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# NAVIGATING TWO WORLDS

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STRENGTHENING LEADERSHIP  
IN RUGBY IN NEW ZEALAND

## AUT Research Report

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# "O LE ALA I LE PULE O LE TAUTUA"

(The pathway to leadership is through service)

Samoaan Proverb.



# Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
.....	
<b>The Process</b>	<b>5</b>
Phase One & Two: Context Analysis, Issue Identification	6
Phase Three: Action	7
Phase Four: Evaluation	8
The Limitation of Our Lens	8
.....	
<b>Navigating Two Worlds Project Timeline</b>	<b>9</b>
.....	
<b>Outcomes: Key Pillars</b>	<b>10</b>
Introducing the Outcomes: Key Pillars	11
Inclusive Leadership	12
Welcoming	15
Unleashing Potential	18
Connecting	21
.....	
<b>Moving Forward</b>	<b>24</b>
Our Learning	25
Summary Recommendations for NZR	27
1. Pacific Advisory Group	27
2. Pasifika Engagement Manager	27
3. Develop a Leadership Framework	28
.....	
<b>Links to Other Outputs/Resources</b>	<b>29</b>
.....	
<b>Acknowledgements &amp; Partners</b>	<b>30</b>



# Executive Summary

## *The Pasifika<sup>1,2</sup> community plays a key role in rugby from local club to professional level.*

In Auckland, specifically, Pasifika participation is largely on the field and not reflected in non-playing roles such as administration, management, refereeing, and governance. In 2016, Auckland University of Technology (AUT) student Chantelle Huch focused her work placement at New Zealand Rugby (NZR) on understanding barriers and enablers to Pasifika participation in off-field roles (see report<sup>3</sup>). From this NZR and Auckland Rugby (AR) recognised the need to cultivate Pacific leadership and partnered with AUT's Sports Performance Research Institute New Zealand (SPRINZ) to develop the Navigating Two Worlds (N2W) action research project. It was recognised that within rugby there is a dominant Western based culture and view of leadership, yet with a greater appreciation of Pasifika culture, new leadership ways and practices can be developed and strengthened.

A collaborative Project Team was established among the partners as part of the action research process. The purpose of N2W was articulated in the following research question: *How can*

*cultural intelligence be enhanced to develop leadership within the New Zealand Rugby system?* A 20 strong Pacific Advisory Group was established to guide the design and outworking of the project. This consisted of leadership and cultural development workshops, as well as a mentoring programme. Divided into two cohorts, 13 participants formed the Club Leadership Group (club administrators/chairs), and 13 participants formed the Pacific Leadership Group (aspiring Pacific leaders), with a matching number of Mentors for both (total: 26). Two full group talanoas were also held, designed to bring all involved together, and to provide the opportunity to share stories, challenges, aspirations, and knowledge as well as what had been learnt throughout the project. Individual interviews supplemented the insights derived from the action research process.

The success of N2W has been dependent on the courage and curiosity of all participants, numbering over 70 (the two cohorts, Pacific Advisory Group, Project Team, invited guests). Each were encouraged to be active in exploring their own leadership values, views and practices, engaging in conversations, and creating change that is resulting in the strengthening of leadership in rugby in New Zealand.

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<sup>1</sup> We have used the term Pacific (known to encompass a variety of Pacific nations and communities) and Pasifika (associated with Samoan language), interchangeably.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Pacific Peoples. (2018). Yavu: Foundations of Pacific Engagement. Ministry of Pacific Peoples. <https://www.mpp.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/MPP8836-Yavu-Pacific-Engagement-Digital-Book.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Ferkins, L., Dee, K., Naylor, M., & Bryham, G. (2017). Navigating Two Worlds: Pacific Island Experiences and Contribution to Non-playing Participation in Rugby. Auckland University of Technology.

## Outcomes: How *Can* Cultural Intelligence be Enhanced to Develop Leadership

The outcomes of the project are represented by four pillars which convey the themes generated throughout, as follows:

- **Inclusive Leadership: Drawing on Pasifika culture**
- **Welcoming: Making clubs inviting to whānau**
- **Unleashing Potential: Encouraging people to step forward**
- **Connecting: Growing and developing together**

Collectively, these pillars are offered as a foundation for a proposed leadership framework which NZR could construct to cultivate leadership capability within the rugby system.

In real time, N2W is resulting in positive change. Data based evidence from the action research project demonstrates that Pasifika leadership values are taking hold within clubs. This has included the promotion of leadership as a service relationship, as well as the valuing of informal and collective approaches to leadership. Pasifika people within the rugby community also reported a greater sense of opportunity and a more visible pathway to follow in order to contribute their leadership to the off-field rugby setting.

## Recommendations for NZR

Going forward, from the outcomes the following recommendations have been developed:

1. Pacific Advisory Group: continue to support and resource the Pacific Advisory Group
2. Pasifika Engagement Manager: continue to support and resource the Pasifika Engagement Manager role
3. Develop a leadership framework: drawing from Pasifika (and Māori) culture and practices which provides the basis for N2W 2.0.

## Purpose of the Report

This report has been prepared, in the first instance, for NZR and AR by AUT SPRINZ researchers. Its purpose is to capture the action research process, learning, and outcomes so that the momentum of N2W continues, and a legacy of leadership development is created which encapsulates a strong Pasifika contribution. While every attempt has been made to capture the multiple voices from the project (and to recognise the collaborative effort), ultimately, this report is presented through the lens of the AUT researchers. We acknowledge the limitations that this lens brings and point toward accompanying publications<sup>3,4</sup> that more directly capture participant and Pasifika voices.

[Note: Ethics was sought and approved from Auckland University of Technology - all research participants signed a consent form.]

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<sup>4</sup>Navigating Two Worlds. (2021). Navigating Two Worlds; Strengthening Leadership in Rugby in New Zealand. Auckland University of Technology.

<sup>5</sup>Auckland University of Technology. (2020, February 10) AUT SPRINZ: Navigating Two Worlds Project [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/jEYqkD0y4os>.

# The Process

*N2W followed an organic and emergent process, enabled by the principles of action research which offers a guiding structural framework for research collaboration and partnership.*

As set out in Figure 1: N2W project timeline (page 9), the genesis of N2W was sparked by a phone call from Evelyn Stanley leading to conversations between NZR and AUT SPRINZ. As part of the Wider Auckland Project, in early 2016 NZR sought an AUT student for an intern role focused on understanding the barriers and enablers to Pasifika participation in off-field roles. Chantelle Huch responded to this call, out of which N2W was born.

## Phase One & Two: Context Analysis, Issue Identification

Action research is an approach that values change, learning, and collaboration. Most action research frameworks fall into four phases: context analysis, issue identification, action, and evaluation.<sup>6</sup> The first two phases for N2W, involved the capturing of insights from the communities who were to be involved in the action elements of the project. This drove a deeper understanding of differing leadership perspectives.

Such perspectives included Pasifika community voices, rugby club voices, NZR, AR and other Provincial Union (PU) viewpoints. These insights were captured formally within the reports, *Navigating Two Worlds: Pacific Island experiences and contribution to non-playing participation in rugby report*<sup>3</sup>, and Crawford's<sup>7</sup> report on rugby club capability. While the gap that exists between the number of Pacific rugby players, and the number of Pacific people participating in non-playing rugby roles was the starting point, N2W evolved into a leadership

development programme. This was done to foster Pasifika approaches to leadership which value relationships and service, as well as collective and informal contribution to leadership.<sup>3</sup> Leadership development targeted aspiring Pasifika leaders, current rugby club leaders (predominantly European), as well as the connections and relationships that could be built between these cohorts in order to construct leadership as a collective activity.<sup>8</sup>

The design of N2W was founded on a growing body of leadership research where scholars have challenged traditional (often referred to as Western) approaches to leadership.<sup>9</sup> This has included an historical view of leadership as a hierarchy, whereby leader characteristics has been the focus of study.<sup>10</sup> Contrasting this view is a social constructionist lens which recognises that leadership can be enacted informally, by anyone, irrespective of their formal position or role.<sup>11</sup> This view also helps to distinguish between the leader (individual) and leadership (a collective activity).

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<sup>6</sup>Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (2008). *The SAGE handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice*. Los Angeles, Calif: SAGE.

<sup>7</sup>Crawford, S., Ferkins, L., & Bryham, G. (2018). *Rugby Club Capability: Developing Rugby Club capability across Wider Auckland through Board Leadership and Governance*. Auckland University of Technology.

<sup>8</sup>Ospina, S.M. (2016). Collective leadership and context in public administration: Bridging public leadership research and leadership studies. *Public Administration Review*, 77, 275–287.

<sup>9</sup>Ospina, S., & Foldy, E. (2010). Building bridges from the margins: The work of leadership in social change organisations. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 21, 292–307.

<sup>10</sup>Ferkins, L., Skinner, J., & Swanson, S. (2018). Sport leadership: A new generation of thinking. *Journal of Sport Management*, 32(2), 77–81.

<sup>11</sup>Marchiondo, L. A., Myers, C. G., & Kopelman, S. (2015). The relational nature of leadership identity construction: How and when it influences perceived leadership and decision-making. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 26(5), 892–908.

“As the property of a group, leadership is found in the work of that group, not in specific individuals” (p. 294).<sup>9</sup> In essence, this view widens access to leadership. Figure 1 shows the organic way N2W involved a coming together of the project partners to form the collaborative Project Team in 2017 (NZR, AR, AUT, PAG<sup>12</sup>). It was also in phase one and two, that the 20 strong Pacific Advisory Group was established to guide the project to completion. This contextual work provided a platform for the design of N2W ‘action phase’. From that basis, a greater collective understanding was created, which guided actions to *enhance cultural intelligence in order to develop leadership within the New Zealand Rugby system*.

## Phase Three: Action

The first part of phase three (action), consisted of leadership development workshops and the establishment of a mentoring programme for two distinct cohorts: Pacific Leadership Group (aspiring Pacific leaders), and the Club Leadership Group (club administrators/chairs). The two distinct cohorts were established because the aspiration of N2W was to simultaneously develop respective cultural understandings (i.e., between Western and Pacific approaches to leadership). This occurred as follows:

### 1. Pacific Leadership & Mentoring Programme

**(2018-2019):** A leadership development and mentoring programme for Pacific people with aspirations to contribute to non-playing roles within the New Zealand rugby system. This

involved two workshops, and 13 participants with a matching number of mentors. Many of the mentors were drawn from the Pacific Advisory Group.

### 2. Club Leadership & Mentoring Programme

**(2018-2019):** Aimed to develop understanding of Pacific culture within the New Zealand rugby community. This cultural intelligence and leadership development programme involved current office holders/influencers within rugby. It involved two workshops, and 13 participants with a matching number of mentors.

As Figure 1 shows, in February 2019, the first all-participant talanoa brought together members of the Pacific Advisory Group, the collaborative Project Team, and both cohorts (Pacific and Club) who had, until then, been on parallel but unconnected journeys. This parallel pathway enabled a safe place for deep discussion of issues and the creation of ideas for how to navigate two worlds to strengthen the leadership within the New Zealand rugby system.

This talanoa of 58 people, served as a mid-point review for the programme. Powerful insights were shared by mentees and mentors from both cohorts as well as Pacific Advisory Group members. Individual interviews with selected participants (n=11) also contributed to the insights generated in early 2019. Another feature of the February 2019 talanoa was the presence of senior people from NZR and AR (i.e., Chair,

<sup>12</sup>NZR – New Zealand Rugby; ARU – Auckland Rugby Union; AUT – Auckland University of Technology; PAG – Pacific Advisory Group.



Acting CEO, senior managers). Following this event, the mentoring programme continued as the second part of phase three, the action, which also involved online check-ins for the mentoring pairings.

## Phase Four: Evaluation

The final phase of the action research was the evaluation. This involved a second all-participant talanoa in August 2019 (57 people). Once again, impactful stories were shared, and heard by the senior leadership of NZR and AR (i.e., Chair, CEO, senior managers as invited guests).

This final talanoa was also a celebration of the N2W journey and recognised the contribution of all participants. It has been captured in a video.<sup>13</sup> The voices of the participants have also been captured in a talanoa legacy book.<sup>14</sup> The present research report draws from this book and includes excerpts and direct quotes from the book. Individual interviews in each phase supports the data collection and data generation through the action research process.

## The Limitation of Our Lens

At the commencement of this project, the AUT SPRINZ team had limited experience in Pasifika research. Our expertise is in sport leadership and governance (from a Western perspective). Although we held a strong desire to support and strengthen both leadership within rugby and the Pacific community contribution, we acknowledge the limitations of being Pasifika cultural outsiders. We engaged in the research process with open hearts and minds and we are incredibly grateful for the guidance of our Pasifika colleagues during our own cultural development journey.

We found that the foundations of action research have much in common with Talanoa Research Methodology<sup>15</sup> from which we also drew. Nonetheless, it is important to note that this report is constructed from our interpretation of events; our lens.<sup>16</sup> As noted above, the video<sup>13</sup> and talanoa legacy book<sup>14</sup> have been developed to specifically capture participant (including Pasifika) voices.

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<sup>13</sup>Auckland University of Technology. (2020, February 10) AUT SPRINZ: Navigating Two Worlds Project [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/jEYqkD0y4os>.

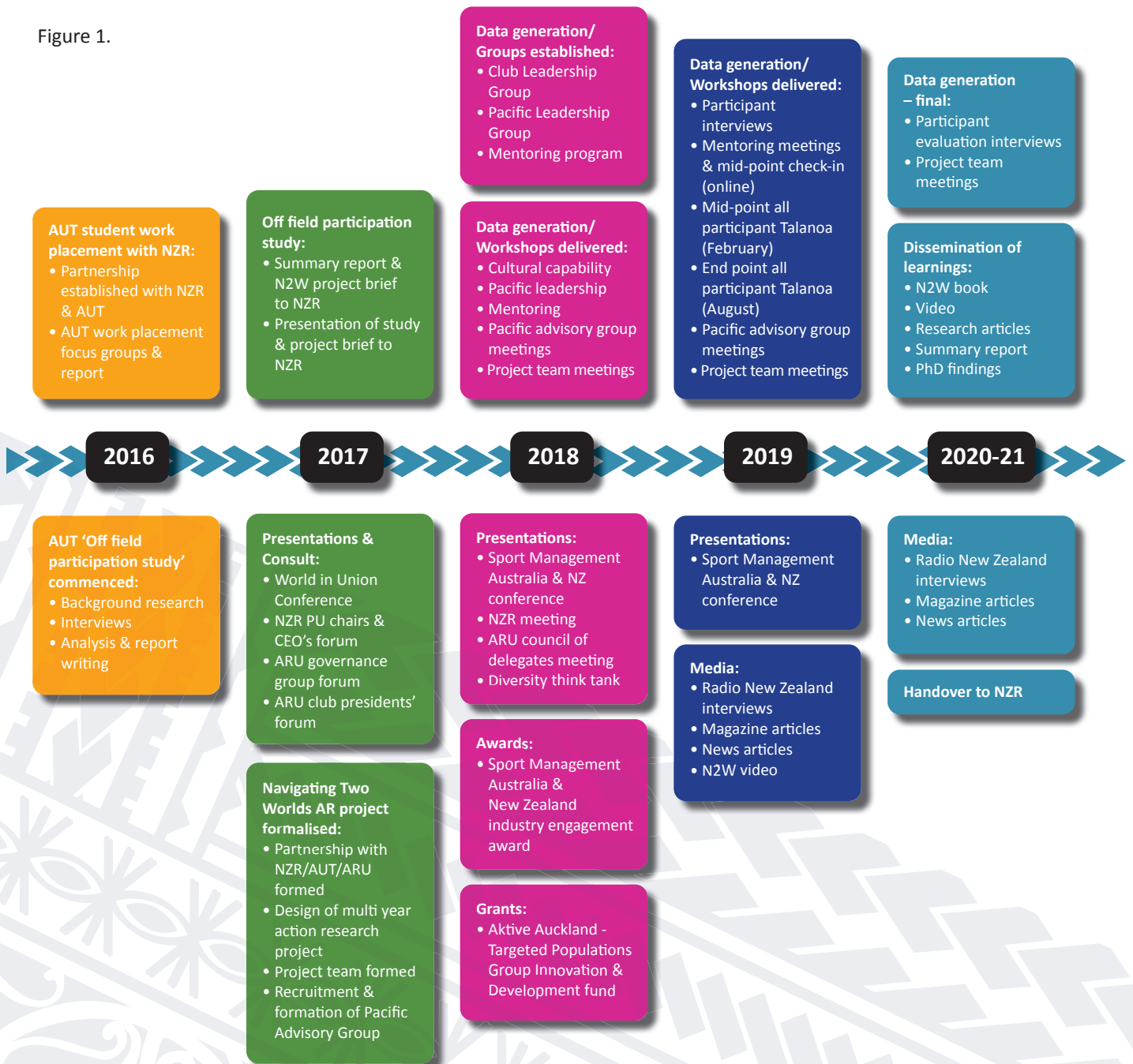
<sup>14</sup>Navigating Two Worlds. (2021). Navigating Two Worlds; Strengthening Leadership in Rugby in New Zealand. Auckland University of Technology.

<sup>15</sup>Vaiotele, T. (2013). Talanoa: Differentiating the talanoa research methodology from phenomenology, narrative, Kaupapa Māori and feminist methodologies. *Te Reo*, 56, 191–212.

<sup>16</sup>Our lens is Lesley Ferkins: <https://www.aut.ac.nz/research/professors-listing/lesley-ferkins>; Gaye Bryham: <https://sprinz.aut.ac.nz/our-people/sport-leadership-and-management-research-group/gaye-bryham>; Katie Dee: <https://sprinz.aut.ac.nz/our-people/sport-leadership-and-management-research-group/katie-dee>

# Navigating Two Worlds Project Timeline

Figure 1.



# Outcomes: Key pillars



## **INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP**

Drawing on Pasifika culture



## **WELCOMING**

Making clubs inviting to whānau



## **UNLEASHING POTENTIAL**

Encouraging people to step forward



## **CONNECTING**

Growing and developing together



## Introducing the Outcomes: Key Pillars

As sport organisations seek to cultivate leadership capability and embrace greater cultural diversity, the ability to navigate multiple cultural worlds has become increasingly important.<sup>17</sup> While our focus was to explore how cultural intelligence can be enhanced to develop leadership within the New Zealand Rugby system, we saw that participants of this project were navigating multiple worlds. This included the current leadership practices prevalent in rugby in New Zealand, accompanied with a greater understanding of their own cultural and social constructs of leadership. This also encompassed a growing appreciation of the leadership perspectives and ways of others.

The talanoa approach of sharing stories, perspectives, challenges and aspirations highlighted some strong, common messages (as did the interviews). This offered insights from our research participants about their lived experiences, influences, challenges and reasons why they contribute to leadership in rugby. Also shared were suggestions and recommendations as to how leadership capability in rugby can be further encouraged and developed.

The following four pillars represent the key

themes conveyed throughout the N2W project drawn from across participant groups. They capture and summarise both the ideas, actions and change that took place during the project, as well as aspirations for the direction of change going forward. Voices of participants are shared to highlight the significance of each of these pillars.<sup>18</sup> These pillars are therefore presented in a way that, together, can be used to underpin the establishment of a future leadership framework focused on cultivating leadership capability within the rugby system.

The proposed development of a rugby leadership framework recognises and embraces Pasifika (and Māori<sup>19</sup>) leadership values and ways, requiring changes to some current euro-centric (Western) institutional practices. The proposed framework also ensures a focus on leadership development (i.e., the collective nature of leadership, rather than leader development as an individual pursuit).

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<sup>17</sup>Cunningham, G. (2019). *Diversity and inclusion in sport organizations*. New York: Routledge.

<sup>18</sup>These direct quotes are excerpts from *Navigating Two Worlds*. (2021). *Navigating Two Worlds; Strengthening Leadership in Rugby in New Zealand*. Auckland University of Technology.

<sup>19</sup>Keung, S. (2018). *Te Taha Hinengaro: Using Talanoa to Facilitate an Interconnected Analysis of Psychosocial Development Shared by Māori and Pasifika Young Men in Rugby League* [Doctoral thesis, Auckland University of Technology]. Tuwhera. <http://hdl.handle.net/10292/11941>.



# **INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP**

**Drawing on  
Pasifika culture**

*“As Pacific people, we are drawn to the team sports ... because for us a village or family or whānau or aiga scenario is how we operate. There is definitely a place for shared leadership...”*

## **Key Pillar: Inclusive Leadership**

The first pillar, **Inclusive Leadership**, was derived from reflection on the dominant Western cultural influences and practices that have prevailed in rugby. It ‘speaks to’ a willingness to create change to embrace Pasifika (and Māori) leadership ways, such as shared leadership and collective leadership.<sup>2</sup> The essence of this pillar was communicated in the workshops by members of both the Pacific Leadership Group and the Club Leadership Group, in the sharing of their leadership challenges and aspirations in rugby. Reflections referred to rugby being a ‘white man’s sport off the field’, Pasifika voices not being heard, Pasifika values not being understood and not knowing how to authentically embrace Pasifika contributions to leadership. Aspirations included a greater understanding of Pasifika culture, recognition of different leadership styles and valuing what Pasifika can bring to leadership in rugby. On behalf of the Pacific Advisory Group, Saveatama Eroni Clarke, a key figure in the project, presented an Engagement Framework referencing

a model of leadership that draws prominently on Pacific culture. This framework was developed from the workshops and talanoas. It was seen that this leadership model would apply to the boardroom, clubroom and playing field. This model included reference to engaging, educating, appreciating Pasifika values and embedding Pasifika perspectives of wellbeing into a model of leadership.

This model and key findings from the workshops and talanoas informed this pillar and is exemplified here:

*“As Pacific people, we are drawn to the team sports ... because for us a village or family or whānau or aiga scenario is how we operate. There is definitely a place for shared leadership...” (p. 13).<sup>4</sup>*

More inclusive leadership would also recognise and encourage informal leadership as noted here:

*“It’s a matter of acknowledging the leaders within, rather than just the leaders up on the stage. We don’t acknowledge the quiet behind the scenes leader enough. We acknowledge the ones who are loud and proud standing at the front” (p. 16).<sup>4</sup>*

Through volunteers, informal leadership contributions are often independent of formal leadership roles or positions; these informal acts of leadership are significant to the survival of community rugby, noted here:



*“We need volunteers to make our clubs welcoming and sustainable. A little of our leadership can make a big difference to the life of the club” (p. 30).<sup>4</sup>*

**Inclusive Leadership** also embraces a focus on *leadership* rather than *leaders*. Leader development is focused on an individual’s ability to fulfil a leadership role whereas “leadership development is the expansion of a collective’s capacity to produce direction, alignment, and commitment through their interactions” (p. 131).<sup>20</sup> In cultivating leadership in rugby in New Zealand, leadership development would therefore need to recognise Pasifika values of family, relationships, collectivism, community, service, faith and spirituality.<sup>2,19</sup> Fundamental to how leadership is perceived and practiced is recognition of these Pasifika values of faith, community and service.<sup>3</sup> Within leadership literature, relationships have long been recognised as the foundation of leadership.<sup>8</sup> Such an approach to leadership was also highly valued by Pasifika N2W participants. Being inquiring of and appreciating diversity allows us to embrace different leadership ways and to build stronger relationships.

As one participant noted, *“Diversity is key. Being accepting no matter what colour your skin is” (p. 15).<sup>4</sup>* A Samoan proverb used many times in N2W which resonates across Pacific cultures, conveys a core value and perspective of leadership as and through service, *“Ole ala i ile pule ole tautua” (“The road to leadership is through service”) (p. 17).<sup>4</sup>*

These insights from the participants point toward the development of a leadership framework that embraces informal, collective, service and relational leadership ways. Such a framework will promote inclusiveness and greater accessibility to leadership throughout the rugby system in New Zealand.

*“Ole ala i ile pule ole tautua.  
The road to leadership is  
through service.”*

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<sup>20</sup>Cullen-Lester, K. L., Maupin, C. K., & Carter, D. R. (2017). Incorporating social networks into leadership development: A conceptual model and evaluation of research and practice. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 28(1), 130–152.



**WELCOMING**

**Making clubs  
inviting to whānau**

*“The ‘club’ is not the buildings or the fields – it’s the people and how welcome they feel”*

## Key Pillar: Welcoming

The future of rugby in New Zealand is more than ever before, dependent on how **welcoming and inclusive** clubs are - not just to the players, but also other members and their wider family or whānau.<sup>21</sup> N2W participants from both the Club and Pacific Leadership Groups, highlighted the importance of making all whānau feel more welcome at the club. Pacific participants emphasised that getting to know a Pacific player means getting to know their whānau as well.

The pillar *Welcoming – making clubs inviting to whānau* was identified from data generated from the focus group workshops, talanoas, the semi-structured interviews and the model presented by the Pacific Advisory Group. The 11 semi-structured interviews involving participants from the Club Leadership Group and the Pacific Leadership Group, identified several common elements that may be contributing factors to developing leadership capability in rugby. One common element related to the importance of **extended family involvement** as a reason why

people become involved in rugby and contributed to leadership. Making clubs more welcoming to whānau is seen as critical. Thus, the source of both current and future leadership contributions will come from how welcome, safe and valued members and their extended families feel.

The foundation principles of the Pacific Advisory Group’s model also highlights the importance and value of families and communities to leadership in rugby as articulated in the following participant statements:

*“The ‘club’ is not the buildings or the fields – it’s the people and how welcome they feel” (p. 22).<sup>4</sup>*


*“Members shouldn’t feel like they have to check their culture at the door” (p. 23).<sup>4</sup>*

*“Nothing about the club reflected that over 50% of our members were Pacific or Māori” (p. 20).<sup>4</sup>*

One initiative from some clubs to support and make their Pacific players and whānau feel more welcome, has been to encourage players to wear their traditional dress at events such as after-match functions. Many participants (both from the Club Leadership Group and Pacific Leadership Group) stated they contributed their leadership

<sup>21</sup>New Zealand Rugby. (2017). Respect and responsibility review. <https://www.nzrugby.co.nz/assets/NZR-RRR-Final-Review-Report.pdf>.





because they believed in the potential of rugby to bring communities together. The more welcome members and their whānau feel, the more likely they are to contribute their leadership.

As with the pillar of Inclusive Leadership, the degree to which members feel welcome is largely dependent upon how **culturally safe** and valued they feel. Informed by N2W, a leadership framework focused on ways for rugby clubs to be welcoming and inviting to whānau (beyond a Western dominance) would provide the building blocks for more diverse leadership contribution in the rugby community.

*“Nothing about the club reflected that over 50% of our members were Pacific or Māori”*



# UNLEASHING POTENTIAL

Encouraging people  
to step forward

*“Being shoulder-tapped helped me have confidence ... to utilise the skills or even be confident to help others lead in these different spaces”*

## **Key Pillar: Unleashing Potential**

One of the key messages from the N2W process (meetings, workshops, interviews, talanoas) was the perception that leadership capability is potentially **abundant** within rugby in New Zealand, and, especially within the Pasifika rugby community. This is an important finding which contrasts a view that because Pacific people are not well represented in leadership positions off-field, there is a lack of rugby leadership capability from within that community. Instead, early in the project, the focus became about **unleashing the potential that already resides**. One way to unleash this capability is to be more active in encouraging and supporting people to step forward and contribute their leadership. In the semi-structured interviews (involving individuals from the Pacific and Club Leadership Group), participants talked about their leadership contributions to rugby. All experienced a number and variety of voluntary roles such as managing/coaching teams, officiating and being on committees. This suggests an informal leadership pathway present in rugby; those who are contributing to leadership, are doing so in multiple

situations. Many started on this pathway because they were players who wanted to give back to the club, and/or they became parents and wanted to give back because their children were playing.

Another common message shared particularly by Pacific Leadership Group participants in the workshops and talanoas, was that early on, **someone believed in them** and in their ability to contribute and make a difference. The impact of this very informal way of encouraging people to contribute to leadership was also emphasised by participants from both the Club and Pacific Leadership Groups within individual interviews. Data generated from the 11 interviews showed that participants had stepped forward to contribute to leadership in rugby because they were shoulder-tapped, and someone conveyed a belief in their potential:

*“Being shoulder-tapped helped me have confidence ... to utilise the skills or even be confident to help others lead in these different spaces” (p. 29).<sup>4</sup>*

*“I was voluntold, not volunteered. The president of the junior club just turned around and said you’ll be on the committee next year eh? ... It was good that he did that, because otherwise I would’ve just backed off and said no ... I tend to shy away .... I’m really grateful that he’s given me that opportunity” (p. 29).<sup>4</sup>*

A message conveyed by Pacific participants in video interviews for the N2W book<sup>4</sup>, was that

Pasifika were comfortable as players because of the team surrounding them – an extension of the Pasifika worldview valuing the collective rather than the individual.<sup>22</sup> However, when thinking about contributing to leadership, there was a sense that you were on your own – a reflection of the more traditional leader-centric practices that prevail in many of our sporting clubs.<sup>4,7</sup> Encouraging a shared, collective approach to leadership<sup>23</sup> could encourage greater involvement in leadership from Pasifika.

*“Pasifika and Māori need to be shoulder-tapped and encouraged to step forward. When we are not on our own, when we have a team and people guiding – that gives us the confidence to contribute” (p. 26).<sup>4</sup>*

The significance of this approach is conveyed in the Samoan proverb used in N2W:

*“O Le tele o sulu e maua ai se fagota, e mama se avega pe a ta amo fa’atasi” (“My strength does not come from me alone, but from many”) (p. 42).<sup>24</sup>*

Evidence from the N2W action research process has led us toward promoting the development of a leadership framework that establishes ways to tap into the strong Pasifika network.

This particular pillar of the framework also promotes new ways to recruit and encourage members to contribute to leadership (in both formal and informal ways) and would assist in unleashing more of the leadership potential in our rugby communities, including Pasifika.

*“O Le tele o sulu e maua ai se fagota, e mama se avega pe a ta amo fa’atasi.  
My strength does not come from me alone, but from many.”*

<sup>22</sup>Anae, M. (2010). Research for better Pacific schooling in New Zealand: Teu le va - a Samoan perspective. MAI Review, 1, 1–24.

<sup>23</sup>Ospina, S., & Foldy, E. (2009). A critical review of race and ethnicity in the leadership literature: Surfacing context, power and the collective dimensions of leadership. The Leadership Quarterly, 20(6), 876–896.

<sup>24</sup>Seiuli, B. (2013). Counselling psychology from a Samoan perspective. New Zealand Journal of Psychology, 42, 42–50.





# CONNECTING

Growing and  
developing together

*“For me that’s been the key learning. It’s being able to understand from both perspectives how we all work together”*

## Key Pillar: Connecting

The N2W action research process created opportunities for all participants to learn and develop their leadership by spending time together, in talanoa, hui, and workshops; sharing stories, perspectives, experiences, challenges and aspirations as noted below:

*“For me that’s been the key learning. It’s being able to understand from both perspectives how we all work together” (p. 37).<sup>4</sup>*

*“... N2W has brought about quite a bit of change specifically around people’s attitudes toward understanding that there are two different perspectives. I’ve seen that grow quite organically” (p. 37).<sup>4</sup>*

Continuing to **provide forums such as talanoa** and hui is something that participants stated they would like to see more of, acknowledging that some clubs have already embraced such gatherings. At the whole-group talanoas, participants conveyed the value of the insights and learnings gained when individuals shared their

stories. For many participants, the stories provided a greater understanding of Pasifika cultural values and leadership ways along with an appreciation of the dominant Western leadership practices prevalent in many of the clubs. Such sharing provided a platform for participants from both the Club and Pacific Leadership Groups to learn and grow – individually and together.

These two cohorts were initially separated via discrete workshops, which offered a **‘safe place’** for the two groups to develop their understanding of the ‘others’ world (Pacific/Western). These initially separate, yet parallel processes, were then combined into the whole group talanoas. In the separated workshops, Pasifika participants conveyed the desire to be mentored and gain knowledge and experience in leadership and governance. They also shared aspirations of having more Pasifika role models to inspire and educate a younger generation wanting to step into leadership. Club Leadership participants shared the desire to understand more about Pasifika cultural values and participation in the off-field club environment.

*“... it’s about connecting people with people”*

The establishment of **mentoring relationships** in the N2W project, created opportunities for participants to form relationships, share, learn and develop together. It built on the already strong Pasifika networks, and intertwined the networks

<sup>22</sup>Anae, M. (2010). Research for better Pacific schooling in New Zealand: Teu le va - a Samoan perspective. MAI Review, 1, 1–24.

<sup>23</sup>Ospina, S., & Foldy, E. (2009). A critical review of race and ethnicity in the leadership literature: Surfacing context, power and the collective dimensions of leadership. The Leadership Quarterly, 20(6), 876–896.

<sup>24</sup>Seiuli, B. (2013). Counselling psychology from a Samoan perspective. New Zealand Journal of Psychology, 42, 42–50.

between the Club Leadership Group and the Pacific Leadership Group. Participants commented on the value of these mentoring relationships in the mid-way review of N2W and again at the end of the project as follows:

*“One of the key things was having a mentor, explaining one-on-one the ways we can engage the Pasifika community better” (p. 34).<sup>4</sup>*

*“We now start meetings with food. Everyone is comfortable, they have something to eat and then start engaging in conversation” (p. 34).<sup>4</sup>*

*“... it’s about connecting people with people” (p. 38).<sup>4</sup>*

At one of the whole group talanoas, participants talked about wanting to see leadership stories being captured and shared with clubs across the country, as one of the ways of educating and encouraging club members to reflect, learn and

develop their leadership and cultural capabilities. As mentioned, the production of the N2W book<sup>4</sup> captures some of the voices and messages shared from this project. A focus on youth leadership and mental health was also reinforced through the Pacific Advisory Group’s framework that was presented at the final talanoa. Along with these two focal areas, was a call to establish greater partnerships with the health and education sectors as part of youth leadership and mental health development in rugby.

A Leadership Framework that recognises the significance of relationships, connections and conversations, along with mentoring initiatives, development forums and partnerships with other key agencies, will contribute to developing the leadership capability that so richly resides in New Zealand’s rugby community.

# Moving Forward

*N2W has been about creating a medium for participants, primarily at the local club level, to come together to better understand each other's organisational and cultural perspectives of leadership and to find ways together, to cultivate greater leadership capability in the wider rugby system.*

Moving forward, N2W presents as being central to NZR and AR's strategic priorities. For example, as outlined in NZR's 2020 strategy<sup>26</sup>, aspects that directly align with the key outcome themes derived from N2W, include:

- Creating a more respectful and inclusive culture;
- More players and more communities participating.

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<sup>26</sup>New Zealand Rugby. (2020). Annual report 2019. <https://www.nzrugby.co.nz/assets/AnnualReport19-WV.pdf>.



The call from N2W for a Leadership Framework (see below) relates directly to NZR's 'Respect and Inclusion' initiative, specifically three of the goals of NZR's Respect and Responsibility Review:<sup>21</sup>

- Goal one; Inclusive – Inclusive Leadership
- Goal Three: Progressive – Developing People
- Goal Five: Respectful – Proactive Engagement

The key themes from N2W specifically align with the partnership initiative between NZR and Aktive (Auckland Sport & Recreation). As part of the outworking of the NZR Wider Auckland Sport of Choice strategy, a working group, focused on club capability, identified that a key purpose was to create “stronger rugby clubs across wider Auckland through building leadership, governance, and administrative capability within the rugby club community” (p. 4).<sup>7</sup> Alongside this goal is AR's key priority area outlined in its Auckland Rugby Priorities to “Be more inclusive to grow the strongest rugby whānau” (p. 7).<sup>27</sup>

## Our Learning

While N2W has begun to impact these areas of strategic priority, there is still much work to be done. If N2W were to continue (or some form thereof), for the purposes of future action we have learnt that:

- The **Pacific Advisory Group** needs to be engaged and empowered early and authentically for its leadership, guidance, connections, and influence within and beyond the Pasifika community.
- A **Project Team** was critical to driving N2W forward at every step. Any future project team

needs to be reflective of the Pasifika community and ensure there is a strong bridge with the Pacific Advisory Group.

- The **two cohorts** (Club and Pacific) which were initially separate but parallel were needed for a safe place for challenging conversations, and to surface aspects of culture and heritage. This was important groundwork that took place for both cultures (Western and Pacific).
- The **bringing together** of the two cohorts (Club and Pacific) with the Pacific Advisory Group, Project Team, and invited guests (NZR, AR influencers) for talanoa (storytelling) were impactful milestones. Here learning about different cultural approaches was shared respectfully.
- The **second talanoa** (August 2019), importantly, was also positioned as a celebration of progress and learning and was directed by the Pacific Advisory Group. Action and ways forward were seeded.
- The **mentoring component** was a key tool to stimulate and embed cultural learning and 'system navigation'.
- The **mentoring check-ins** were critical to maintain momentum. More touchpoints in between the workshops (2018) and talanoa (2019), and across the span of the project (phone, email, social media, virtual hub, workshops) would provide more opportunity for participants to connect with each other and to stay more engaged and committed to the project.
- The N2W **resources and materials** provided important guidance especially for the mentoring component. Future resources need to strongly

<sup>27</sup>Auckland Rugby. (2019). Annual report 2019. <https://www.aucklandrugby.co.nz/asset/downloadasset?id=ccb06827-58b2-4e8d-b24b-1349ca62578a>

reflect Pasifika design and could include audio visual.

- The **combination of cultural capability (intelligence) and leadership development** was an important dual thread of the project. One without the other would have been less impactful.
- The **choice to situate** N2W within the local rugby club setting in Auckland was an inspired choice. The next participants of N2W 2.0 could be PU boards and staff, Super Rugby Club boards and staff, the National board and (senior) staff, as well as rugby clubs in other provinces.
- As with the Auckland context, N2W 2.0 would need to consider **environmental nuances** within the provincial setting that may differ from Auckland.

- The **strong partnership** between NZR, AR, and AUT which grew throughout the project was a critical piece of the project's success.
- The **organic nature** of the project was challenging at times but created an environment of responsiveness as the learnings from the project phases unfolded.
- N2W has created a **database of connections** among people who may not have otherwise been connected. With permission, this database could be utilised to grow a network of influence within the rugby system. We learnt the importance of shoulder tapping and reaching out beyond 'current system' networks.

## Summary Recommendations for NZR

To maintain the momentum generated through N2W, we consider it crucial to continue with the work of embracing Pasifika (and Māori) leadership perspectives and ways. This involves working together to expand prevailing Western leadership

practices. As set out below, the development of a leadership framework is a key next step to achieve this. The four pillars presented in this report are positioned as the basis of this framework. In the Summary Table below, they are linked to three specific summary recommendations for NZR which we put forth to continue the legacy of N2W.

## Summary Table

Focus	Recommendations for NZR
To create inclusive leadership, drawing on Pasifika (and Māori) culture	1) Continue to support and resource the Pacific Advisory Group
To make clubs welcoming to both members and whānau	2) Continue to support and resource the Pasifika Engagement Manager role
To encourage and support people to step forward to contribute their leadership	3) Develop a leadership framework drawing from Pasifika (and Māori) culture and practices which provides the basis for N2W 2.0
To connect, grow and develop people together	

### Recommendation 1: Pacific Advisory Group

As mentioned, a Pacific Advisory Group was established at the commencement of the N2W project. Continued support/resourcing of this group is vital to maintain the momentum of this movement going forward. We recommend that the group is officially acknowledged by NZR as a working group of the organisation and is consulted with regularly regarding NZR strategy and decision making.

### Recommendation 2: Pasifika Engagement Manager

The recent position of a Pasifika Engagement Manager established by NZR is an important step toward ensuring a strong Pasifika voice in strategy processes and to advise on key projects. We recommend this position to continue long term and be established as part of the workforce framework of NZR Rugby, with a specific focus on development of 3) below, a leadership framework.

### **Recommendation 3: Develop a Leadership Framework**

We consider the catalyst to long term, systemic change within rugby in New Zealand is the development of a leadership framework drawing from both Pasifika (and Māori) culture and practices. The four pillars discussed above are designed as the foundation for this framework. It is essential that this framework is developed in collaboration with the Pacific Advisory Group and the New Zealand Māori rugby community. It could provide the basis of N2W version 2.0.

*How can cultural intelligence be enhanced to develop leadership within the New Zealand rugby system?* Cultural intelligence can be enhanced by a willingness to understand our own and other's culture.<sup>23</sup> N2W has demonstrated that a greater understanding of Pasifika cultural approaches can expand prevailing Western perspectives of

leadership. Specifically, approaches to leadership which move from a focus on the individual leader in charge, toward the valuing of informal contributions, placement of relationships at the centre, a greater focus on service-as-leadership, and a collective orientation to leadership are ways that Pasifika influence connects with leadership practices. Leadership seen and enacted in this way may pave the way for more Pasifika people to be present and influential within the system, offering their leadership to strengthen rugby in New Zealand, and, to better serve a growing Pasifika playing population.



# Links to Other Outputs/Resources

## Legacy Book link:

Navigating Two Worlds. (2021). Navigating Two Worlds; Strengthening Leadership in Rugby in New Zealand. Auckland University of Technology

## Videos:

<https://youtu.be/jEYqkD0y4os>

## Website:

<https://sprinz.aut.ac.nz/areas-of-expertise/sport-leadership-and-management/navigating-two-worlds>

## Reports:

<https://openrepository.aut.ac.nz/handle/10292/10818>

## In the media:

Radio interviews:

[https://www.rnz.co.nz/audio/player?audio\\_id=2018728180#](https://www.rnz.co.nz/audio/player?audio_id=2018728180#)

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/ninetoon/audio/2018759099/cultural-inclusivity-on-and-off-the-field>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/ninetoon/audio/2018755870/diversity-of-athletes-not-reflected-in-sports-management>

## Magazine articles:

<https://www.oceaniamedia.co.nz/spkwebsitecontentmanagement>

<https://insight.aut.ac.nz/empowering-pasifika-beyond-the-playing-field>

## News articles:

<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2019/may/21/israel-folau-case-highlights-need-to-reassure-pacific-island-wallabies>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/406151/pasifika-overlooked-in-nz-rugby-leadership-study>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/414218/sport-former-all-black-eroni-clarke-appointed-to-nzr-pasifika-role>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/409882/nz-rugby-to-appoint-first-pasifika-engagement-manager>

<https://www.aucklandrugby.co.nz/newsarticle/86753>

<https://news.aut.ac.nz/news/aut-study-prompt-new-rugby-role>

<https://www.newsroom.co.nz/what-if-work-was-a-place-to-build-our-wellbeing>

## Other resources:

<https://www.kanaloahi.com/>

<https://www.mpp.govt.nz/>

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