

# He awa whiria, braiding the rivers of kaupapa Māori and Western evidence on community mobilisation

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Acknowledgement: Ngā mihi nui ki a korua Professor Angus Macfarlane and Associate Professor Sonja Macfarlane for feedback on an earlier version of this transcript and encouragement, me koutou ki a E Tū Whānau for the opportunity to contribute to the braiding.

E Tū Whānau (ETW) is a transformative Kaupapa Māori strategy which has been working to mobilise communities to address violence within whānau since 2008. This article explores the relationship between the Kaupapa Māori approach used by ETW and the Western evidence on community mobilisation (CM). CM is a public health and community development strategy (Trewartha, 2020), which is very aligned to community psychology (Rappaport & Seidman, 2000). The relationship is explored using He Awa Whiria, the Braided Rivers Model developed by Angus Macfarlane.

## He awa whiria, the braided rivers approach

Macfarlane's He Awa Whiria Braided Rivers approach (A. Macfarlane & Macfarlane, 2018; S. Macfarlane, Macfarlane, & Gillon, 2015) uses the metaphor of streams of a river to describe the complex and dynamic relationship between Kaupapa Māori and Western science approaches (see Figure 1). The metaphor describes two streams of a river which start at the same place and run beside each other in equal strength. The streams come together and move away from one another on the riverbed. Each stream spends more time apart than together, but when the knowledge streams converge a learning space is created (Superu, 2018).

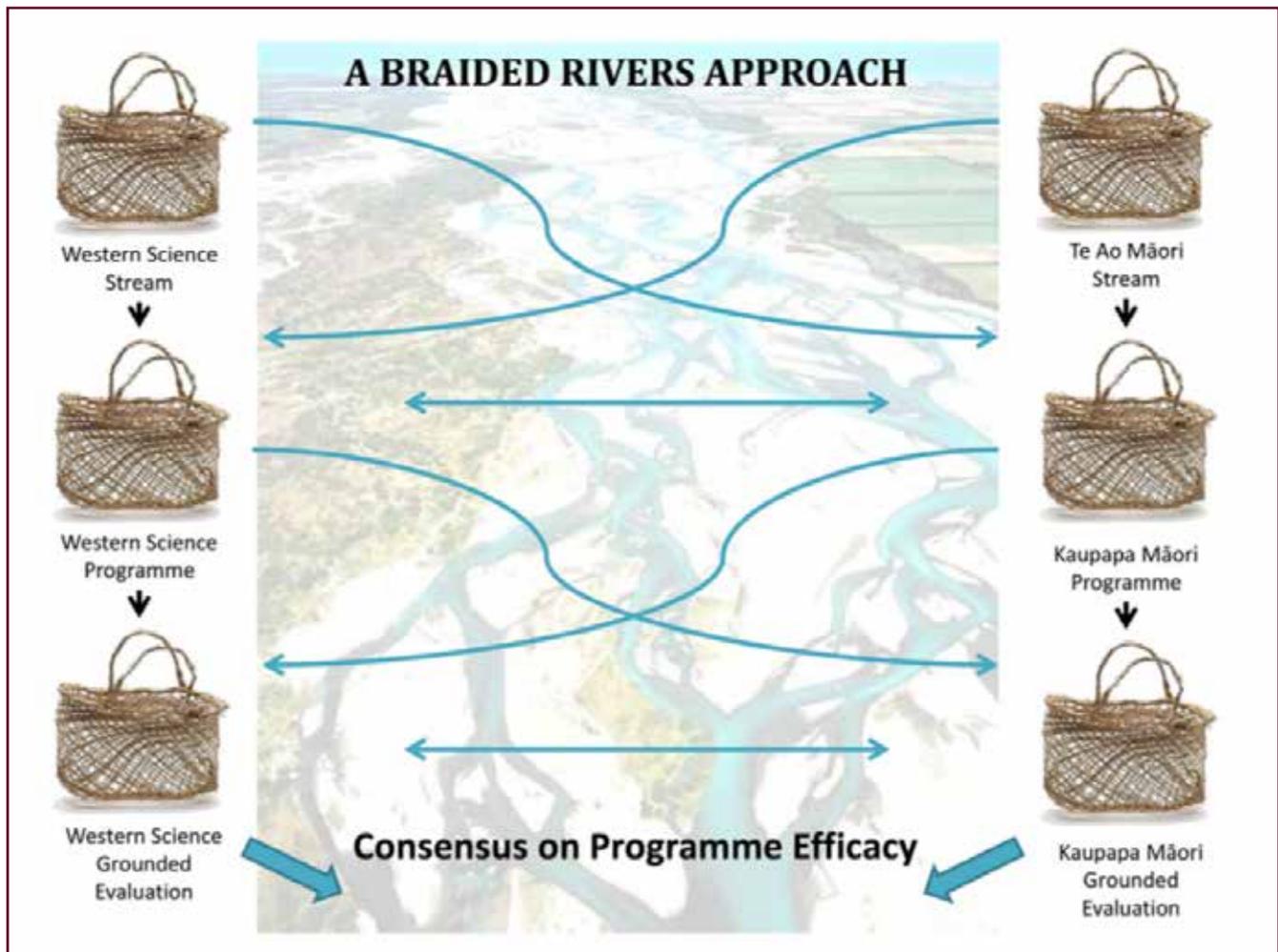


Figure 1: A diagram of the He Awa Whiria Braided Rivers model (S. Macfarlane et al., 2015, p. p. 63).

He Awa Whiria combines Western and Kaupapa Māori research in order to strengthen evidence and facilitate consensual decisions about programme effectiveness (Superu, 2018). The rationale for assessing government funded programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand from both Kaupapa Māori and Western perspectives can be described as an obligation and an enactment of the partnership between Māori and the Crown defined by Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Advisory Group on Conduct Problems, 2011).

He Awa Whiria gives mana to kaupapa Māori approaches (Superu, 2018) which Durie (2004) states is necessary as Western science has developed an intolerance and lack of ability to incorporate Māori knowledge. This lack of understanding by Pākehā led to a withdrawal of Māori knowledge into safe spaces (Durie, 2004). The lack of trust and understanding between the two world views meant that each approach was assessed by the other from a place of limited understanding.

Durie (2004) says it is important that one approach is not

used to challenge the credibility of the other. Instead he describes research at the interface between Western and Kaupapa Māori approaches which uses two sets of values and methods to bridge the benefits that might arise from each. Ultimately Durie says the intention is to produce gains for indigenous peoples, most of whom live at the interface between Western and Māori cultures.

Working at the interface includes working between different and at times contradictory methodologies. For example, where Western science is interested in analysing small components, indigenous knowledge is more interested in the relationships between physical and social environments and in models that can accommodate multiple strands in an interacting whole (Durie, 2004). At the interface no one way is privileged, but both are embraced. He Awa Whiria is an example of this and a new philosophical position which embraces both Western science and Indigenous knowledge (S. Macfarlane et al., 2015).

## E tū whānau

Here the context of the whiria-braiding is the Kaupapa Māori approach used by E Tū Whānau and Western evidence on community mobilisation to prevent violence within whānau and families.

ETW is a transformative Kaupapa Māori strategy to address violence within whānau. It operates as a Māori-Crown partnership, designed and led by Māori, supported by government (the Ministry of Social Development). ETW emerged from a Māori leadership summit and hui around the country in 2008, as a Māori response to unacceptable levels of violence. It uses a community mobilisation approach to support communities to make change with a strong focus on leadership and capacity development. ETW is a Māori strategy, however it is also working successfully with refugee and migrant communities (Grootveld & Widmer, 2018).

ETW is grounded in a Te Ao Māori worldview “that the universe is dynamic, moving from one state to another; from a state of unrealised potential (Te Kore) to a state of becoming or knowing (Te Pō) to a state of enlightenment or wisdom (Te Ao Mārama). This process of growth, transformation and enlightenment is not static but one of continuous

in ETW. The vision of E Tū Whānau is:

Te mana kaha o te whānau - Whānau are strong, safe and prosperous – active within their community, living with a clear sense of identity and cultural integrity, and with control over their destiny (E Tū Whānau, 2019, p. 5).

ETW honours and invokes these Māori values:

Aroha: giving with no expectation of return

Whanaungatanga: it’s about being connected

Whakapapa: knowing who you are and where you belong

Mana/ Manaaki: building the mana of others through nurturing, developing and challenging

Kōrero Awhi: open and positive communication and actions

Tikanga: doing things the right way according to our values

Since 2008 ETW has been developing and refining how it works with communities. Recent evaluations (Chauvel, 2019; Grootveld, 2019; Grootveld & Widmer, 2018; Nakhid, 2018) describe the approach and strategies used by ETW, and the

Māori. Grootveld and Widmer (2018) state that whanaungatanga, manaaki and kōrero awhi enabled engagement and ownership by Māori, whānau who belong to gangs, and refugee and migrant communities, who are often marginalised, disenfranchised and weary of working with government. The importance of Māori learning about Te Ao Māori and being Māori is evident in the evaluation reports. ETW provides access to Māori knowledge through the ETW team, Kahukura (local leaders), iwi leaders and courses like Mauri Ora run by Te Korowai Aroha.

ETW uses an empowering approach that supports whānau and communities to define and achieve their own aspirations (Chauvel, 2019). This has increased confidence and agency for change (Grootveld & Widmer, 2018). ETW acknowledges the strengths inherent in whānau and how these can be further developed to reduce family violence (Grootveld & Widmer, 2018).

Fostering leadership at all levels is a key approach for ETW (Grootveld & Widmer, 2018). ETW has utilised the natural leadership structures in communities. The signing of the ETW Charter of Commitment by iwi leaders in 2014 (E Tū Whānau, 2019), and presence of iwi in local community actions are clear demonstrations of leadership. Developing Kahukura, community-identified leaders who work for and with their community, is a key mobilisation strategy.

The strengths-based approach ETW uses has effectively built the protective factors that strengthen whānau (Grootveld & Widmer, 2018). This is demonstrated by the determined focus on building strong whānau, rather than on violence within whānau. This means that ETW is often associated with whānau wellbeing rather than violence prevention.

**The rationale for assessing government funded programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand from both Kaupapa Māori and Western perspectives can be described as an obligation and an enactment of the partnership between Māori and the Crown defined by Te Tiriti o Waitangi.**

interaction, learning and review” (E Tū Whānau, 2019, p. 4). As is usual for a Kaupapa Māori strategy (Durie, 2004), ETW includes aspirations for change beyond the topic of preventing violence within whānau. These aspirations were developed from the moemoeā (vision) of whānau involved

outcomes achieved. The focus here is on the approach and strategies.

### ETW approach

Evaluation findings showed that the most important way of working for ETW is the grounding in Te Ao

The focus of the work of ETW within refugee and migrant communities is on the changing roles within families in Aotearoa and providing communities with access to family violence services and resources for prevention (Grootveld & Widmer, 2018). Nakhid (2018) found that through ongoing connection to Settling In (an earlier MSD supported community-led initiative) and ETW, refugee and migrant communities had reconnected with their own ancestral and indigenous heritage and developed an appreciation of Kaupapa Māori approaches and the shared experiences of colonisation and racism.

**ETW strategies**

ETW has used an iterative approach to identify its key community mobilisation strategies. The five strategies are:

1. Kahukura: growing leadership that engages whānau and ignites community action.
2. Wānanga: enabling safe spaces for kōrero awhi, whanaungatanga and transformation.
3. Community collaborations: iwi and community-led projects, partnerships and capability development.
4. Messaging, tools, resources, support: to share the ETW kaupapa.
5. Centre of excellence: sharing the expertise on indigenous-led solutions on community resilience, well-being and violence prevention (E Tū Whānau, 2019, p. 9).

**Community mobilisation**

Community mobilisation (CM) is a transformative approach used to create social change on complex issues (Trewartha, 2020). CM is most often considered to be a public health and community development strategy, but is also aligned to a community psychology approach (Rappaport & Seidman, 2000). Key features of CM are working with complexity using a multifaceted approach (Lippman et al., 2013; Michau, 2012) and building capacity for sustained change, primarily through leadership development (Campbell, 2013; Michau, 2012). Hann and Trewartha (2015) recommend CM as an important strategy to prevent family violence due to the complexity, size and entrenched nature of the problem, and the potential of CM to reduce and prevent future violence from occurring. Although in its infancy, evidence on CM to prevent family violence shows promise (Abramsky et al., 2016; Contreras-Urbina et al., 2016; Garcia-Moreno et al., 2015; Pettifor et al., 2018). There is limited but growing evidence on CM in indigenous communities. Grootveld and Widmer (2018) found that while ETW was uniquely Māori, it was broadly

consistent with international evidence on reducing family violence in indigenous communities.

**The domains of community mobilisation**

Lippman et al. (2013) and Trewartha (2020) have identified the six domains, or essential elements, of CM. The domains are leadership; organisation; participation; shared concern; critical consciousness; and social cohesion (see Table 2 for definitions). The identification of the domains of CM and tools to measure CM (Lippman et al., 2016; Trewartha, 2020) are significant steps forward for CM theory, practice and research.

Domain name	Definition
Leadership	Leadership development is central to mobilising communities.
Organisation	Structures and resources used to mobilise people.
Participation	Engaging increasing numbers of people in action.
Shared concern	An issue that effects the community.
Critical consciousness	Understanding of an issue built through dialogue.
Social cohesion	The glue that holds people together.

*Table 2: The domains of community mobilisation (Trewartha, 2020).*

Critical consciousness is a key domain of CM that requires further explanation. The roots of critical consciousness are identified in Paulo Freire’s work (Campbell, 2013; Parker, 1996). Freire’s approach focussed on liberation through a process he called conscientização (conscientisation), defined as “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (Freire, 2000, p. 35). Conscientisation is a collective process, where groups of people come together and use dialogue to understand their lived experiences. Critical consciousness is built through the ongoing application of Freire’s concept of praxis, a simultaneous process of “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (Freire, 2000, p. 51; Shor & Freire, 1987).

**He Awa Whiria analysis**

Using He Awa Whiria, this section brings together the Kaupapa Māori and Western evidence. As the two streams

of the river come together a space is created for learning, not assimilation, and to strengthen evidence (Superu, 2018).

**ETW approaches and the domains of community mobilisation**

There were many similarities between approaches and strategies used by ETW and the domains of CM identified in the Western literature. These are included in Table 3 to encourage discussion about the similarities and differences between the two approaches. This is not intended to simplify the concepts, but rather to explore the core functions and contributions of each approach. Also, it is acknowledged that this table may be unhelpful and should be discarded.

E Tū Approaches and Key Strategies	Domains of CM
Kahukura Mana/ Manaaki Tikanga	Leadership
Centre of Excellence	Organisation
Aroha Community Collaborations	Participation
Messaging, tools, resources, support Kōrero Awhi	Shared concern
Wānanga	Critical consciousness
Whakapapa Whanaungatanga	Social cohesion

Table 3: ETW approaches and strategies and domains of CM

As can be seen in Table 3, there is a great deal of alignment between the two approaches. While there are many similarities, there are also some important differences. A key difference is the use of tikanga (cultural knowledge and practices), values and spirituality in Kaupapa Māori approaches that creates safe spaces to engage in dialogue. Wānanga is a multi-level strategy that demonstrates the use of tikanga. In wānanga all of the Kaupapa Maori and Western elements of CM can be demonstrated. For this reason, wānanga is identified here as a key Kaupapa Māori strategy, and an excellent example of what Campbell and Cornish (2010) refer to as safe social spaces that enable transformative dialogue.

Both the Kaupapa Māori and Western evidence have a strong focus on transformation. However, unlike the Western literature, Kaupapa Māori strategies like ETW embrace transformative visions that go beyond stopping a

problem to fostering wellbeing. This is what Freire’s work aims at but is rarely fully realised in practice.

**The strengths-based approach ETW uses has effectively built the protective factors that strengthen whānau**

Similarly, where Western evidence defines what to do to mobilise communities, Kaupapa Māori knowledge goes further and provides guidance for how to do CM through the values and approach. This is an important contribution to knowledge building around CM.

The way in which community connectedness is conceptualised is also different. In the Western literature, social cohesion refers to the glue and social fabric that connects community members. Whakapapa and whakawhanaungatanga are deeper levels of connection through ancestors (tipuna) and places in the past, present and future. ETW demonstrates the ability to foster connections in both realms.

**Conclusion**

This use of He Awa Whiria showed many synergies between the Kaupapa Māori approaches used by ETW and domains of CM from the Western literature. A key difference is the grounding in Te Ao Māori used by ETW. This is an essential element in engaging Māori and has been shown to be very useful for engaging migrant and refugee families. The Kaupapa Māori approach used by ETW has much to offer Western understandings of CM. It seems that where the Western theory on transformative change struggles to be put into practice, ETW and Kaupapa Māori approaches demonstrate how this can be done.

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