Te Whāriki 2026-2027: Impact Report (live)

“Activating the intersections of identity to lead systems change”

leadership lab
Fostering collective responses to complex issues

LINC

ISC COP x Te Whāriki Programme

Intentional integration

The Intersectionality and Systems Change Community of Practice (COP) was designed in late 2024 to give intersectional leaders and allies a space to critically examine how identities and ecological systems shape power dynamics in systems change initiatives. The COP series is intentionally designed to be part of this Te Whāriki programme (Ko Wai Tātou component).

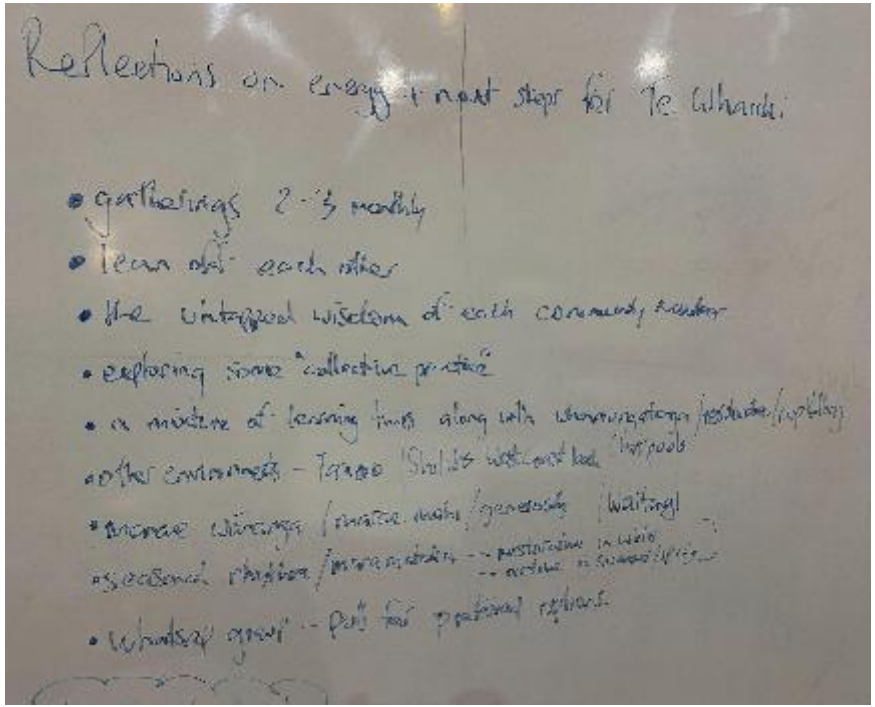
After three successful Te Whāriki programmes, the decision was made to merge with the “Intersectionality and Systems Community of Practice” into a new initiative called the “Te Whāriki COP (Community of Practice)”.





ISC COP x Te Whāriki = Te Whāriki COP

Combining the best of ISC COP and Te Whāriki



Te Whāriki has created a uniquely intersectional space where people can advocate for their own identities while stepping outside single-issue echo chambers.

ISC COP created a space to sharing systems change practices through an intersectional lens.

After reflecting on the strengths of the two programmes, Te Whāriki COP was born. There was energy to create space for:

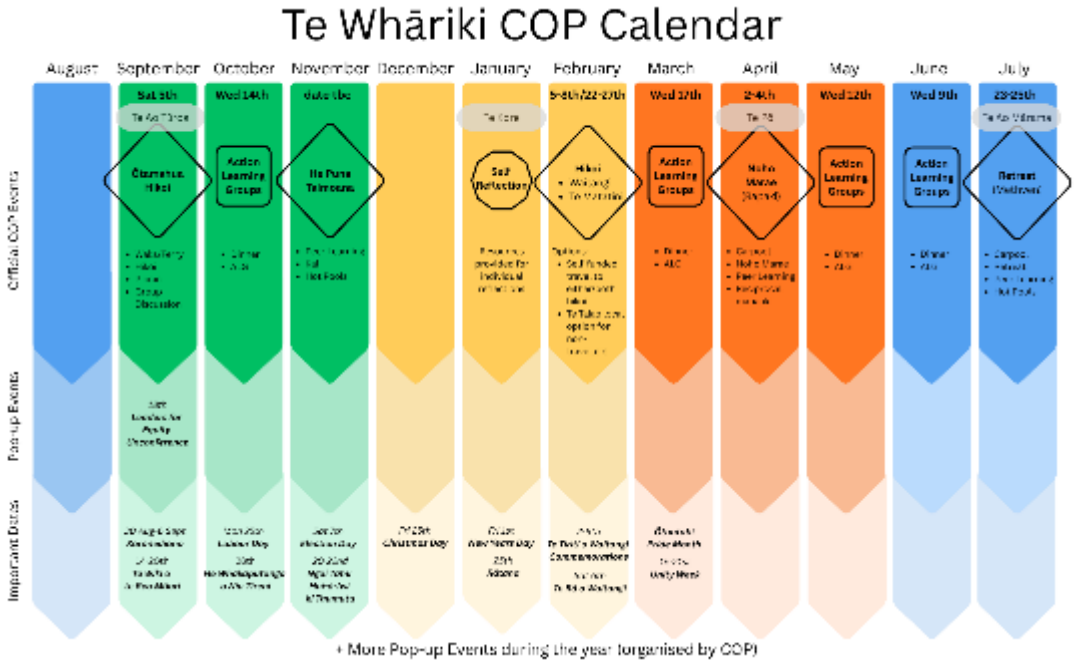
- Maintaining whakapapa and relational safety.
- Recognising invisible work.
- Healing and restoration.
- Generating opportunities.
- Bridging cohorts.

leadership lab

LINC

Introducing Te Whāriki COP

A dynamic Community of Practice (CoP) dedicated to fostering leadership and systems change through the lens of intersectionality and ecological understanding in Ōtautahi Christchurch.



Who Is This For?

This is for intersectional humans who:

- Identify with communities or groups that have experienced discrimination because of their identities
- Are committed to working towards a more equitable society and systems
- Are active in systems change work (in paid or unpaid contexts)
- Understand that stepping outside yourself and your own identities is part of the mahi











Te Whāriki COP Team

Te Whāriki COP organising committee include:

- Atarau Hamilton (2023/2024 alumni)
- Shiloh Sutherland (2023/2024 alumni)
- Cooper Sides (2023/2024 alumni)
- Wikitoria Kurene (2023/2024 alumni)
- River Dantzler (2025/2026 alumni)
- Rangimarie Elvin (2025/2026 alumni)
- Kai J.Lee (2025/2026 alumni)

With support from:

- Erica Austin (Te Whāriki COP co-lead)
- Chris Jansen (Te Whāriki COP co-lead)

leadership lab

LINC

Te Whāriki COP people...



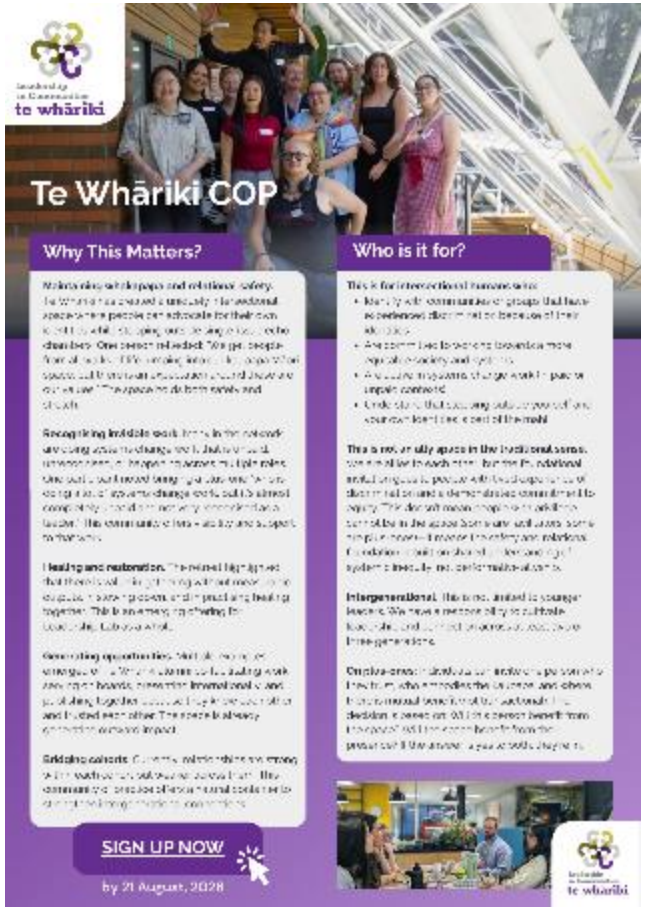


Te Whāriki COP planning group

On 15 July 2026, the Te Whāriki core group met to design the transition from a formal 12-month leadership programme to a sustained community of practice. The group recognised a strong appetite to continue together, and moved from "Why?" into "What does this look like?". They were committed to facilitating a dynamic Community of Practice (CoP) dedicated to fostering leadership and systems change through the lens of intersectionality and ecological understanding in Ōtautahi Christchurch.

Guided by Te Korekoreka, the year long journey is designed to follow the realms: Te Ao Tūroa, Te Kore, Te Pō and Te Ao Mārama. The Collective Kawa + Tikanga includes;

- Honour the Mauri
- Honour Others
- Honour Yourself
- Honour Te Taiao
- Honour Vā



Focus group

Te Whāriki COP is designed for those who;

- Identify with communities or groups that have experienced discrimination because of their identities
- Are committed to working towards a more equitable society and systems
- Are active in systems change work (in paid or unpaid contexts)
- Understand that stepping outside yourself and your own identities is part of the mahi

*This is not an ally space in the traditional sense.

Intergenerational. This is not limited to younger leaders. We have a responsibility to cultivate leadership and connection across at least two or three generations.

Journeying with Te Taiao

The programme was designed with Te Taiao in-mind. System change work happens within us and also in connection with our natural environment.

Event #1: Sept 5 Ōtamahua Hīkoi









Event #2: Nov 15: Reflection Hui at New Brighton Beach + He Puna Taimoana









What have you loved about any of the events?

- Watching a room arrive before it performs. Opening with breath and a simple question (if you were a tree, a fungi or an animal, what would you be?) brought grief, pride and real connection within minutes. I loved the day in nature with pūrākau from local hapū: stories heard on the whenua they belong to. I've also loved co-designing and co-delivering with a team that trusts each other.

- Tikanga-informed approach to any of engagement (sessions) - karakia, whanaungatanga, kai - these processes ensure cultural safety, and provide opportunity to build on existing relationships. As a foundation before diving into the mahi; I am reminded that I am safe and can bring my whole-self to each session.

- I find immense value in the space which Te Whāriki offers. I know that i can show up genuinely as my spicey-brained chaotic self and be wholeheartedly welcomed. Growing up autistic but only having been diagnosed recently I have grown up assuming that everyone sees and interprets the world like I do. But obviously that is not true. The space at Te Whāriki is unique and safe for me because I don't have to explain certain aspects of my world view and my approach to humanity.
  Many spaces there is mauri such as competitiveness or a need for people to "prove" they are knowledgeable in their area of expertise. Where as at Te Whāriki CoP there isn't any of that. People are people and each person is more than their skill set.

What learnings or insights popped for you?

- People are ready for depth when someone holds the door open with care. Rest and slowness matter. In my Unconference session on slow productivity and love as systems change, people from their late teens to their sixties named the same patterns: urgency, and rest that has to be earned. Relational practices held them.

- I've moved from shaping stories behind the lens to holding space in real time. Facilitating is mostly listening.

- That everyone has their own strengths - it’s ok not to be an expert on everything. However, each voice has value, and its through collective thinking and shared meaning making that makes a contribution to the overall kaupapa.

- This is a great pātai. The space is allowing me to see several of my strengths and allowed me to learn how to grow my ability and recognition towards internal validation as opposed to external. The way I was raised is one which intentionally taught us to not question authority. In a similar vein as that, I have grown up without realising that I prioritised external validation of everything I did and said because I didn't have innate self-belief or self-worth. My inner journey of self love and exploration is one which will be life long of course, but it is this year that I have realised just how important external validation was for myself.

- I am in a space where I have finished my social work degree and am having to think about what is next. I spent 20+ years in youth development and external supervision spaces and in theory I *should* be making the side step into a social work career. However Te Whāriki carves out intentional time and space where we get to deeply reflect on what is before us, what choices we have made or want to make so we can decide for ourselves what is right for us. That intentional space has enabled me to press pause and remember what sort of mahi is important to me and how I want my practice to be.

What does being part of this group of people mean to you?

- Belonging with depth. Leadership Lab's values of mana ōrite, kotahitanga and manaakitanga give my practice as tauiwi, upholding Te Tiriti and learning te reo, a place to be tested and held. I feel trusted here, and these are the reciprocal relationships I'm choosing.

- I always leave with more energy I arrived with. Every sessions requires deep thinking and reflection on issues that I don't otherwise get to explore. For example, there are times where I can be a passive partner, due to power-imbalance within university settings - the 'cycle of reflection' piece reminded me that I have agency - and that I hold a body of knowledge that is of value - and to trust and value what I knowledge I bring.

- This rōpū is one where I am usually in awe of who I get to be around. The folks who are here have ātaahua hearts and ways they lead their lives. I count it a huge privilege being in these spaces and getting to learn from others. I think also being a part of this rōpū to me means being seen. There are not many spaces where I feel safe to be myself and to be vulnerable. But at our Te Whāriki CoP in November I felt safe and able to reflect and be myself. I shared personal information and circumstances which I had been reflecting on for a while. This rōpū is an absolute gem for me.

What impact do you see this having on you?

- The path from learning and trialling within our group, to co-designing, to facilitating with the public has been a step up and a maturing of my talents. I can call myself a facilitator, not only a documentarian. The te ao Māori frameworks and co-design habits now carry into Hapori, the men's circle, International Men's Day and my storytelling work.

- I have more confidence in my strengths, while being at peace with my limitations, and to acknowledge and appreciate a collectivist approach to problem solving.

- The impact of this rōpū will be huge. It is cup-filling being in a space where you as a human are seen and hold value for nothing else other than because you do. Currently the space and rōpū is allowing me to learn more about my strengths and and practice which is something I haven't really done before. I had created a practice which was values driven, but there was always a need to prioritise others opinions regarding the choices I should make. That was due to an innate belief that other people always hold more knowledge than me. However Te Whāriki has carefully held a mirror up for me and allowed me to see myself, my life and my choices through different lenses. That has been an absolute gift which will have unknowable positive impacts on my practice from here on out. I am allowing myself to see my innate strengths and personal values in ways which I haven't before, despite being in the youth sector for 20+ years.

Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, he toa takitini

Our strength is not as individuals,
but as a collective

leadershiplab.co.nz