The Whānau Awhina Project is a Tāmaki community initiative with local parents. The main aim is to inspire and motivate local Tāmaki Parents of 0-5 year olds to become a part of The HEART Parenting journey and create parent-led initiatives throughout Tāmaki. As a part of this project, a series of key events to empower parents are taking place. These events include focusing on Māori parents, Pasifika parents and Capacity Building of parents. If you would like more information on The Whānau Awhina Project, Sam Tu’itahi is the Project Co-ordinator and his contact details are below.

The Māori Parenting hui was held in April, 2016 with 30 Māori whānau from Tāmaki. We came together with kai to share what it is like to be a Māori parent in Tāmaki and what is unique about being a Māori parent. The Whānau Awhina Project hosted 5 different tables in the wharekai. Whānau moved between them, and shared their thoughts. This document details the findings that 30 Māori whānau shared with us on the night. Specific notes with direct quotes from the sticky notes and sheets on the tables can be accessed through The Whānau Awhina Project.

From that information and in direct response to whānau requests, a series of drop in spaces were created at Ruapotaka Marae through out June, to share the findings we had gathered and offer opportunities for local whānau to gather and plan anything that they would like to create. These four drop in events were not successful in numbers. In total, we had four local parents and five local practitioners join us. We did however develop some thoughts and understanding from the gatherings.

Nga mihi to the whānau of Tāmaki, Ruapotaka Marae, Tāmaki Community Development Trust, Ngati Whātua O Orakei Health Services, The HEART Movement and the volunteers on the night for all of the support you gave to this kaupapa.

Tara Moala
SKIP Champion

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Summary of Findings

Tāmaki whānau highlighted through out all of the tables, that they are strong in knowing how they want to raise their children and that they have their own ways of doing things which is different to other cultures and groups within the community. These whānau incorporate tikanga Māori into their parenting naturally and know that this helps them to be better parents. They would also like to see tikanga and their ways of doing things in their interactions with others in the community and through out their lives. One of the key thoughts that whānau shared was that they wanted people to respect that and for the whole of the community to normalise what being a Māori meant. This lens was firmly in place when talking about their role as a parent. It is a social norm for a whole generation of whānau, to naturally awhi the next generation.

If Tāmaki community is to support local whānau to parent well, then the community needs to incorporate the cultural norms of Tāmaki Māori into their interactions. A major part of that, is understanding how important relationships are. Whānau spoke of the importance not only of the relationships within their own whānau, but of their relationships through out Tāmaki. Preventing isolation was a key concern that was discussed at almost every table.

Some whānau talked about the importance of conscious parenting in the older generation, and how that influenced the parenting styles of the next generation. This was seen as a positive element of their relationships between generations and intertwined their roles as parents and grandparents. Something that might want to be thought through further is how this collective view of self impacts on how whānau identify as ‘Māori’. Some whānau were unsure if they personally identified as ‘Māori Parents’, and yet came as Māori to share their thoughts. There are also requests by whānau to learn more within Te Ao Māori - as a way to strengthen their parenting to be the best that they can be.

The Tāmaki whānau that came together, appeared empowered and strong. They believe that it is important to maintain power within local whānau and rōpu, rather than with outside organisations or the government. They would like to see more practical support for locals to step up. As a direct response to this request, a series of drop in spaces for local whānau to gather and create any parenting actions that they would like to see in Tāmaki was hosted in June. From those spaces and the few conversations that was had with the small numbers that attended, three key factors were identified:

- Local Māori Whānau may want to self-develop local parent-led initiatives, however they haven’t the capability as of yet to create these.
- Local Māori Practitioners tautoko the desires of parents and agree that they are relevant and important, however they haven’t the capacity to take on anything additional to their workloads.
- There are a lot of amazing initiatives, programmes, activities in Tāmaki for Māori whānau. We do need to get better at supported our whānau to connect and engage with them - especially our most at risk whānau.

What follows, is more detail from each of the tables around the key questions. The bold sentences in each section are defined statements that capture the key thoughts from whānau. The ‘sticky notes’ are quotes from whānau. The next steps for this process is for some key local Māori (whānau and/or practitioners) to come together and discuss this information; to decide what they would like to trial in practice with and for our local whānau.
This is a diagram to help illustrate all that local whānau want to see in Tāmaki for Māori Whānau.

We believe our Tikanga and Traditions are important enough to be included all the time.

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We want to create actions for us within our own culture and traditions.

We want to learn more about what it means to be Māori.

We want Te Ao Māori normalised throughout Tāmaki.

We want to learn conscious parenting from our older whānau members.

Parenting is different for us.

Build us up within our own culture.

Keep the power with us, the local people.

Give us a hand up, not a hand out.

Empower us to engage.

Support from us, for us.

Help us connect Teina Whānau with Tuakana Whānau in Tāmaki.

Help us connect Teina Whānau with Tuakana Whānau in Tāmaki.

Relationships are key.

Keep our Tikanga strong please.

Keep our Tikanga strong please.

We want to learn conscious parenting from our older whānau members.

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We want to connect to us the way we want to connect.

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What is unique about Māori Parenting?  
- Toni Tamati

We have our own culture and traditions

Māori whānau have their own ways of doing things and they are important to them. Those values help Tāmaki Māori whānau to raise their children. It was highlighted in the kōrero that those values and maintaining them is what whānau believe creates a uniqueness in our Māori parent.

The key values that Tāmaki Māori Whānau identified are:
- Kotahitanga
- Tika
- Pono
- Aroha
- Te Whare Tapa Wha
- Inclusiveness with every whānau member
- Understanding Tikanga
- Parenting by all of the older generation to all of the younger generation
- That is takes a village to raise a child
- Sticking by each other no matter what and coming together when times are hard
- Awhi the youngest and oldest generation
- Understanding how to resolve conflict
- Passing down of parenting knowledge from one generation to the next.

Our parenting is different to other cultures

It was highlighted in the kōrero that there is a difference for Māori whānau when they parent. One of the key comments that was made through out, was that our tamariki are the highest taonga. Whānau acknowledged the importance of the role of kaitiakitanga for each other - especially for the very young and very old.

Another characteristic that was highlighted as pointedly different, was that there was a natural flow of how things are done for Māori. This includes whānau connections and relationships with their own whānau, hapu and iwi as well as their connections to local marae, knowledge and use of tikanga and traditions. Whānau talked about the importance of understanding and using “nga wa o mua” - tikanga, kawa, te reo, kapa haka, kai, kohanga reo, puna reo and marae wananga. These Māori systems are regarded as more important that the economic or social service systems in the community.
Support from whānau and the community helps us in our Parenting

Parenting is not an individual task achieved in isolation for these parents. It’s regarded as a group activity through out their whānau and their community of whānau. That support for each other is regarded as a consistent, no matter how hard things became.

For these whānau, there is a knowledge that there are unique Māori organisations and services that can help. Those ‘unique Māori organisations’ provide support for the whole whānau. The ones identified as providing that type of support were; marae, school, HIPPY, Kohanga Reo, Puna Reo and Tamariki Ora. It was also acknowledge that “Māori culture gets more support” - more facilities and services available for Māori than for any others.

Table Facilitator Observations

We stick together as a culture and as whānau, especially when things get hard. 

*We support our own whānau and other whānau - sticking together as a culture.*

We support each other - looking after our children, looking after our elders. This is a cycle that continues through out the generations.

*We parent together as a whānau, hapu and iwi.
It’s a part of our tikanga and is very important to us.*

We value our culture, our whānau, hapu, iwi and tikanga.

*We hold onto our tikanga - like sorting out our problems together, like sharing kai and giving koha.*
What would help our local Māori Parents to be the best that they can be?
- Ane Valoa

Our whānau need Tuakana. Awhi mai, Awhi atu

Tāmaki Whānau want to be able to give and receive support between each other. They want to be able to lean on other whānau that have been where they are. Whole of whānau activities, mentoring programmes with strong tuakana role models guiding parents into learning and having access to parent led support groups were all requests that show how much whānau believe that the answers to the community problems lie within their own community.

The Tuakana - Teina relationships were not only talked about within whānau settings, but also when whānau work with organisations and enter into the schooling system. Whānau have concerns that their children are being judged in Tāmaki (in schools) because of their family background or last name. They would like to see that cycle broken and for their tamariki to have tuakana that can look out for them and get help - in education, careers, training, anything that they want to accomplish.

Tuakana were identified as people that would be able to share knowledge on parents rights, take on Iwi leadership, wouldn't turn a blind eye to 'the norms' - i.e. abuse. And whānau would know that it would be okay to ask them for help with parenting.

Build us up within our own culture

A lot of the requests that whānau made for what would help them be the best Māori parents that they could be, included building their own knowledge around Te Ao Māori. The marae was stated as being the best option for learning to take place and within that space, whānau feel that learning Māori skills would help them to become the best people that they can be. The Māori skills that were identified from whānau were:

- Free Te Reo classes with childcare
- Skill classes e.g. learning how to create Korowai and other things that we can pass down
- To be able to be involved in the Marae and learn where we came from
- Wananga, Kapa Haka, Whakapapa o Te Ao Maori
- Courses for Self Development
- More practical hands on stuff e.g. a bone carving weekend wānanga for Māori
- Learn tikanga values to be valued e.g. our unique way in which we raise our tamariki
- For Māori youth to learn the importance of their community and how to help each other
When we do engage with organisations, meet us on an equal footing

Whānau overwhelmingly voiced that whānau to whānau was the most preferred option. However when needs arise to see help from organisations, they want that interaction to be filled with empowered interactions. They just want to be heard and responded to - accepted as and for where they are at in their own journeys without judgement. For that to happen, they understood that good communication needed to come from both organisations and from whānau themselves. It was acknowledged that whānau sometimes weren’t able to ask for help - and that they needed to learn to be able to grow. One suggested way of supporting whānau to learn how to ask for help was to create a service navigation process. Something to help whānau navigate their way to the services that they need. Whānau have had enough of being referred to different organisations, being put on waiting lists and not being treated as an individual.

Whānau also created a list of services that they feel are lacking in Tāmaki:
- Support be free from debt and crime
- Support to achieve training e.g. transportation
- Support around the impact and affect of alcohol and drugs
- Nutrition and exercise support and education, learning about health e.g. preventable diseases, diabetes and heart disease.
- Ban sugar drinks or make them restricted (R18).
- Kai time on the road in Glen Innes teaching us some cooking
- Sports opportunities
- Contraception - knowledge of it
- Better options for childcare (cheaper)
- Health and Safety education

“Respect each other”

“Listen when advice is given. Open your hearts and ears.”

“To be involved in creating solutions to challenges through local and national opportunities.”
What do you need in your parenting journey that would benefit you as a Māori Parent?
- Nikki Korte

Several whānau found this question the hardest to answer. Whānau were encouraged to think deep into their own journeys and share those things that can sometimes we hard to share.

**Relationships are key, so give us ways to prevent isolation**

If whānau are involved in the community, then they are active in a lot of community groups throughout Tāmaki. However, if they are not, then isolation happens quickly - especially if they cannot find the appropriate help to meet their needs. Whānau support was highlighted as important, including the need for more role models in Tāmaki - in particular Male role models.

It was felt that sometimes there are barriers to accessing or connecting with agencies or services available in Tāmaki. On the flip side, other whānau found that these local services were good, accessible and offered ways to prevent isolation. Whānau want to have strong and trusting relationships with any organisations they engage with. One person identified that this strengthening of relationships in the community included the need for education providers to provide meaningful learning in schooling around New Zealand history and Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

*“Support and encourage strong identities of individuals so we all have a ‘connection.’”*

*“Today’s parents expect to ‘have more’ than previous generations and are less likely to ask for help because they don’t want to give things up”*

*“As mana whenua, a traditional marae locally”*

**Maintaining Conscious Parenting throughout our generations**

Whānau consciously acknowledged their own childhood and their understanding around shifting parenting styles for positive changes to happen for future generations. Because whānau collectively parent, the older generation also consciously shared the differences in parenting between the generations, providing another layer of conscious parenting.

Some needs that Whānau feel are not currently being met are that current parenting programmes and groups do not use Tikanga Māori, the Powhiri process or kawa. Parenting groups only cater to a certain type of parent, and there is a need for different ones - solo, young or old mums. that there is a need for initiatives that have a Māori focus - playgroups, sports teams and cultural teams. It was acknowledged that alternatively, the promotion of existing initiatives was needed.
Practical hand ups, not hand outs

Some specific requests were made that would help Māori Whānau immediately:

- Better solutions to keep Maori out of prison and strategies to deal with re-offenders
- Strategies to deal with violence, addiction, suicide, teenagers
- Information on how to ask for help, where to go and what to say
- More access and support for Te Ao Maori
- Practical education, such as household management, affordable nutritional cooking recipes, stress management, keeping safe in public places
- Financial support, such as for swimming lessons.

“it is important to get parenting right.”
How do you find the Tāmaki community as a Māori Parent?
- Sam Tu’itahi

What is a Māori Parent and how do I know if I am one?

Some whānau were challenged to think about whether they saw themselves as Māori parents or simply as parents. For some whānau, being fair skinned or ‘half caste’ Māori meant that other people in the Tāmaki community would presume that they are not Māori and sometimes even hear unintended offensive comments. This included stereotyping and disrespectful behaviour at times. It was also acknowledged that there are more ‘half caste’ Māori in the community, and this was being accepted more. There is also some frustration by one whānau who felt that other groups of people, in particular refugees, received more aid to get on their feet than Māori.

Learning about their identity as Māori and what that means for their parenting was a new concept for them. Overwhelmingly, comments were positive around Tāmaki being generally accepting of being a Māori parent and feeling like you fit in. Whānau said that you could fit in or stay separate - the decision being up to each person.

Hearing community leaders speak from a Māori perspective and being active in making changes, gives hope to some whānau who think that this is one way their Māori voices can be heard.

It’s up to me to be involved

Some whānau saw that it is up to each individual whānau to participate in the Tāmaki community - to take it upon themselves to get out there. Others feel that the Tāmaki community is very helpful and is full of neat and really good people. Peoples individual choices can involve or isolate their whānau in the community - misuse of money, not thinking ahead, drinking, individuals effort to engage with their whānau, getting better education, upholding the tikanga of the past generations. Some whānau identified that through experience they realised the importance of guidance from parents.
Is there a way for Māori to be normalised in our community?

Although generally participants thought it was a great place to be a Māori parent - they also generally felt that we needed to normalise Māori in everyday life. Whānau felt that would make a big impact on their lives and see value for the community in this. They referred back to the importance of creating a better foundation for tamariki. Some things that whānau raised as things that would help were:

- More access to Te Reo classes, with free childcare
- More support for kaupapa Māori perspective
- Māori events and activities until they were normalised in our community
- Developing an understanding of Te Ao Māori through out the community with all of the different cultures
- Maintain sustainability for Māori in Tāmaki despite all of the changes that are happening
- Building up the marae because it is a great resource for urban

There were comments from some whānau who emphasised that some in the community (organisation and individuals) ignore and give little weight to Te Ao Māori which has made “us feel ashamed” and “held us back”. Part of this, is that some community gatherings are not set up to accommodate for Tikanga Māori.
How do Tāmaki organisations catch your interest?
- Claire O’Meara

Keep with Tikanga

Whānau were very specific when it came to knowing who they like to work with and why. Almost all of whānau thoughts about what works well, was when organisations understood tikanga and practiced it well. Some examples of what whānau shared:

- Kid friendliness is advertised/ My kids are always the ones who tell me what’s happening/ anything to do with the kids
- That I can bring my whānau and it’s inclusive
- Whānau focused and orientated
- The people are straight up and honest
- The organisations is trustworthy and can build trust with our whānau
- That they deliver on what they promise
- That different organisations/ groups have relationships with each other and connect with each other.
- The organisations actually know Tāmaki well, have been in the community long term and are community focused
- That services are free and kai is offered
- To be invited, if personally asked to attend it’s more enticing
- Having the right people that know how to engage, that understand tikanga, te reo, about colonisation and inequalities
- The Tikanga is appropriate
- Run by tribal rōpu or mana whenua

Whānau are more inclined to engage with an organisation if other whānau they know have told them about it. Word of mouth is the most important communication, but promotion through flyers and posters is still good because not everyone in Tāmaki have access to the internet.

Organisations that work well in the eyes of Tāmaki whānau; help with transport, walk the talk, easy to access, are open to all cultures, will raise awareness, can be approached when things aren’t going well in the whānau, will ensure that the service is right for that whānau, and understands that no two situations are the same. These organisations are often sort after when things are going on within whānau.

“There’s a family vibe, it’s a non-judgemental environment, children are looked after and are the focus in some way”

“They will be long term organisations, good qualifications, the workers will be hands on and will relate to all cultures, the putea and actions will reflect commitments”

“There are a lot of Pakeha organisations with Māori workers, but these organisations don’t truly understand what it means to be Māori”
Keep the Power with the People

Whānau were concerned that at times, the government had too much control and local groups including whānau didn't have enough. They believe that sometimes, the non-profit organisations that didn't have any vested putea involvement, were more helpful. One reason given for this is because they are long term community partners that are committed to the Tāmaki community developing, not just achieving one outcome. Some whānau suggested that regular communication workshops were important, to learn “Who’s who in the zoo”.

There was also some skepticism around not believing everything that you hear and not fully understanding what certain organisations are trying to achieve. The example given around this was TRC and the regeneration process. This was a concern because it was seen that the Government having too much control, can be a turn off. It is better for Tāmaki to have independent organisations for their tino rangatiratanga.

We know what we need more of and less of

Whānau identified that they want more:

- Youth services to support our whānau. Tamaki is short on youth resources.
- More regular events and for organisations to be involved in community events - promoting them and their services
- Positive initiatives for women and children
- Transport provided
- Make sure that there is good promotion - not everyone uses computers and phones etc.
  - Do mail drops, put notices up at supermarkets
- Organisations that relate to our issues
- Good quality service - workers that are qualified in their specialised areas and are welcoming to any questions being asked

The biggest turn offs from organisations for whānau were racism and workers that had judgemental attitudes. Whānau feel disempowered when they reach out to certain organisations, but the whānau don’t end up ‘getting anywhere’. Whānau don’t want organisations to ‘let them down’ - this includes misunderstanding tikanga and looking for the quick fix of a problem instead of the best fix.