



# Working with gender diversity at Puna Tatari STU

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# Acknowledgments

*I would like to share some acknowledgments today.*

*I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we are gathered, the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, I pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging, and I extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples here today.*

*I also extend my heartfelt acknowledgments and gratitude to Ngāti Naho, our local Iwi that stand as the Kaitiaki (guardians) of the land that Springhill Correctional Facility stands on have named our unit.*

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Maori whakatauki (proverb)


*Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou, ka ora ai te iwi*

*With your food basket and my food basket the people will thrive*

*This whakatauki talks to community, to collaboration and a strengths-based approach.*

*It acknowledges that everybody has something to offer, a piece of the puzzle, and by working together we can all flourish.*

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In my talk  
today...

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I will provide:

- A brief description of how our therapeutic community is run
  - share some highlights of community activities that we engage in
  - Talk more specifically about our experience of working with a transgender client more recently.
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# A little bit about Puna Tatari Special Treatment Unit...

Puna Tatari – translates to “pool of still waters”  
a time for reflection

- Special Treatment Unit (STU), or community of change, situated in the Springhill Correctional Facility of Ara Poutama Aotearoa.
  - We provide therapeutic services for men with histories of violent and sexual offending.
  - Values
    - Trust
    - Caring
    - Commitment
    - Honesty
    - Responsibility
  - Our STU encourages all our Tane (men) to play a contributing role in making our therapeutic community (TC) an inclusive environment.
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# A snapshot of the activities that all members engage in at our unit

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- All community activities have a common goal of pro-social change and improving overall wellbeing.
- Each community member takes up a job to contribute to the overall running of the TC; jobs ranging from gardening to laundry to cleaning.
- Mentors for each graduating group.
- Three community meetings.
- Time outside of treatment sessions is also treated as therapy and used as an opportunity to practice their skills and adapt a value driven lifestyle.

# A snapshot of the activities that all members engage in at our unit

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- All members are expected to live by the therapeutic community values.
- Constructive feedback is provided by the staff when behaviour does not align with the TC values.
- The members then share the feedback they received and the changes they intend to make to the wider community, for accountability.
- Members are also encouraged to provide feedback to each other for practicing and displaying the community values.




# Some highlights of our TC.

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## Creativity and learning new skills...

- Band room, where they come together to create music and practice various sets.
- Barbershop singing.
- Art classes
- Music library and crafts room where they create artwork that is donated to various parts of the prison.
- We are also in the process of building a fully furnished barber shop where our client can learn and practice hairdressing skills.






# Opportunities to re-connect with their culture

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- Whakapauwai rōpū - where Tane come together as a group to teach each other various Waiata (songs) and practice Kapa Haka.
- Participation in Kapa Haka competition held between all the prisons in New Zealand.
- Important role in facilitating the official welcoming of any guests onto our unit.
- One of our Tane from a past group has also written and composed a Waiata for Puna Tatari which he taught the rest of the rōpū and performed at various events.



# Meeting their recreational needs...


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- Basketball court
- Reflection garden
- Games room
- For recreation purposes and feed their Wairua (spiritual wellbeing) and Tinana (physical wellbeing).
- Redesigning visits area to make it more kid-friendly for the children of our Tane during weekend whanau visits.
- Painting the walls of the visit area with various cartoon characters and vibrant artwork.



Puna Tatari has always prided itself for being an inclusive, innovative and a rich therapeutic environment for our community members who are on their change journeys. This year, we were presented with an amazing opportunity to stretch ourselves further when we welcomed our first transgender woman into our therapeutic community. In order to meet the unique needs, she presented with, we had to make some logistical and therapeutic adaptations to our unit.


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# Working with our Transgender Wahine (woman)

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- Transgender support plan to meet basic needs.
- Formulated in collaboration with the client and is reviewed every three months.
- Robust assessment process both to identify treatment needs and determine any responsivity issues.
- Educating ourselves as well as our community members in the unit about how to work with gender diversity has been a significant focus – korero ongoing.
- Many of our community members have displayed an amazing ability to accept and adapt to the challenges of living with a transgender female in the unit.



# Working with our Transgender Wahine contd...

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- An outcome of our assessment process: regular individual therapeutic support to process any challenges due to residing in a men's prison and engaging in a therapeutic group with other men.
- She also requested the opportunity to take a break of sorts.
  - Assist with the library books delivery to various units for a few hours each week.
  - Also tasked with being in charge of making teas and coffees during weekend visits.
- Unit job – laundry responsibilities.
- Also linked with some local organisations that provided regular care packages including feminine hygiene products.
- Exploring transgender support agencies that can provide her with regular contact and support.



# Working with our Transgender Wahine contd...

- Within the therapeutic space:
    - Significant work on empowering the client to develop her self-esteem and practise self-acceptance.
    - Space for her to openly talk about transition and share what it was like for her to live with her gender identity.
  - Also encouraged to take opportunities to share with others in the unit about what it is like to be a transgender person in a male unit.
  - Potential concerns around sexualisation and sexual behaviour were discussed prior to entering the unit and plans to raise any concerns as they come up.
  - Emotional regulation strategies featured regularly in her one-on-one sessions.
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Some reflections  
from our  
transgender Wahine  
about what she  
found helpful in the  
unit and what we  
can improve on...

- Appreciated the regular one-on-one sessions - opportunity to discuss issues that came up for her while living in the unit.
- Appreciated having an understanding principal corrections officer (PCO) and manager of psychological services (MPS).
- Learning self-acceptance and appreciation - a big take away from the therapeutic journey.
- Moving forward - regular (may be monthly) check-in with the MPS to discuss how her stay is going in the unit from a logistical perspective would be useful.
- Vigilance about any potential sexualisation or sexual behaviour was highlighted by both staff and our client and ways to manage it.

# Lessons we have learnt from working with our first transgender female...

- The need for a robust assessment process as early as possible.
  - Providing 1-1 support is crucial.
  - Having transgender support groups in place from the get-go will be beneficial.
  - Imperative to have discussions around any sexualization and sexual behaviour that may become a concern and plans need to be put in place on how these can be managed and resolved immediately.
  - Ongoing area of development for us – find ways to educate our Tane about the dynamics of having gender diverse community members to ensure everyone's therapeutic journey runs smoothly.
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# Final comments

While there is a long way for us to go and lot more things to learn to get this right, this mahi has been greatly educational and has highlighted some things that we can adapt to make it a better experience for the next person who joins our community. Lastly my biggest take away from this experience has been an insight into how incredible inclusive therapeutic communities can be and how easy it is for all of us to come together as one community to uplift and support each and every member of our rōpū.

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*Whiria Te Tangata*

Weave the people together.

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# Thank you

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