

Erin (she/her): Takatāpuitanga

Erin's kōrero

Erin was always proud of who she is – her whānau celebrated her whakapapa Māori and family connections from abroad. She was also growing in confidence in understanding how she fit into the LGBTQIA+ world. Although she held space in many different worlds, she was passionate and loved learning more about her identities.

She enjoyed the different opportunities that her school gave her to support her understanding and confidence in te ao Māori. Still, she felt friction as these worlds collided with one another – especially when she thought of gender and sexual identity and how they fit in with her whakapapa Māori.

Erin had the chance to share, discuss and challenge how her complex identities work together at the wānanga. She learned about western constructs of her gender, sexuality and diversity in te ao Māori. She had always had a place in the Māori world – Erin wondered why she hadn't been taught this earlier! Erin was excited to apply her knowledge to stand with more confidence in all of the worlds that she is proud to draw from.

Understanding representation, Māori/sexuality/gender identity

When learning about my Māori heritage, same sex couples were accepted and having a child was to carry on generations. They could have same sex marriages and relations and I felt rather happy and proud that that was accepted in our culture for years until New Zealand was integrated with other cultures.

I was happy that Māori heritage would have allowed that, and it was perfectly fine for me to have feelings for other girls. Despite not learning this in school.

- Erin



Whakaaro

As discussed in the previous section, the modern use of ‘takatāpui’ as an identity is a response to western ideas of sex, sexuality and gender, and emphasises one’s identity as Māori as inextricably linked to their gender identity or sexuality.

Erin illustrates this; she holds a diverse understanding of her cultural, gender and sexual identities. Like many of her contemporaries, this is fluid and can challenge those around her. She navigates this with confidence and with a healthy disregard for societal norms.

Erin celebrates the growth of her understanding to include not only the western but also the Māori constructs of who she is. She reflects that she did not have the opportunity to do this in school.

Schools in Aotearoa were not predominantly designed with indigenous perspectives of the world in mind. These include consideration of diverse sexual and gender identities: takatāpui, fa’afafine, fakaleitī, laelae, and others.

Whaiwhakaaro

- Rangatahi takatāpui are hungry for knowledge which they can apply in their own contexts. The wānanga was for many the first opportunity they had to engage with mātauranga takatāpui.
- There were noted generational differences at the wānanga in perceptions of sexual and gender identity and expression, with rangatahi takatāpui demonstrating their comfort with individuality and fluidity.
- Safety in exploring identity-focused knowledge was key. The mahi was challenging and personal, and rangatahi takatāpui valued the intentional space and expert support to unpack this.

Pātai/Whakapātaritari

- Schools in Aotearoa have excellent health and wellbeing policy guidelines in the Ministry of Education’s Relationships and Sexuality Education documents. Do you purposefully ‘localise’ them to include the identities of your Māori and Pasifika students?
- There are indigenous identities and perspectives of sexuality and gender. How will you transform your education practice to be inclusive of these?
- How will you redesign your school so that its culture shifts from sympathetic to transformative?

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Supporting quotes

Without the wānanga, I would never have found out that I am more comfortable in my skin as ‘Erin’ than I would have been as the gender I was assigned at birth, and I will be forever thankful for that.

- Erin

Takatāpui is not just a Māori person identifying as something other than ‘cis het’. I don’t think a lot of people understand that there is a whole culture to being Māori. Takatāpui isn’t just a gay Māori or a trans Māori person. It’s different.

- May

I’ve been thinking about te reo Māori and the use of matua and whaea in the classroom, and there doesn’t seem to be a word beyond ‘ia’ that is a diverse honorific.

- May

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