

How to **connect** **parents of young** **children and** **build stronger** **communities.**

HARAKEKE

A model for parent-led support

September 2020

**Hutia te rito o
te harakeke,
kei hea te
kōmako e kō?
He aha te mea
nui o tenei ao
Māku e kī atu?
He tāngata,
he tāngata,
he tāngata.**

If the centre shoot of the flax is removed, where will the Bellbird sing?...What is the most important thing in this world? It is people, it is people, it is people.

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Harakeke | Parents for Parents

is a parent-led initiative powered by Innovation Unit to create stronger social connections between parents of children under five years old.

This report is for

organisations, groups or individuals considering how community-led support might work in their own region. It describes how to adopt and improve this model in your community.

Get in touch

Innovation Unit is a not-for-profit social enterprise that works to develop new solutions for social issues and create impact at scale. If you have any questions about this report, the Harakeke initiative or Innovation Unit's mahi/work more broadly, please contact us at teamanz@innovationunit.org or find out more at innovationunit.org.

Thank you to

- the incredible 55 parent and 'pod' leaders across Waitākere and Kaipātiki that have spent time and energy planning activities and bringing together families in their communities,
- each parent who shared their experiences of participating in Harakeke with us,
- the hundreds of families that have participated in events across Tāmaki Makaurau and helped weave together the fabric of their communities,
- J R McKenzie Trust for funding this vital work and giving Innovation Unit the opportunity to make a difference to how socially connected parents feel, and their ability to parent positively,
- and finally, our colleague and friend Kataraina Davis for putting her heart and soul into supporting parents across Auckland, and building their mana motuhake at every opportunity.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Why social support
for parents



Connecting parents brings significant health benefits to families and strengthens the fabric of our communities.

SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS IS ESSENTIAL FOR CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

With a well-established link between social connectivity and both physical and emotional well-being, there is a clear social and economic imperative to encourage families across Aotearoa to participate more in their communities.

Mothers' and fathers' loneliness has been shown to have negative effects on children, impacting their social competence, motivation to learn, and academic skills. If a child is raised in a socially isolated family, the risk of the child becoming chronically lonely increases¹. However, children who grow up with strong family and community relationships are more likely to develop core capabilities such as self-regulation and resilience, which allow them to thrive as they grow up.⁴

PARENTS CAN MISTRUST PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES

There are service-led models on offer to families facing disadvantage in different pockets of Auckland, however families told us they either didn't trust the support offered because of perceived hidden agendas, or didn't feel comfortable engaging due to the formality of the services. These conversations with families surfaced the need for more flexible, informal, and community-led initiatives.

-
1. The National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2015. *Supportive Relationships and Active Skill-Building Strengthen the Foundations of Resilience*.
 2. Dr. Vivek Murthy. *Work and the Loneliness Epidemic*. Harvard Business Review.
 3. NZ General Social Survey, 2016.
 4. Juntilla et. al. (2013). *Mothers and Fathers Loneliness During Pregnancy, Infancy and Toddlerhood*.

Loneliness is associated with a reduction in lifespan similar to that caused by smoking

15 cigarettes per day

and is associated with a greater risk of cardiovascular disease, dementia, depression, and anxiety.²

Families with incomes of

\$30,000

or less are one of the most likely groups in New Zealand to consider themselves as lonely.³

In 2019 across Aotearoa, around

290,000

kids lived in low-income households.

UNICEF ranks New Zealand in the bottom 3 of high income countries for ensuring healthy lives and promoting wellbeing for all at all ages.

THE HARAKEKE MODEL

Parent-led support
for parents of children
under five



The hypothesis for Harakeke is simple: when you're connected to and supported by other parents, you parent better.

PURPOSE

Harakeke aims to reduce social isolation of parents with children aged 0 to 5, and improve their ability to parent positively. It does this by creating more opportunities for families in the community to meet each other and spend time together.

The hypothesis is simple: when you're connected to and supported by other parents, you parent better. Social connectivity is especially important for families with low incomes. A lack of funds to access early learning experiences, get to the doctor, go to the shops or see friends can often lead to feelings of isolation and impact on parents' ability to create positive, nurturing environments for their children.

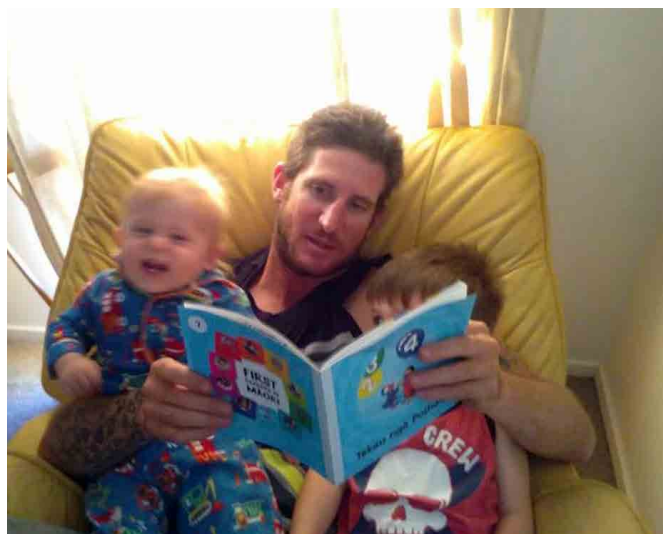
When we asked parents and families five years ago what would make a difference to support them to be the best parents they can be, the most common suggestions focused on reducing social isolation and increasing social support.

Read more about what parents told us about what it takes to parent positively here:
innovationunit.org/wp-content/uploads/Insights-on-Positive-Parenting-in-Waitākere.pdf

IMPACT SNAPSHOT

In the Auckland area, over 220 families have benefited from Harakeke activities in one year alone, with 55 Parent Leaders running events in the Waitākere and Kaipātiki areas. Regardless of whether they are leading or participating in events, parents have reported a range of significant benefits to their parenting and self-esteem. In some cases, the changes have made a transformative impact on their lives. You can read more about the impact of this model on Parent Leaders on page 15.

By learning from this model, we hope to share how other communities and funders can create similar positive changes for whānau in their own area.



Right: Nathan, Ryder and Casey,
from 'Celebrating SKIP Waitākere
2016' photography exhibition.

PARENT-LED ACTIVITIES

Since 2016, we have supported parents in two locations in Auckland (Waitākere - West Auckland, and Kaipātiki - North Shore) to design and deliver their own weekly, hour-long, meet-up activity for other parents in their local area.

To work best for families who are new to the neighbourhood and/or those in low income and poor transport areas, activities should be:

- small scale, easy to organise and regular
- local so transport is not an issue
- free or low-cost.

Activities have ranged from casual cups of tea at the houses of Parent Leaders, to guitar lessons, crafting and making, park and library visits and cafe dates.

As the initiative has progressed, parents have created activities that meet a specific need or opportunity in their community, such as skill-sharing workshops, or holding a big cook-up so families can share the cost of market ingredients to make bulk meals.

For more activity inspiration:

- ask your local families what they'd like to do!
- visit [Harakeke.org](https://www.harakeke.org) and see the '[activity suggestions](#)' or weekly activities on offer on under 'find an activity near you',
- check out some of the Harakeke facebook pages: [Ranui/Swanson](#), [Glen Eden, New Lynn, Kelston, Avondale](#), or
- search on [Pinterest.com](#).

RECRUITMENT

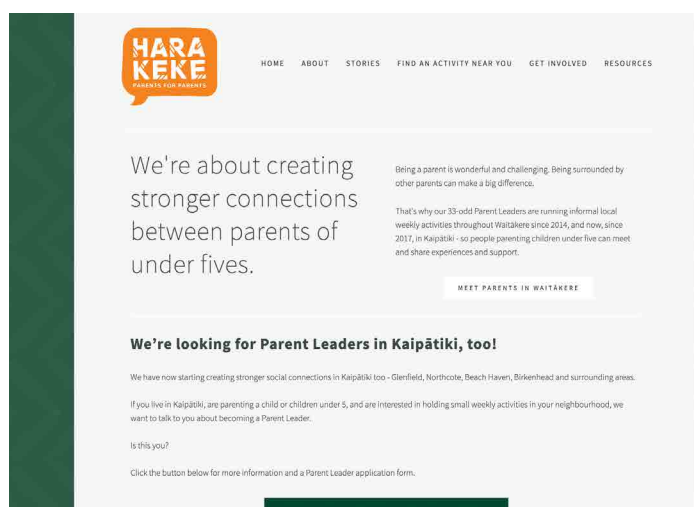
In the Waitākere suburbs of Henderson and Ranui, we worked with community members to identify parents who would take on the role of 'Parent Leader' and organise weekly events and meet-ups for other parents in their area. Most of the initial Parent Leaders were participants in the original co-design process, and felt a strong sense of ownership through being involved since inception.

KOHA VOUCHERS

For each week that a parent ran activities, they were given a shopping voucher to the value of \$100. This both incentivised them to continue running events, rewarded and recognised them for their time and efforts, and also helped cover activity costs.

ONLINE PRESENCE AND RESOURCES











[Harakeke.org](https://www.harakeke.org) allows families to find events or Parent Leader contact details in their area, apply to be a Parent Leader themselves, and download a range of helpful resources to support them to run their own events. 'Pods' - groups of parent leaders in a suburb - often had their own Facebook pages to promote events to parents in their local area.



Above: Harakeke website.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Below is an overview of the different roles in the Harakeke model, the responsibilities of each role, and how each role was rewarded and recognised for the effort they put into running Harakeke.

	POD1	POD2	POD3
FAMILIES 220 total attend events in their area with their children.			
PARENT LEADERS 55 total work with their 'pod' of other Parent Leaders (around 3-6) to plan, promote, and run one activity each per week for families in their suburb. Provided koha of \$100 per week.			
POD LEADERS 12 total recruit, support, and co-ordinate their 'pod' of Parent Leaders to run events for families in their neighbourhood. Can be combined with parent lead role. Provided koha of \$120 per week.			
COACH 1 total provide light-touch coaching support to Pod Leaders and facilitate events for pods to connect and learn across locations. 0.3 Full Time Equivalent (1.5 days per week, as part of Innovation Unit team). Funded through external contracts with government and philanthropic organisations.			

THE JOURNEY

What we did, why,
and next steps



Parents were adamant that any new initiative should be informal and community-led.

TWO LOCATIONS OVER SIX YEARS

Harakeke emerged as a result of a social innovation process that started in early 2014, to develop community-led initiatives to help grow positive parenting in Waitākere.

Key activities across this time included:

- Talking to parents and whānau to understand their experiences of parenting
- Starting a prototype model called 'SKIP Waitākere' (now Harakeke)
- Evaluating the impact of the model
- Scaling the model to a second location
- Explored further funding, and finally
- Open-sourcing the Harakeke model.

The following time-line goes into each year and activity in more depth.

Waitākere
West Auckland,
first location

Tāmaki Makaurau | Auckland

Kaipātiki
North shore,
second location

Whakapapa

2014

UNDERSTANDING PARENTS' EXPERIENCES

Innovation Unit (then 'innovate change') was commissioned by the SKIP team ([Strategies with Kids, Information for Parents](#)) within the [Ministry for Social Development](#) to lead a co-design process to understand the challenges and opportunities facing families in Waitākere, Auckland, in order to build positive parenting skills in the area.

To do this, we looked at key research on parenting, trained and supported local parents to interview their peers, and held a community whānau event.

We learnt that many parents felt socially isolated, judged, and overwhelmed, and that these feelings had a strong influence on their parenting style.

"I don't have – or ask for – support. There is nothing for people like me. I do it all by myself."

- Mother, Waitākere

Read more about what parents told us here: innovationunit.org/wp-content/uploads/Insights-on-Positive-Parenting-in-Waitākere.pdf

We then worked with a group of parents, creative 'provocateurs' and people that support parents to come up with new ideas on how to achieve change.

Right: Children at community whānau event, 2014.

2015

SKIP WAITĀKERE (HARAKEKE) IS BORN

Through the co-design process, parents said that a peer-to-peer support model was desirable for any projects targeting their community, as their previous experiences with formal, service-based models in the area often felt like there was a hidden agenda. Parents were adamant that any new initiative being targeted to their community should be informal and community-led if it was to be adopted and make an impact.

To bring this new model to life, we started to recruit 'Parent Leaders' in the community, and supported them (financially and with coaching) to run weekly activities for parents in their area.



2016



EVALUATION OF IMPACT

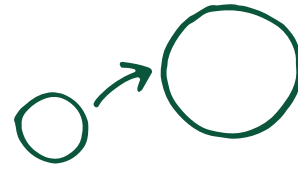
In mid-2016, an internal evaluation was conducted by Dr Emma Blomkamp, a Project Leader at Innovation Unit (then innovate change) who had not been involved in implementing SKIP Waitākere.

The evaluation concluded that the initiative was making a significant contribution to individual and community well-being by effectively building social connections.

"Harakeke creates connections and now lifelong friendships. I never want to leave this community."

- Mother, Waitākere

2017-18



SCALED TO SECOND LOCATION

Based on the positive evaluation findings, we set out to scale the model to other areas that might benefit. Research and consultation identified Kaipātiki - on Auckland's North Shore - as the next community to focus on.

Funders often overlook the area due to its close proximity to affluent suburbs, however, the area sits between 5 - 8 on the NZ index of Deprivation, with:

- a high number of young, solo parents and many parents of 0-5 year olds,
- 36% of people over 15 have an annual income under \$20,000, and
- new families reporting feeling overwhelmed with no support or community connections.

Thanks to the support of the JR McKenzie Trust, we started to scale the model to the area, including:

- testing the original insights with the community,
- changing the name to 'Harakeke' (flax plant), chosen for its symbolism of whānau and significance in Māori culture,
- creating a [website](#) and [facebook page](#) to formalise the brand, and
- recruiting new Parent Leaders in the area.

We used the existing funding for one location to support both Waitākere and Kaipātiki together by testing a new role structure. To reduce the time required of an Innovation Unit coach, 'Pod Leaders' became the main point of support for Parent Leaders. Recruitment began in Kaipātiki for Parent and Pod Leaders, and parents who showed strong leadership in Waitākere were invited to consider becoming a Pod Leader. Vouchers were reduced from \$120 to \$100 per leader per month, with the remaining funds allocated to the new Pod Leader positions.



2019

2020



EXPLORED FURTHER FUNDING

Families in Waitākere and Kaipātiki came together regularly across 2019 to engage in Harakeke activities with their pods.

In the meantime, Innovation Unit explored ways that the initiative could be financially supported on an ongoing basis.

Securing long-term funding to continue incentivising community leadership was one possibility. Another was considering how communities themselves might reward the work that goes into Harakeke, and invest in the skills of their local people.

We know that the most successful movements rise from the ground up and are driven and owned by communities. Although funding from external sources has significant value in building movement at the beginning of any initiative, relying on funding can be unsustainable and unreliable in the long run.

Ownership and momentum now exists within both Waitākere and Kaipātiki to rethink how this might work more sustainably. Having seen the model's success in both locations, we wanted to share exactly how Harakeke works so that more communities could adopt and adapt it in their own area.

OPEN-SOURCE HARAKEKE

To learn more about how the Harakeke model worked in two different locations, we spoke to four Pod Leaders, four Parent Leaders and four parent participants about their experiences, split equally between Waitākere and Kaipātiki.

We wanted to learn what:

- made it successful, or didn't work,
- could be improved if it was adopted elsewhere, and
- changed for parents who led Harakeke.

We also interviewed the Harakeke coach, Kataraina Davis, who has led the initiative since 2014, to learn more about the practical steps involved in initiating, recruiting for, leading, coaching and facilitating Harakeke experiences.

The following pages share what we learnt from these interviews.

CHANGE FOR FAMILIES

Key impacts of Harakeke on parents in Auckland



From the 2016 evaluation, we knew that Harakeke was having broad positive impacts on families in Waitākere. This time, we dove into the impact on parents who have come with us on the journey to run Harakeke activities in their community.

IMPACT SUMMARY

Parents who had taken the role of Parent or Pod Leader in their community found that Harakeke:

- Opened doors for them to connect with their community
- United their community and created safer spaces for their family by strengthening their connections with other families in the neighbourhood
- Helped strengthen their identity by connecting with parents with similar backgrounds and by helping them practice and showcase their cultural values
- Increased their confidence, capability, and financial security, and
- Reduced their stress levels and helped them be calmer in their parenting by knowing they have support nearby.

The following pages go into more depth for each of these findings.

MORE STORIES OF IMPACT

Read more about what parents told us about the impact of Harakeke in 2016 here:

innovationunit.org/wp-content/uploads/Insights-on-Positive-Parenting-in-Waitākere.pdf

OPENING DOORS, CREATING SAFER SPACES

In the 2016 evaluation, we discovered that SKIP Waitākere was helping parents to become more active participants and leaders in their communities. By connecting with other parents, they were able to access and share parenting knowledge and experience and learn more about the services and opportunities in the local area, such as free swimming lessons and car-seat checking clinics.

"Having the title of Parent Leader in the community gives us access to resources and we can offer support to others."

- Parent Leader

Recently, parents have also told us more about how Harakeke has changed their place in community more broadly. Families are feeling a greater sense of safety in their communities through knowing more people. In getting to know other parents in different pockets of the local area, they have been able to challenge their assumptions about the safety of particular parts of town, and know that a friend is just around the corner should they ever need someone in an emergency.

"My kids have other kids to play with in the community, they feel safe everyone knows them and who their parent is."

- Pod Leader

Right: Parents at community whānau event, 2014.

UNITING COMMUNITIES, STRENGTHENING IDENTITIES

As well as helping families feel a greater sense of physical safety in their communities, parents told us they have also seen and felt a greater sense of unity in their communities as a result of participating.

For some Māori parents, Harakeke has acted as a catalyst to strengthen their sense of whānaungatanga and identity. For parents of other cultural and language backgrounds, Harakeke offered a chance to connect with similar families. Some parent events drew in participants from beyond their immediate area because it presented a safe and familiar space for families to create networks that might not have otherwise been possible.

"I've seen our Māori community grow and band together behind the marae movement."

- Parent Leader



**"Now I know
at least one
person in
every street...
it has really
opened up the
community
for us."**

- Parent, 2016 Evaluation

INCREASED PARENT CONFIDENCE, CAPABILITY, FINANCIAL SECURITY

An unexpected outcome of Harakeke is the opportunity it presented for parents to learn new skills - or refine existing ones - by working alongside other parents.

Many Harakeke activities have been centred around parents demonstrating creative skills such as playing music, cooking and making. In coaching others through the learning process, some parents have developed the confidence to explore their talents and consider how they might be turned into a career. For others the process of skill-sharing has practical, immediate benefits, such as community cook-ups where knowledgeable Harakeke leaders take their parents to the market to buy ingredients in bulk and spend a morning together making healthy, low-cost meals for their families.

Becoming a Parent or Pod Leader has made a significant difference to parents' confidence and capabilities. As a result of planning, organising, running and evaluating activities, many parents have reported a change in their self-confidence. Many parents have developed community leadership skills throughout the model, including: creative problem-solving, providing safe spaces and positive experiences for parents and their families, and walking alongside them through tough times.

"I've seen Parents move into becoming Leaders or going into work - something they never would've thought for themselves!"

- Pod & Parent Leader

Right: Nikita and Alby, from
'Celebrating SKIP Waitākere 2016'
photography exhibition.

REDUCED STRESS, CALMER PARENTING

Although Harakeke was first initiated to nurture a culture of positive parenting in communities, it has never explicitly been designed or presented as a parenting model - which we learned in our 2016 evaluation has been one of its strengths. It was suggested by one parent in this evaluation that many parents don't respond well to being told what great parenting looks like, and that the modelling of positive parenting from people they respect is much more effective in changing behaviour.

"I learnt a lot about myself as a mum. I'm a better mum I think, more tolerant and gentle."

- Pod & Parent Leader



HOW TO GROW HARAKEKE

Ways to make it work
in your community



Only the outer leaves of the Harakeke plant are cut. Similarly, in this model, some parts are vital, while others can be woven into new shapes to better serve your community.

SUMMARY OF WHAT IS ESSENTIAL, AND WHAT MIGHT CHANGE

For Māori, the harakeke plant represents the family. The outer leaves are the tupuna (ancestors); the inner leaves are the mātua (parents); the very inner leaf is the rito or pēpi (baby).

Only the outer leaves are cut to allow the inner 'parent' leaf to protect its young and enable it to thrive. Similarly, in the Harakeke model there are some things that are vital and need to be protected to make it work, while other things will need to be taken away or changed to better serve your community.

We talked to the different people involved in Harakeke across both locations to identify what parts are essential regardless of location, and what could change for each community.

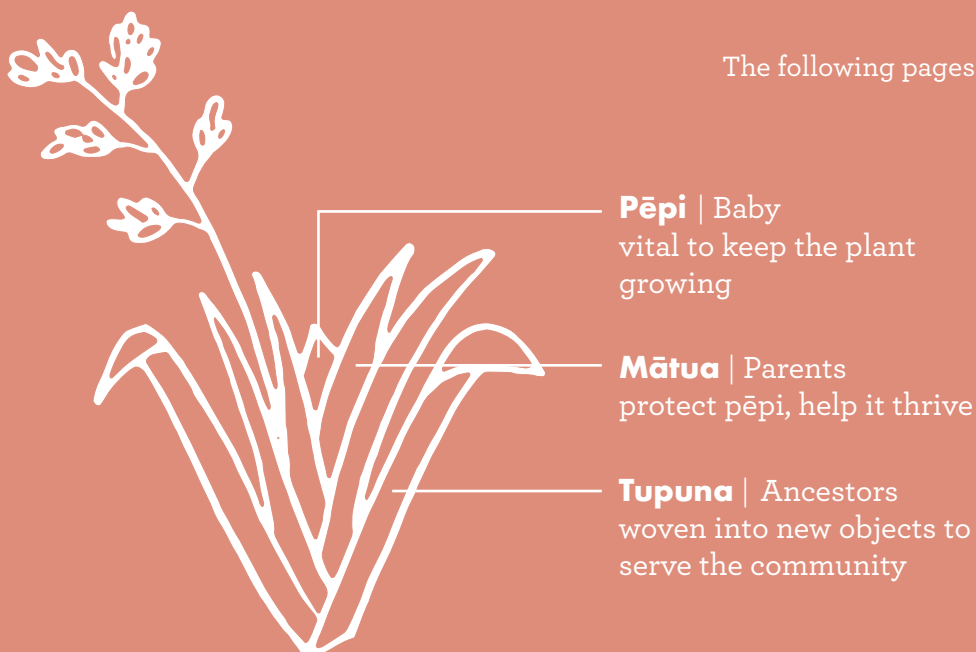
Essential:

- Hold it lightly - allow communities to fully own it
- Create a clear purpose and roles
- Coach parents to build their leadership skills
- Give parents incentives and recognition for their time and effort
- Provide time for parents to connect with other leaders
- Ensure events are regular and reliable

Flexible:

- What types of activities are on offer
- How often parents attend
- Who Parent Leaders are
- Amount or type of incentives
- How parents and leaders connect

The following pages go into each part in more depth.



What's essential to make it work

HOLD IT LIGHTLY

Harakeke was designed to be very lightly led by Innovation Unit in response to communities' perception of the pressure and hidden agenda added to initiatives when well-meaning organisations seek to work in their space. An indication of this is that most parents did not know or hear about Innovation Unit as an organisation.

'It's about what parents need, not what any services, models, or organisations need. As a result, parents recognise their strengths and are able to support each other without depending on a service provider or other resource-strapped organisation.' - 2016 evaluation

By providing 'just enough' support to Parent Leaders, we show respect to parents as experts in their own lives, and encourage them to take initiative as leaders in their communities.

Below: Harakeke event.



"Harakeke needs someone who cares to run it...We really need someone like Kat to look up to for support and advice - to talk to when things are hard."

- Parent Leader

IMPROVE IT FURTHER

Provide committed, stable and responsive leadership

Holding Harakeke lightly still requires leadership. It's very important that the leader or coach has clear time set aside each day and week to be responsive to Parent Leader's needs, and pro-actively identify potential challenges before they develop further.

CLEAR PURPOSE AND ROLES

The Harakeke model was co-designed with many of the parents who still participate in it today, maintaining a strong connection to its mission and purpose. A 'Harakeke Manual' (see: harakeke.org/manual) is shared with new parents who enter leadership positions, which steps out the initiative's whakapapa and what it was designed to 'do' and 'be'. It also contains a description of each role, including a clear articulation of what the role is - and isn't - to help Parent and Pod Leaders manage expectations about what is required.

Achieving clarity and buy-in around the kaupapa of Harakeke through the manual, and regular reminders about mission and purpose, has helped those involved in the initiative to stay on track and resolve challenges when they arise. Participants told us that there have been occasions where the scope of particular roles has begun to creep beyond what was originally intended, so having a collective agreement about overarching values helped identify and resolve issues early.

IMPROVE IT FURTHER

Co-design the purpose with your community

Co-design is a great way to test the mission, purpose and roles with people who might engage with an initiative. Bring your community together to test if the community wants it, if it's fit-for-purpose as-is, and if not - what needs to change for your context. By inviting communities to actively participate in the design and development of new initiatives, there is a greater likelihood of them feeling 'owned' by that community, and therefore a greater chance they will succeed.

"I've stayed in it because of the kaupapa, and because I helped design it. Creating stronger social connections for parents has been my purpose – especially for solo parents like me."

- Pod Leader

"After learning about Harakeke you think you can change the world – you quickly learn that you need to take it slow. I felt like I was failing for a bit – had no one turning up, but once my first actual group started I was away."

- Parent Leader

COACHING TO BUILD PARENT LEADERSHIP

Prior to Harakeke, most Parent Leaders had no previous experience in leadership roles, and many took on these roles despite experiencing their own challenges with social isolation, well-being and self-confidence. All participants we spoke to told us how an 'independent' leader or coach was vital to develop their own collaboration and leadership skills, and ensure the success of their events.

Kataraina Davis, then Project Lead at Innovation Unit, held this role, which included:

- coordinating the start-up of each Harakeke site, such as screening new Parent Leaders and organising training,
- supporting leaders in their event design and recruitment efforts,
- coaching leaders to remove obstacles and resolve conflicts within their communities, and
- facilitating regular meet-ups of leaders to talk strategically about the work they were doing and their impact in the community.

For those Parent Leaders who felt a sense of social isolation before joining Harakeke, Kataraina was the first connection they made and their gateway into building local friendships through their events.

When SKIP Waitākere became Harakeke in 2017 and Kataraina stepped back to instead coach Pod Leaders, many participants felt a sense of loss at no longer having the strong connection they once had to their coach, but understood the reasons why this change was made. There were also times where it wasn't possible for this role to be prioritised alongside other projects. Parent and Pod Leaders told us that for other communities to successfully adopt this model, it's essential that this role be clearly prioritised to be able to respond to parent's hectic lives.

"Kat [from Innovation Unit] provided advice, support and made me feel like I was a part of something. She was a referee for me to get some work, and was always there for me."

- Parent Leader

"It's a big job to run Harakeke so having someone to help you when you need it is important."

- Pod Leader

IMPROVE IT FURTHER

Enable peer-coaching and support

It's important for the Harakeke coach to have enough time, energy and passion to support leaders in their community, especially in the early stages. Equally important is planning a gradual release of responsibilities so that parents learn to collaborate with each other on challenges and grow their independence as leaders. Once their leadership and confidence skills have been built, there's potential for Parent Leaders to form their own leadership group to support and coach one-another and the next generation of leaders. This could help to improve the longer-term sustainability of coaching support for Parent Leaders.

**"I've stayed
because of
the kaupapa,
and because
I helped
design it."**

- Pod Leader

INCENTIVES AND RECOGNITION

Providing shopping vouchers for Parent and Pod Leaders was an important recruitment and reattainment strategy. The weekly koha/gift:

1. enabled leaders to cover associated costs, such as coffee and snacks, and
2. recognised parents' time, effort and commitment.

The vouchers ultimately demonstrated manaakitanga; the reciprocity of respect and care on which whānau and community is built. The roles performed by Parent and Pod Leaders are vital for Harakeke events to occur and have a positive impact on those who attend, but they take time and effort. Leaders spend time planning and advertising their events, recruiting other leaders, offering support to their community and will often open up their own homes and pantries for those who participate.

Although the provision of vouchers might not be seen as a cost-effective way to sustain initiatives like Harakeke, relying on the goodwill of community members to offer their time and skills is unlikely to achieve sustainability either.

"The voucher was great - it didn't make me do the activities but it helped me be able to do it."

- Parent Leader

"I'm a solo mum so the vouchers definitely helped to keep me going. Sometimes I'd use all my coffee for Harakeke."

- Pod Leader

IMPROVE IT FURTHER

Seek local sponsorship

Those wishing to adopt and adapt Harakeke for their local context may wish to consider how you might make this aspect more sustainable, so it isn't reliant on funding from organisations that are external to the community and require something in return.

There is a clear value proposition for communities to support local parents. When families feel safer and more connected to where they live, they are more likely to venture out to their local area with their children. With increased leadership skills comes financial opportunities, and when families thrive they are in a better position to spend in their communities.

With those in your community, consider who might incentivise leadership to improve the lives of local families. Shops, small businesses and community-based not-for-profits may be interested in partnering with you to fund vouchers at a suburb level on the basis that Harakeke contributes to safer, more connected local communities.

TIME WITH OTHER LEADERS

For Parent and Pod Leaders in both Waitākere and Kaipātiki, coming together regularly as leaders was strongly valued, and some wished these meetings could be even more regular than monthly.

Meetings were an opportunity to catch up on what was happening in each Parent Leader's area, learn about the activities others were running, and collaboratively problem-solve challenges. They also gave leaders a sense of being part of something bigger than their own immediate community which helped refuel their energy and commitment.

Photo below: Parents at community whānau event, 2014.

"I don't think Harakeke works if we aren't working together."

- Parent Leader

IMPROVE IT FURTHER

Bring others in to inspire parents and help solve challenges

As well as planning how leaders could work together and connect over time, consider who you could bring in to help parents to make sure they are creating the desired the impact in their communities. This could look like inviting a community member with a specific skill or capability into a monthly meeting to help the group to: undertake particular tasks, address a challenge, or take advantage of new opportunities to do great work. Business or community leaders, entrepreneurs, creatives and technologists all have great skills to offer that may help Parent Leaders, and the initiative itself, to thrive.



REGULAR AND RELIABLE EVENTS

Harakeke was designed as a regular offer for parents so they have time to build strong relationships with others in their community, and have access to consistent support. Reliability of events was important for many parents who participated, as it took a significant amount effort - and perceived risk - to try something new and make new connections.

Parent Leaders told us that providing regular, quality events relied on the:

1. leaders' buy-in to the mission and purpose of Harakeke, including the importance of offering events on a regular basis, and
2. incentive of vouchers: Parent Leaders committed to running four events per month to receive their koha.

In most cases, if something unexpected came up that couldn't be helped and they weren't able to host an event, Parent Leaders were able to seek support from another parent in their 'pod' to fill in.

IMPROVE IT FURTHER Plan for rainy days

Winter presented a challenge for the regularity of some events, with the weather putting a stop to many outdoor activities. Partnerships with local libraries, schools and community halls can help to offer clean, warm spaces for families to connect at points where it isn't feasible to all meet in a leader's home.

Right: Corrin, Emmanuelle, Aniwaniwa, from 'Celebrating SKIP Waitākere 2016' photography exhibition.

"The main thing was me being there. What if I wasn't there and someone turned up? I gave lots of hugs and received lots of hugs."

- Parent Leader



**"Harakeke
helped
me be an
important part
of our new
community
and provide
something
for pasifika
parents."**

- Parent Leader

What might change for your community

WHO PARENT LEADERS ARE

There are some clear personal attributes and values that make a great Parent Leader, such as being organised, positive, non-judgemental, self motivated and having good communication skills. However, almost anyone can be a Parent Leader, and the diversity of leaders in a community is a strength. Leaders have joined Harakeke from a range of different cultural, socio-economic and religious backgrounds, and included both mothers and fathers along the way. The diversity in those leading Harakeke has maintained its relevance and credibility in the communities it serves, and in some cases has helped to attract new members from similar walks of life who didn't previously feel they were part of their community.

"Harakeke has helped me to be an important part of our new community and provide something for pasifika parents who might not have anyone outside of their family."

- Parent Leader

ACTIVITIES ON OFFER

The job of Parent Leaders was to listen and respond to the needs of their families on a week-to-week basis. Some activities gave parents an opportunity to learn or teach a new skill, while other times a chat over a hot drink while the children played was more welcome. While there might be some obvious options for activities, Parent Leaders need to be able to flexibly respond to the needs of their families - and the local weather!

"It would chop and change depending on the mood of our group. Sometimes a cup of tea, sometimes poi making."

- Parent Leader

AMOUNT OR TYPE OF KOHA

We know that rewarding parents for the time they invest in running activities is key, however what that reward looks like, or what financial value it is, could change for your community. This will depend on what organisations might be willing to support the initiative, and what local parents deem as enough to motivate and sustain their efforts. Fuel vouchers, early childhood education funding, babysitting costs or other means might also work.

HOW OFTEN PARENTS ATTEND

Although it's important that Harakeke events are offered regularly, it is just as important that no pressure is ever placed on parents to attend regularly.

Our research with local families made it clear that parents are often put off by a sense of obligation to attend; the complexity of family life means that committing to regular activities is rarely possible. Successful Parent Leaders understand the importance of being there when their community needs them, but being comfortable with the space that others need.

Below: Whānau at community whānau event, 2014.

WAYS TO CONNECT

While building relationships can rarely been done better than kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face), there are so many other ways that parents, leaders, and neighbourhoods can connect online to advertise events, share stories, and learn from each other.

The facebook group '[Kia ora māmā](#)' is a fantastic example of how parents can support each other through social media, and these channels are essential to maintain a sense of connection for busy parents, or in times of crisis. Although facebook has proven useful for Harakeke groups so far, consider what channels are most commonly used or convenient for families in your area when setting up online to broaden your reach.



It's time to sow the Harakeke seed and weave together the fabric of your community.

This koha – our kete of knowledge –
is for you to share and grow in
your own community.

We would love hear about what you try, learn, and adapt.
Send your pātai or stories to teamanz@innovationunit.org
or find out more at innovationunit.org.

Mauri ora!

TE REO MĀORI GLOSSARY

Aotearoa	New Zealand
Harakeke	Flax plant
Kaipātiki	Area in north Auckland
Kanohi	Face
Kaupapa	Purpose, initiative
Kete	Woven basket
Koha	Gift
Mahi	Work
Manaakitanga	Making others feel valued
Māori	Indigenous population
Marae	Sacred communal place
Pā	Māori settlement
Pātai	Question
Poi	Used in Māori performance
Rohe	Tribal territory / area
Tāmaki Makaurau	Auckland
Waitākere	City in west Auckland
Whakapapa	Lineage / history
Whānau	Family
Whānaungatanga	Relationships

JARGON GLOSSARY

Adapt	Modify for a new purpose
Adopt	Take up, use
Evaluation	Assessing the value
Impact	Affect, influence
Co-design	Designing with a broad audience to ensure the end result is usable
Social innovation	Creating new solutions for social challenges
Scale	Grow
Model	Example to follow
Open-source	Make freely available
Prototype	Early version of something to test and develop

Right: Ryder and Hayden, from
'Celebrating SKIP Waitākere 2016'
photography exhibition.



HARAKEKE PLANT SYMBOLISM IN MĀORI CULTURE

Harakeke is a an evergreen flax native to New Zealand. Traditionally, each Māori pā or marae would have a plantation of harakeke and grow different varieties depending on their needs and intended uses: clothing, nets, baskets, rafts, children's toys, and sweetener for food from the plant's flower nectar. Each part of the plant was also used for a range of medicinal and healing purposes.

A well-known Māori proverb demonstrates the significance of harakeke in Māori culture beyond its practical uses, as symbolic of whānau and the importance of protecting and nurturing children.

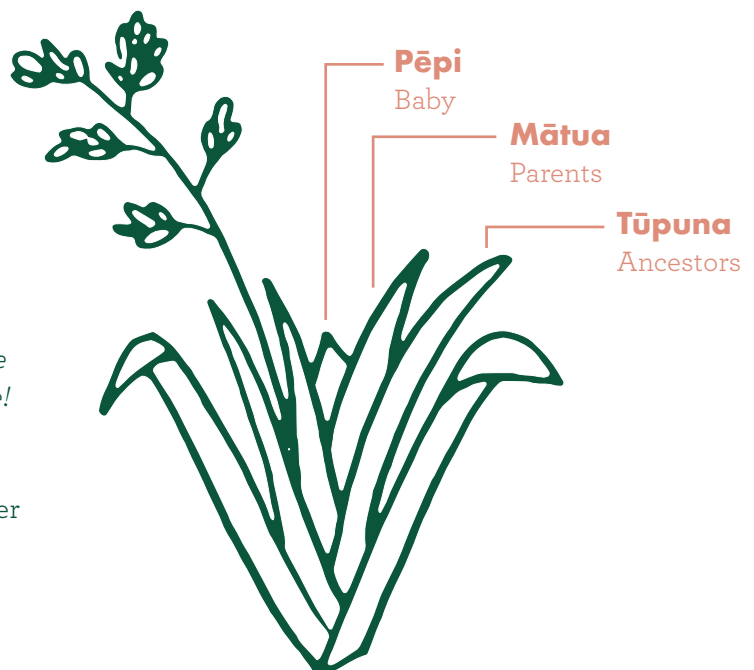
*Hutia te rito o te harakeke,
Kei whea te kōmako e kō?
Ka rere ki uta, ka rere ki tai.
Kī mai ki ahau;
He aha te mea nui o te Ao?
Māku e kī atu,
he tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata*

If the heart of harakeke was removed, where will the bellbird sing? It will fly inland, it will fly seawards. If you ask me, what was the most important thing in the world; I will reply, It is people, it is people, it is people!

For Māori, the harakeke plant represents the family. The outer leaves are the tupuna (ancestors); the inner leaves are the mātua (parents); the very inner leaf is the rito or pēpi (baby). Only the outer leaves are cut in order to allow the inner 'parent' leaf to protect its young and enable it to thrive.

"Protect the inner flax to help them grow."

- Parent Leader



**Poipoia te
kakano
Kia puawai.**

Nurture the seed and it will blossom.

