



TE TŌTARA CASE STUDY - TE WAKA HOU

WHANGANUI DISTRICT LIBRARY



"Ko au te awa ko te awa ko au"

Jasmin Ratana discusses adapting Te Tōtara Workforce Capability Framework for the Whanganui District Library team and how they came up with their Te Waka Hou framework.

The rhythmic splash of paddles in the water kept in time by the call of our elder kuia is a sound that resonates throughout the centuries to our present day. What does that have to do with a Capability Framework? Not a lot until you search for the unique qualities in the library workforce serving the Whanganui Community.

Before I saw Te Tōtara framework, I had never seen a competency framework, let alone a capability framework. I had first to understand what it was and how it is helpful to us before I could explain it to others or consider how it could be useful to our library. There were other considerations too. This framework has a kaupapa Māori base standing on Te Tiriti o Waitangi. How do I feel about this? Does it resonate with me as Māori? Will it resonate with my other colleagues?

A capability framework is about establishing desirable capabilities in a library workforce. It also enables you to identify your own capabilities.

Although it was somewhat long and complex, I found the Te Totara framework helpful once I had worked my way through it. I had issues though.

With Te Tiriti o Waitangi at the base, the framework should provide for a two-culture partnership. Where did the

principles of the kaupapa Māori appear in the capability sets, and where were the principles that should stem from Pākehā culture? In addition, the Whanganui District Library already has a kaupapa Māori Framework. Would the two sit together?

Those issues gave birth to the Te Waka Hou project which was about taking the Te Tōtara Framework and making it fit 'Whanganui'. For the Whanganui community, Te Awa Tupua, the Whanganui River, is our heart, and for Whanganui iwi, it is our revered tūpuna. We identify ourselves with this whakatauki: Ko au te awa ko te awa ko au, I am the river and the river is me. This is where the sound of paddles is heard. Te Tōtara was transformed into a waka.

The hull made from the original Te Tōtara framework also represents Te Tiriti o Waitangi which is to make clear that the waka belongs to all of us. The prow carries the dual values system of our library's Kaupapa Māori framework and our professional library ethics. The paddles are our capabilities as they pertain to our particular library, so they can be added or subtracted as necessary. There is the addition of a pou or pole carried on our river waka to help traverse rapids and travel upstream. The pou represents a new capability set, the Whanganui capability, which gives life to the unique skills of the Māori librarian.

Some might consider it a radical step, but if you listen carefully, you can hear the sound of the water speaking to us from our tūpuna awa, our river of knowledge. Hear the paddles wielded by capable librarians dipping into the water. In this way, we find our place in the team, our personal strengths and develop our navigation skills for the river of knowledge that we care for.



The Whanganui team have since added these five skills to Te Waka Hou:

Skill 1. Taonga Māori - the Māori way of looking at information management, taonga refers to the intrinsic life energy and tapu of objects.

Skill 2. A tribal connection to local iwi - honouring the role of local iwi: Whanganuitanga

Skill 3. Manaakitanga - the ability to be mana enhancing in all matters of engagement.

Skill 4. Tikanga - the ability to lead the traditional practices of Whanganui tikanga in everyday library practices.

Skill 5. Knowledge of the kōrero and te mita o Whanganui - revitalisation of local dialect.

*Ruapehu te maunga
Whanganui te awa
Whanganui te lwi
Tēnā tātau katoa,*

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