better or you could like work on certain things that you've done...recognising and keeping yourself, holding yourself accountable.

Q: What mauri are we creating in the programme and how can facilitators nurture the mauri?

C: When I hear Mauri, my mind automatically goes to Tihei Mauri Ora. It's one of our oldest sort of sayings in the world of te ao Maori and I think it's one that rings true every time. We don't want to just be surviving, we want to be thriving nē? We want to be flourishing. And I think the reason that is such an old saying is because it has rang true for so long, and it's something that I feel that we should continue and interweave into this programme. So we want to be encouraging these healthy relationships, we also want to be going above and beyond. Supporting whanau and entering relationships that really fill their cup nē?, not just the bare minimum.

R: So diversity and open mindedness, I think, obviously, open mindedness is crucial. And it would really help us take into account everyone's different circumstances, while still weaving in the same concepts that we talked about last time, like connectedness and stuff. But yeah,

being open minded to diversity and people's individual experiences and how different they can be as well.

A: Different groups need different sort of Mauri, like some group will need, like empowerment, some group will want a perspective of like, collective care to inspire them, or some group will want like social justice, or those kinds of things, like each group will, like want a different thing, depending on who they are. And I think it would depend on which group we're doing it with.

U: It [Mauri] is like a flower that is ever changing. It is not constant. And people have different needs at different times, what they might resonate with today said, it's not certain that it will even be relevant for them tomorrow. So I think, you know, just just checking in with them, and like, as, you know, from a diversity point of view, just accepting who they are, because it's really impossible for you to understand where they're coming from and what their needs are, you can try but in the end, you just have to accept for who they are and where they are at.

C: Honestly, I think it's just about being responsive and reading the room. So if you can kind of sense that everyone's in a bit of a down buzz vibe, sometimes it's good to like, try and, you know, up the vibe, and get the like, mauri ora running. But also, sometimes it's like, is it the right choice? Like, or should we just, maybe take a chill and like, listen to people? Like, you know what I mean? Like, it's really just about a case by case basis, I feel. Yeah, because sometimes you can try to push the

whole upbeat vibes, but I know I've been in rooms with they have tried to push the upbeat vibes and I'm like, no.

H: Acknowledging when we are sharing really deep things or when we're outside of our comfort levels. And I think that is super important, especially in a classroom with people who you see every day. And that can be really daunting. And I think another idea would be to let people kind of exist in the room or online, however they want to, I think I'm remembering a time I was looking at a therapy session being facilitated by a group in Dunedin. They put out a bunch of supplies to create and that was like weaved through the conversations and like allowing people to express themselves and exist, however they want to. I think it's really important. Especially if you're catering for a bunch of different kids who might have different needs, or might have different ways of expressing things.

W touched on emotional labour trans folks can face in these spaces,

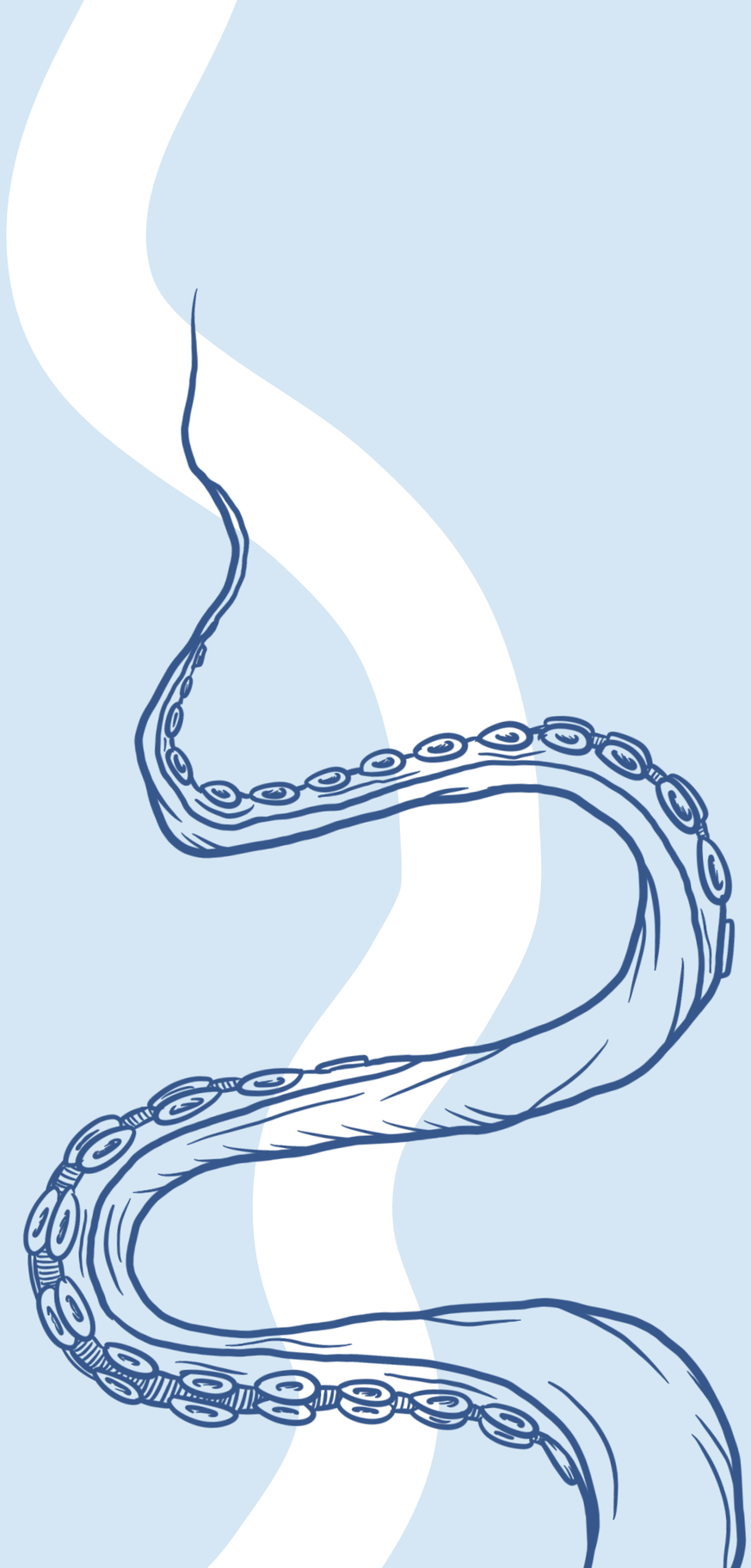
Within queer spaces, sometimes there's an expectation of emotional labour from trans people to have to deal with. Someone's choice to participate in a space shouldn't include a burden for them to educate others. Keeping in mind that not everyone's experiences about being open about being trans will be the same. For example, I know that there's been times where some trans people might feel compromised by doing things like sharing their pronouns, or having to declare their

gender identity. On one hand, we should ensure people's identities and experiences are being respected and on the other hand we shouldn't be forcing trans people to participate prescribed ways, like following tikanga that doesn't align with how they want to be in the space or who they are.

W then spoke further to non-coercive facilitation practice,

I feel you should have agency over what information you choose to share as opposed to putting the expectation on people to have to participate. People should be welcome in the space in any way they want to participate - not a transactional expectation of; you can be here if you give us information about yourself. For example, like, raise your hand if you want to say or contribute or as opposed to, we're going to go around, and everyone's going to contribute. Little things like that, which can kind of make the difference in feeling like you have to participate in giving up information.

Taha Tinana and Wai Ora



Taha Tinana is the physical dimension.

"A mother [birthing parent] nurtures, cherishes and blesses her child through the sacred waters of her womb. Approximately nine months after the sacred seed from the other birth parent unites with the sacred river of life from the birthing [uterus] parent a precious child is born of water. Every person is sacred and requires a set of disciplines to ensure that nurturing continues...Each person is a universe and needs to have dominion over themselves..

"Waiora [wai meaning water, ora to be alive] refers to the external world and the connection between people and the environment. As well as sustaining life in a physical sense, the environment is essential to cultural wellbeing for many people by providing a sense of place. For Maori this is expressed through the concept of turangawaewae, a place to stand. Waiora includes protecting the environment so water, land and air are clean and biodiversity is preserved and enhanced, and opportunities for people to experience the natural environment."

We led our kōrero with the whakataukī

Ko au te whenua, te whenua ko au

I am the land and the land is me.

H: I think it's a really common thread in a lot of indigenous and ethnic communities that the land exists in tandem with our own existence. Sustaining the land sustains our people. This is something I relate to being Indian. Where my father's family lives, the land is what grows the people and they feed themselves off of the food that is grown near them. Their lives are linked to the lands they live on. You become part of the land with this.

U: My family, you can think of them as spiritual or religious or you know, super ethnic. We have this understanding of when we read these ancient texts, they were, you know, dated 1000s and 1000s of years back... And one of the sayings they have is if you walk barefoot on the land you can feel the vibration of the place. And when you walk in a room, for example, you can just feel the vibration, you can call it the energy, you can just feel it. And you just know, this place is fantastic; or this is not so good. So there is this connectivity to the land to all the elements and it just comes down to one element in the end, if you want to talk metaphorically.

A: A lot of people interpret Buddhism in different ways but for some people we were taught to walk with our bare feet on the rough Earth, with a light heart... kind of like cleansing in your soul in a way and some people interpreted it as torturing yourself to erase your sin. But you know, like, when it comes down to it, it is just cleansing your soul and cleansing the bad feelings you have in the unhealthiness and if you have been unhealthy or if you have not had a chance in a slightly violent environment to, do that, to sort of like humble yourself down, or reconnect with yourself. And I think it's about breaking away from the barriers that Americanisation makes us treat each other as humans. And human expectations, because you know, as we get closer to Buddha we will get called closer to ourselves and be more rational in relationships and not let our egos or our arrogance interfere.

It seemed a lot in Asia that we explore everything through nature. Like even the literature I have read growing up, in everything we compare ourselves to every element, to the leaves, to the trees, the flowers, the birds, the light. We use mostly personification or like prophetism to reflect. It is a great treasure. And so our relationship with nature, the way we treat the flower is literally a reflection of how we will treat humans in relationship. And it doesn't mean that we treat everyone greatly, it just means we explore how someone treats a flower might show how they would treat humans...I see a lot of people when before they start healing their relationship with actual people they heal their relationship with flowers or objects first. Especially in nature...they connect to nature in parallel with themselves before they try to fix the relationship they have with people so I feel like nature is very connected to healthy relationships.

W: When I first came out as trans, I felt like I was always kind of chasing beauty standards, and doing the whole assimilation thing. It wasn't really a slay move. And then I was watching, I think it was Euphoria. And I watched Jules' special episode where she kind of divulges into the psychology of being trans. And she talks about her experiences, where her tranness resonates with the ocean and how the ocean can be a complex, like feminine and strong force of nature. And it really made me rethink the way that I feel like, my connection to my body.

Seeing that, like, there's so much beauty in nature and different like... I can't even explain it. I've like tried to put this into writing before, but it's like, just seeing things like the ocean or like the night sky or big rolling hills and huge trees, it just makes you appreciate how complex nature is, and how complex your own body is, and how there's such beauty like everyone is saying you know, like love your body, like pushing up body positivity. And that's like all slay but, sometimes it can be a lot harder to compute.

But when you actually like, go out and see the complexity of nature, and what the world has to offer. It really makes you resonate a lot with your own self and your own body. Or at least for me, it did. And I think it also helped a lot with my transition. I have a lot of things that I'm very dysphoric about. And I think it helps me to go out and see oh, the supermassive tree, it's freaking huge, but it's still absolutely gorgeous, or, like, the ocean is this huge, rolling force of nature. But it's still beautiful and holds so much. It feels sacred, right?

And it's like, I guess as I transition. And as I learn more about my own connection to my body, I'm also learning a lot more about my connection to space and land. And yeah, I've never tried putting that into words before. So I hope that made sense. But that's how I feel, at least for me personally.

U: There's a saying where I come from and says, I'll just translate it that you come out of sand or land and you merge into sand or land because in my culture, we when someone dies, we burn their body and you know, spread their ashes. So we don't put them in land. But in any case, you end up in land. So someone questions saying, then what makes me, me? And you know, when I asked the same question I was told even though you are all the same, it is you who makes you. Your individuality. So you are so unique that even though you're part of everyone, as in of the land, you are different. There's no one out there who's like you. So it's like, you know, sort of contradicting but sort of it's like tied together. You're part of everything but your individual as well.

Q. What does to mean to connect to our bodies as rainbow people?

H: I think connection to our bodies as queer people comes in many forms. Whether it be through our gender expressions, how some may decide to navigate transitions, or how we just experience life every day. Some of the ways I connect to my body is through meditating or by washing my hair. I practice washing my hair as a way of getting in touch with my body and

ancestors. Hair is such a point of vitality to me and my culture. When my hair is healthy, I feel healthy too. I write a lot while I wait for it to dry, which connects into my creativity - which to me is my spirituality too.

U: When I read the question, how do you connect with your body, I think of, you know, different aspects. Sure, there's a physical aspect, but I think the spiritual aspect for me tops the physical aspect. And in a sense that, you know, when you say how you connect with your body, it's just, you just listen to it, not like physically pull your ear on a body part and listen to it, it's just, you know, you just sit, close your eyes and see what your body part is saying, you know, when I was young, we used to do this activity, they would just lie down or sit and then we would take our attention or ear to each body part and see what they are saying. And just feel it, you know, that goes to, in a physical sense, where there's, you know, you have eyes and you see, okay, do I look okay to myself? Am I comfortable with how I think I am? Or how I look at myself in the mirror? Is that is more important than anyone's opinion out there. And, yeah, you just, you just know yourself better than anyone else out there.

Rangatahi then reflected on the different challenges they face being in their bodies and how bodies can be and are sites of targeted violence...

W: The political nature of my body and how I can't separate myself from the effect that my presence, as

like transgender, disrupts the cishetero patriarchy, and also colonial gender standards.

It can make it very difficult navigating the world sometimes and figuring out my place in the world, because it almost feels like something is innately deviant about me because you know, from a young age, the media always portrays you as a caricature. I mean, how much trans representation is there that's healthy like, Buffalo Bill and like, Silence of the Lambs. Like, it's, it's awful...I don't know. It can be hard to walk the fine line of enjoying representing my community, being vocal about my transness and also at the trade off I feel I have experienced transphobia and walking down the street. It is scary to have that in mind. Like, oh, there's always gonna be people out there who want to hurt me on the basis of my identity. It seems like there's always going to be adults talking about my genitals.

And there's always going to be people debating whether or not I should exist. I know a lot of privileges that I hold. Like I'm like a white person. Like, I'm Māori, but I walk down the street and I am clocked as a white person. I have never experienced racism face to face. Then looking at my trans friends who are POC, and it's like God...the experiences of racism compounded with trans misogyny. It's just awful. And it can be hard to find comfort in your own body and take up space if the society you live in constantly condemns your body. And also debates whether or not it should exist in the first place?

Question in response to W: How do you resist this?

I honestly think Joy is the first thing that comes to mind... Having an unapologetic aroha for myself and allowing myself to feel joy. And to have fun and it feels there's such a burden of responsibility on queer youth and especially trans youth, to kind of have to always defend themselves and always argue that they should exist. And it's like we're also just teenagers. We are kids, right? And it feels like sometimes the most like, political thing that I can be doing is going and riding my bike down the street and having a good time and listening to some good tunes. Like, there are so many people who want me to suffer. And if I don't, that's like, the biggest way to stick it to them.

Kōrero continues,

G: I've actually got a bit of an interesting connection with my body, because of the therapy with eating disorders and actually, a large part of that was disconnecting my kind of thoughts and self from my body. So I guess, in a way, I find it difficult to kind of bring back that connection between my body and myself, because I see them as two separate things, because that's what I had to do to kind of recover in a way. So it's kind of an interesting question with me, because I don't feel I really do connect with my body as such, because I'm just being taught that they are to be separate things in order to get past that sort of stuff.

H: I relate a lot to what people are saying. In terms of being a brown person the connection I have with

my body is inherently different in public spaces than in private spaces. In public spaces, I am much more aware of myself and my body in a more anxious manner. Being in public makes me feel exposed quite often. Like, the way I present in public is, is very mindful, when I'm feeling confident I will wear cultural jewelry. I will dress unapologetically queer. I don't care if I'm seen. But if it's late at night, and I'm trying to get some groceries alone, and I remember that I live in a small white town, I'm wearing a sweater, and then a coat and then a mask, and then making sure I'm getting places as soon as possible. While hopefully looking straight and invisible. During this, every person I pass I hope to the universe they won't acknowledge my existence, that I am left alone as I walk down the three blocks to the store. That no one hurts me.

When it comes to my own spaces, I'm more openly vulnerable in a really refreshing and therapeutic way. It feels more freeing. I barely even think about. I'll connect with my body through through art, or if I shut the lights off and kind of meditate for a bit. Generally, it's a very different to how I connect with my body in public places. In my own spaces, my connection is a way of, healing from how I connect with my body in public places. Yeah, it's like, the guards are down, and I'm dressing my wounds to an extent. And yeah, I think when I'm in public places, as well, another way I connect with my body is through activism. And it's through connection with other people where I feel some sort of authenticity that I don't get in other forms. Its probably because in those connections, I feel like I belong, and I can be myself without facing harm.

W: Yeah, honestly, I don't connect with my body...it is something I'm working on. I think the main thing is gender dysphoria. I feel like unless you experience your dysphoria, it's not really something I can put into words. It's just kind of this pit in your stomach. Like, I don't even like literally know what to compare it to. It is a gut wrenching, awful feeling about your body...I think it's definitely like getting alleviated the more I transition and the more I'm coming into myself and finding my style. I think it's definitely hard.

And as G said, it can be confronting having to think about the sort of thing [connecting to our bodies]. Because not connecting with your body also means it's a lot harder to do things like take up space and like, be open and like, loud, and like, it's also like, I think specifically for trans feminine people transitioning into womanhood, or femininity where you're told to be smaller, and more petite brings up like, a lot more complicated emotions.

And you can quite quickly kind of fall into a kind of a knee jerk reaction to like masculinity. I think it can, it can lead to some pretty crappy standards and beauty standards...I think kind of taking a step back, looking at things like nature has really helped me kind of understand that two things can be true at once. For example, the night sky, it can be vast and big and huge and take up all the space and it can also be beautiful and worthy of that space. Or the ocean can be like, big and strong and powerful, while also being this beautiful, gorgeous thing, which is like a constant. And it's allowed to like wax and wane and change and come in and out. And I think that's helping me feel more comfortable.

We shared a quote by Prentis Hemphill,

Boundaries give us the space to do the work of loving ourselves. They might be, actually, the first and fundamental expression of self-love. They also give us the space to love and witness others as they are, even those that have hurt us.

(Brown & Hemphill, 2021).

How do you practice honoring others and your own boundaries?

R: I think it's so, so important to emphasize the importance of boundaries in relationships and all types of relationships... as someone who's had negative experiences with not knowing that I deserve boundaries. I think it's so so worth just really emphasizing the importance of boundaries to everyone. involved. Because sometimes if you're in a relationship and you don't realise that certain things, like, that you're not obligated to do anything, you can have your own boundaries. I'm sure it's easy to say that but then there's still the expectations, which are put on people... And then to also discuss how to deal with when boundaries are broken, or if you break someone else's boundaries, what to do after that. Because, yeah, as you can talk about having boundaries and setting boundaries, as much as you want, but what are you going to do when the boundaries don't work?

H: It's something I've definitely increased my practice this year. Whether it is checking in about conversations like, Hey, do you want me to send you this cool article that has these things on it? Which may be a bit tricky for you to read now? Or maybe it's when I'm watching a movie with a friend and it is, hey, do you want to hold hands? And do you want to cuddle a bit while we watch this really sweet movie? Or like, maybe it's on we're in public - Hey, how you feeling about being in this space? Right now? I know. It's kind of loud and overwhelming. And this is something that freaks you out a bit sometimes? How can I help you? It's like, it's like, I think we need to be aware of our own boundaries and capacities. And I think it is our moral responsibility to also check in about our friends and our loved ones and the people we interact with, like, and it's it's not hard, it's just like a, Hey, how are you? And if someone says, Good, you ask them, what does good mean? And maybe good actually means I'm just kind of alive today. And that's, that's good. For me. It's like, it's taking that step to check in and ask a bit more than what is usually expected.

A: Speaking from my own experience, when I ask for boundaries from an East Asian person I would ask them in a different way than how I would ask a Western person. I feel for example, if I asked my European home stay for boundaries, I would just ask them straightforwardly. But if I asked the other student who also stays here, I would ask them in ways that make them feel more comfortable and have extra awareness because I know that they are also having the extra awareness for me. That kind of awareness is part of our culture, and we always inherently have it.

Concluding Reflection by Hailey:

Being a part of this group has allowed me to reflect on my own journey towards Healthy Relationships (HR). What HR mean to me now is different to what it used to be, and I really appreciate the opportunity for growth this has allowed me. As I am big on reflecting, it has made me feel more in touch with my own sense of self, and I think my spiritual self feels more liberated after having these sessions. I felt energised after the meetings, I would end the zoom and be filled with joy that spaces like this exist and are in the process of becoming more widespread. I'd call my partner after the meetings, absolutely grinning because of how happy the group made me. It's a feeling I wish more spaces gave me, and it's made me reflect on how to create spaces for others to feel similarly. Holistically, I felt heard and seen. Often I am put into spaces where I am exploited for labour through tokenistic means. Here, I felt seen for the multilayered human I am. I felt really honoured and appreciated for the ideas I brought.

I learnt to trust myself more - to trust my knowledge, my words, and how I want to act in the world. I learnt to trust and lean into my emotional side, which has been really beneficial for my own healing process and the general health of my spirit and relationships. I also learnt that there is so much room for someone like me to work in spaces like this, and so I've switched my degree to better align myself with a career that will keep me in a social justice space for rangatahi.

I hope that this project continues to foster care, connection, and closure. Care for the rangatahi embracing this education, for the people they interact with, and for their wider communities. As well as this, care for the workers in this space so that their capacities are nurtured enough to manifest this kaupapa entirely while also feeling safe and able to heal. I hope for connections to spread between facilitators and rangatahi, as this workshop is not a transaction of attention for information like many educational institutions we interact with. These workshops are here to be personal and intimate.

They will hopefully recognise rangatahi for the individuals of unique (as well as collective) experience they are and seek to cater for that through trust and connection.

Finally, I hope this kaupapa assists rangatahi in the well-needed closure they deserve in their relationships. There's a lot of grief and pain we are still healing from, and I believe this education can be a tool to heal from it.

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