

Introduction to the three viewpoints on “The most important thing I learned in practice”

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At the end of 2019, a Māori Social Work Practice and Research Symposium was jointly held by Ka Uri o Tānewhakaripiripi, (the Maori social work students' group from the University of Otago) and the University of Otago's Social and Community Work programme. The symposium was run primarily for Māori social work students and had as its theme, “The most important thing I learned in practice.” The keynote address was given by Dr Awhina Hollis-English, one of the founders of the Ka Uri o Tānewhakaripiripi and while all presenters were recorded, three were transcribed re-edited and are presented here.

These three very diverse presentations cover a wide range of experience, showing some of the contrasting places that social work can take place and what we can learn from a social worker in those places. *Te Komako* has always tried to support the practice of tangata whenua practitioners, as well as providing perspectives for those who work in this area. Contributions on research, theory and opinion (commentary) are always valuable and can help inform our practice. But also vital are descriptions of how we practise, our feelings, our motivations and our guiding principles, and it is these that often inspire us the most. As an educator I find that it is not my presentation of theory or practice models, or values, processes and principles that light up people's eyes. It is the stories of practical application, of bringing hope, or contributing to personal and social change that light up students' visions of what they can do and how they can do it and the outcomes good practice can

produce. So while this journal will prioritise academic research and theory, there will always be a place for people to discuss their practice, because it is here where the human connection takes place.

I would encourage you, wherever you are in the country, on line or live, to set up seminars where social and community workers can talk about their practice to inspire each other in ways that, of course, maintain confidentiality and privacy. What Ka Uri o Tanewhakaripiripi did can be done very easily. For example, get three or four people to speak about the most important things they have learnt in practice. Fifteen to 20 minutes at the most and get someone to record them, transcribe them and share them either on line or with us here at Te Komako.

In the meantime, here are social workers humbly sharing some of the things they have learnt on their social work journey. As I noted in the editorial of this issue of *Te Komako*, all three kōrero present varied practice and approaches in social work. All three are very personal, revealing much about the authors and how they approach working with Māori.

AOTEAROA
NEW ZEALAND SOCIAL
WORK 32(3), 80.

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