

# **GROWING UP TAKATĀPUI:** **Whānau Journeys**

By Elizabeth Kerekere



# Mihi

He mana motuhake  
Heke iho mai i ngā tūpuna  
Heke iho i ngā kaumātua  
Heke iho i ngā pākeke  
Heke iho i ngā rangatahi  
Tae noa mai ki ngā mokopuna  
He koha tēnei hei awhi i a tātou

**Takatāpui** is a traditional Māori term meaning ‘intimate companion of the same sex.’ It has been reclaimed to embrace all Māori who identify with diverse sexes, genders and sexualities such as whakawāhine (trans women), tangata ira tāne (trans men), lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer. These are often grouped under the term ‘Rainbow communities’.

**Being takatāpui** is about *whakapapa* (descent from ancestors with sexual and gender fluidity); *mana* (authority and power to be who we are); *identity* (claiming all of who we are – culture, gender, sexuality and ability); and *inclusion* (unity across all iwi, sexes, genders and sexualities).

**This resource** is the second in a series created to provide support and information for takatāpui rangatahi (youth) and whānau (family) who are struggling to talk to each other. We suggest reading this in conjunction with the print and film resource: *Takatāpui: Part of the Whānau*, the first in the series.

**Growing Up Takatāpui: Whānau Journeys** was written by takatāpui leader Dr Elizabeth Kerekere (Founder/Chair, Tiwhanawhana Trust) in collaboration with takatāpui rangatahi leaders Toni Duder (Communications and Operations Manager, RainbowYOUTH) and Morgan Butler (Support Manager, RainbowYOUTH).

**RainbowYOUTH** (1989) is a charitable organisation dedicated to helping young queer and gender diverse people up to the ages of 27, as well as their wider communities.

**Tiwhanawhana Trust** (2001) was created for takatāpui to “tell our stories, build our communities and leave a legacy” by uplifting our whānau and Rainbow communities.

**Morgan Butler (L)**

*Tainui, Ngāti Tūwharetoa  
Te Rarawa*

**Toni Duder (C)**

*Ngāpuhi*

**Elizabeth Kerekere (R)**

*Ngāti Oneone, Te Aitanga  
a Mahaki, Whānau a Kai  
Rongowhakaata  
Ngāi Tāmanuhiri*



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# Introducing the Takatāpui Rangatahi

Leaders, Activists and Supporters  
who contributed to this project:

**Mere-Ana Nicholson (L)**  
*Tainui, Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Te Rarawa*



**Morgan Butler (R)**  
*Tainui, Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Te Rarawa*



**Arika Brightwell**  
*Ngāti Porou, Tahitian*



**Emilie Rākete**  
*Ngāpuhi*

**Cameron Kapua-Morrell**  
*Ngāti Porou*



**Kassie Hartendorp**  
*Ngāti Raukawa ki Te Tonga*

**Nathaniel Gordon-Stables**  
*Ngāti Kuri*





# Introducing the Whānau

Mums, Dads, Nans, Aunties, Sisters and Cousins  
who contributed to this project:

Cousins Morgan and Mere-Ana with Aunty Ellen Tupaea  
(top left) and Grandmother Nina Turanga (bottom right)  
*Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Tainui and Te Rarawa*



Morgan and Mum Kellie Butler  
*Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Tainui and Te Rarawa*



Nathaniel and Mum  
Angelique Gordon-Stables  
*Ngāti Kuri*



Emilie and Dad Robert Rāketē  
*Ngāpuhi*

Ariki with Dad Matahi Brightwell  
*Ngāti Tūwharetoa*  
and Mum Raipoia Brightwell  
*Tahitian*



Cameron with (L - R) Dad Frank Kapua, Mum Natasha  
Morrell, Grandmother Nan Kapua, Cousin Molly Heremaia  
and Sister Monique Kapua-Morrell  
*Ngāti Porou*



# Whakapapa: Where Did We Come From?

**Taonga Tuku Iho** are the treasures passed down from our tūpuna (ancestors) – from traditional Māori society. From them we inherited te reo, tikanga and whenua (language, culture and land).

**Whānau:** The extended whānau is the basic building block of Māori culture. It connects us to our hapū (sub-tribe), iwi (tribe), marae, whenua (land), wairua (spirituality) and tūpuna (ancestors). It is at the core of our identity as Māori. Whānau survival is ensured through the care of children and young people. This is why the word for child is 'tamariki' which stems from 'tama+ariki' meaning 'little chief.'

"I'm proud of my cultural heritage and my language and everything about being Māori... I just love that we have that connection to Papatūānuku and Ranginui. It's just amazing" – Cameron

"Always remember that your tamariki are the most important thing in the world. Never forget that, no matter what" – Raipoia (Mum)



**Accepting Takatāpui:** Our tūpuna who had fluid genders or sexuality were accepted within their whānau long before Pākehā (Europeans) came to Aotearoa New Zealand. We know this from mōteatea, waiata, karakia and whakairo (traditional chants, songs, incantations and carvings). The term takatāpui is hundreds of years old and has been connected to iwi in Te Arawa and the Wairarapa. Some iwi had no particular terms – takatāpui were just part of the whānau.



"Our people weren't constricted in boxes. We didn't have forms. We didn't have signed contracts. We spoke the word. Our stories are passed down through waiata and karakia" – Ellen (Aunty)

## Balance Between Genders:

Pre-colonisation, many parts of Māori culture were gendered, but the roles of both women and men were valued as essential for survival. The work and leadership of women sat alongside and equal to that of men. Sexual and gender fluidity were accepted as long as the work got done.

"It's important to not just call yourself takatāpui. To be takatāpui is to understand that queerness is not just a Pākehā thing" – Emilie



# Colonisation: A Never Ending Story

**Losing Voices:** The colonisation of Aotearoa in the 1800s by the British had a huge impact on Māori culture and society. Colonial settler society made corporal punishment and child abuse commonplace.

Children and young people were to be “seen and not heard” so they began to lose their voice within the whānau. Their mothers were also losing their voices as Māori women were forced to submit to the British ideal of women in the Victorian era. Ideas of gender became constricted with so-called subservient Māori women and warrior Māori men.

“There were no role models [for me]. It was silence and nothingness like there was no possibility aside from heterosexuality and being cisgender [identify with the gender assigned at birth]”  
– Kassie



**Becoming Invisible:** Missionaries and puritans worked hard to suppress any expression of sexuality or gender fluidity. Takatāpui behaviour was hidden and takatāpui stories were erased, deliberately not translated or recorded. Because of this, these stories became forgotten over time.

“We never really grew up hearing the term [takatāpui]” – Nan Kapua (Nan)

**Becoming Illegal:** As British laws and society became the dominant culture of Aotearoa, it became immoral to be anything other than heterosexual, cisgendered or monogamous. For almost a century it was illegal to be ‘homosexual’.

The beliefs, customs and laws that the British brought to Aotearoa became vehicles to discriminate against takatāpui. Today, this has manifested as homophobia (against same-sex attracted people), transphobia (against people who are transgender, transitioning or gender fluid) and biphobia (against people who are bisexual or pansexual).

“The ideal to me is that each whānau, hapū or iwi grouping have their own stories about takatāpuitanga [takatāpui way of life]. Actually ingrained from a very young age that there is a narrative and a story around what it means if you are a different sexuality or gender [identity] to the norm that is around you”  
– Kassie

“Of course, there were gay people back in the day. If it was possible for us then, it should be possible for us to accept it more now”  
– Cameron





**Forgetting The Past:** While the whānau may still be a strong way of connecting to Māori culture, that culture may no longer accept takatāpui behaviour. For whānau today who live without traditional Māori views and acceptance of gender and sexual fluidity, views about takatāpui in the whānau can take on the worst of colonial and Western culture: shame, silence and religious persecution.

"I think the Māori prejudice against this kind of behaviour [being takatāpui] comes from that they see it as unnatural. We're forgetting to see it as a natural phenomenon"  
– Matahi (Dad)



"My cousin was beaten, belted. He was always cooking, cleaning. I remember my older cousin saying, "get outside and clean the hangi pit". Yet they didn't mind eating his beautiful kai. He could only hold his own for so long. Sadly, my cousin died in his thirties. And I truly believe it was through... dying inside. He was not nourished and he was not nurtured"  
– Ellen (Aunty)



"All of the cultural messages of trans women are real bad so it's difficult to learn anything good about trans women or the idea that you can be a trans woman and not just be a weird joke"  
– Emilie

**For Takatāpui Today:** The negative impact of colonisation continues – especially for tamariki and rangatahi. Discrimination against their gender identity or sexuality starts early, both within the whānau and outside, where they live, learn, work and socialise.

**"Not feeling Māori enough because of whatever reason, it's actually a tool of the coloniser for me to feel that way and to think that way. And it benefits the coloniser"**  
– Kassie

**The Price of Forgetting:** Instead of receiving the strength of whānau support, takatāpui rangatahi can be isolated or made invisible. They can be the butt of jokes or even kicked out of home. This can lead to drug and alcohol addictions, unwanted pregnancies, depression, self-harm and suicide. Disconnection from whānau often leads to disconnection from Māori culture and therefore from Māori and takatāpui identity.

"I know people that have taken the same path as me, but their families have rejected them. And over the course of time, I've seen the decay of their mental state and their body" – Ariki



# Journey to Supportive Whānau: Listening to the Silence

**On One Side:** Often communication begins with what is unsaid. Whānau may have noticed changes in their takatāpui rangatahi but they feel disconnected and do not know what to do about it.

**On The Other Side:** Takatāpui rangatahi may feel anxious, confused and reluctant to disclose how they are feeling to their whānau. They also do not know what to do about it.

"I was saying to Matahi, 'there's something not quite right'. I could sense the interaction was more short, angry and I said, 'what's wrong with you?' 'I'm fine'. So I knew something was brewing"  
– Raipoia (Mum)

"As a parent, you notice when your child is not fully there. You learn to listen and you hear more what is not said. This huge burden he had on his shoulders. I didn't want him to fall into darkness... depression... suicide"  
– Angelique (Mum)

"There was this cloud that followed her, and Mum and I just wanted to make that cloud go away... We knew something was happening and we were worried because you love your babies and you don't want them to be unhappy. You just want to fix it. But we didn't know what it was"  
– Robert (Dad)

"It'd be in those driving moments where Mum'd be like, 'So... how's everything going? Everything's good?' I'm like, 'yeah nah, it's all good. Everything's sweet'. And so to answer those questions, I found quite hard. Because... I didn't know myself"  
– Nathaniel

"One thing that really frustrated me was I remember my mum saying to me when I did come out to her, 'I always knew you were gay'. And I looked at her and I said, 'well why didn't you tell me? Why are you making me go through this?'"  
– Mere-Ana

"It was really destroying me from the inside. I was self-harming quite a lot and my friends were noticing that something was up and I couldn't just do it totally on my own"  
– Kassie

"It was a horrifying journey. I didn't know what I was doing but I thought I needed to talk to someone... I needed help. I didn't want to exist anymore - it was that bad"  
– Ariki





# Journey to Supportive Whānau: Getting Up The Courage

**Facing Our Fears:** It can take a while for takatāpui rangatahi to tell their whānau about their diverse gender or sexuality for fear of a negative reaction. Common feelings takatāpui rangatahi experience include embarrassment, fear, isolation, guilt, depression, anger and hopelessness. Takatāpui experiencing these things are at risk of self-harming and suicide.

## Embarrassment

“Transwomanhood means to be something embarrassing and funny and a little bit silly, goofy and dumb. It’s difficult to let your parents in on something that’s embarrassing” – Emilie

## Fear

“I think the first time coming out was the hardest because it was actually acknowledging out loud that you’re saying those words, you’re making them real” – Cameron

## Isolation

“Some nights I would just go to sleep and... think about all the things that my siblings could do that I couldn’t because of my sexuality. Such as bring a boyfriend home, you know, greet the whānau... just normal Māori stuff” – Cameron



## Guilt

“She would turn to me at random times and say, ‘please don’t be a lesbian, I want grandchildren,’ which made me feel guilty about disappointing her and her plans for me” – Morgan



## Self-harm and Suicide

“I showed [Mum] all my self-harm scars which are not visible and I just said, ‘I’m just letting you know that this is what it did to me on the inside. I’m not blaming anyone but when you are so flippant about my sexuality and my story and my feelings and where I’ve come from... This is not a casual thing. This has actually been a really, really hard thing for me to go through’” – Kassie

## Depression and Anger



“I got to a point where I felt like a volcano... I didn’t know what was going on, but I just felt unhappy and I felt depressed, angry and upset. Very angry. Not knowing who I was in terms of my own identity, I would spend a lot of time playing video games - ‘cause that was my way to escape” – Ariki



# Journey to Supportive Whānau: As The Truth Sets In

**First Reactions:** Finding out your children are takatāpui can be a surprise. You may struggle – even if you want to be supportive. You may not be proud of your first reaction but it is probably one shared by many other parents.

Common feelings for whānau include shock, embarrassment, denial, a justified fear for your child's safety and inner conflict. Grief can stem from the loss of the vision you had for your child's future. You may worry that they will not have children or that you have lost a child when they transition.

## Shock

"I was in shock. I just thought she'd make some guy a beautiful wife. But my love for her was always gonna beat that one"  
– Nina (Nan)



"I never thought it was a gender thing because she never really displayed any clear signs – and that's why it was a 'hit by a train' kind of thing" – Raipoia (Mum)

## Embarrassment and Shame

"There's a little bit of 'what will everyone else think of me and what will they think of our family?'" – Angelique (Mum)

"I was a patched gang member. When he first came out, my first comment was 'no comment.' I was still trying to deal with it. I was a little embarrassed because my peers were all staunch men. I felt like I was hiding my son's secret" – Frank (Dad)



## Denial

"Every time I tell someone, they go, 'you don't look like a lesbian.' I always get upset. What are they supposed to look like?" – Mere-Ana

"We needed to just get it out, lay it all out on the floor and then process it"  
– Nathaniel



"You know there're so many cues you choose to avoid... and then when you make the decision that we have to move forward, they come up and they shine like big diamonds"  
– Angelique



## Fear for Safety

"For me, the big factor was safety. You know? How's he gonna live this life when so many people judge?"  
– Natasha (Mum)



"I didn't react really well and I'll tell you that I didn't. It was my fear of what I'd seen when I was growing up. That was my biggest fear. 'Oh my god, how can I protect her? How can I keep her safe?'" – Kellie (Mum)



"Aunty was very religious. I was scared for [Morgan]. But in my mind, in my heart I'm thinking, 'oh, yay! I'm not the only one!'"  
– Mere-Ana

## Conflict with Core Values

"The warrior culture that I come from says, 'No way! No way!' And I have to balance that emotion that comes up constantly inside me" – Matahi (Dad)

"I went around to some friends who were in the church... I cried and I said 'I don't know what to do' because I was conflicted about the Bible"  
– Kellie (Mum)



## Grief

"People just don't know how to deal with their own personal grief. And sometimes you say things... really horrible things. And then when you look back at them later on... they were just things that you never should have said but that's how you felt at the time" – Angelique (Mum)

"That's the grieving that parents go through. And the behaviour... comes from that feeling. Most of the time people don't really know what to do because you feel like your child has gone, but your child is still there"  
– Raipoia (Mum)



# Journey to Supportive Whānau: Starting the Conversation

**Breaking the Silence:** The sooner takatāpui rangatahi and their whānau start talking to each other, the better. Building good whānau communication requires patience, reflection, trust and love.

## Patience

"It's a personal journey. You can't fast forward"  
– Raipoia (Mum)

"Give parents a bit of space and time to readjust" – Ariki

"Patience is the number one key thing that this process has taught me... Know that it takes time and understanding to get to the point where it's okay... It does get better. But it gets better by you trying"  
– Nathaniel



"When your child comes out as transgender, that's not a journey you prepare for and some people struggle with that. Sometimes you have to cut your family some slack because it takes a while to get your head around it"  
– Robert (Dad)

"Keep just talking about it. Keep opening up. Keep moving forward"  
– Mere-Ana

## Reflection

"You know when you get a jigsaw puzzle and someone goes, 'here you go, try and figure this out.' The puzzle started coming together"  
– Robert (Dad)

"As a mother moving into a very challenging area, I really needed to understand myself. And I think if you're unsure of yourself you cannot help someone close to you"  
– Angelique (Mum)

"Where do we get these principles from to judge? We say in our culture, manaakitanga [generosity], whanaungatanga [connectedness], āwhinatanga [help]. Aroha [Love]. Isn't that the strongest emotion in our culture? Why don't we practice that?"  
– Matahi (Dad)



## Trust and Love

"If your moko [grandchild] comes out and says that she's different or he's different, you love that moko. You love them anyway. Don't judge them"  
– Nina (Nan)

"If you have that love for each other and you're trusting... you'll be able to get through it together"  
– Mere-Ana



# Journey to Supportive Whānau: Meeting in the Middle

**Whānau As A Haven:** Whānau support provides a place from which takatāpui rangatahi can draw strength and resilience to help deal with the challenges they face outside the whānau. As the journey continues, good communication will lead to whānau and takatāpui rangatahi sharing feelings of acceptance and pride.

## Acceptance

"I didn't find out Cam was gay until I went in for surgery for my son's birth... He was crying, you know, hurt. I think my opinion really mattered to him at that moment. And I didn't really care, I accepted it and we had a hug and a kiss"  
– Monique (Sister)



"I shouldn't behave like I'm Māori if I reject someone that I brought to earth. That's totally wrong"  
– Matahi (Dad)

"I'm really lucky that there's so much acceptance and... also there's two of us. If our cousins or moko come out or anything it'll be all good"  
– Morgan

## Pride

"We saw the spark in our baby from him coming out. [Cam] was very closed down, stayed locked up in the room. There was just something missing. And then when he came out, oh it's made him the beautiful baby he is today. I'm so proud of him and of who he has become"  
– Natasha (Mum)



"I'm very proud of [Nathaniel]. Because the fact is that he's taken on such a huge, big challenge. And I think his biggest challenge was really to get that across to me" – Angelique



"This has been a massive learning curve for Emilie's mum and I but I'm really proud of the whole family. They recognise that she is a wonderful human being who is fiercely intelligent, argumentative and always happy to get a free ride home from a party. Nothing's changed" – Robert (Dad)



# Where To From Here? Te Whare Tapa Whā

**The Next Steps:** In a world that discriminates against them, the health and well-being of takatāpui rangatahi is often overlooked, made invisible or directly attacked. Te Whare Tapa Whā is a model based on tikanga (Māori cultural values) and mātauranga (knowledge) that whānau and takatāpui rangatahi can use to navigate these challenges.

Te Whare Tapa Whā is the Māori health model developed by Professor Mason Durie (1984). The model is depicted as a whare (meeting house), which is made up of four taha (sides) representing:

**Taha Tinana**  
physical well-being

**Taha Wairua**  
spirituality and connection to  
all things in the Universe

**Taha Hinengaro**  
psychological and  
intellectual well-being

**Taha Whānau**  
extended family and  
relationships



**Claiming Takatāpui Identity:** One of the first steps towards uplifting the health and well-being of takatāpui rangatahi is the act of claiming takatāpui identity. This helps takatāpui rangatahi recognise that their diverse sexes, gender identities and sexualities are part of what makes them Māori.

“Takatāpui means that first and foremost, I’m Māori. Then I’m everything else but together I am everything I am. I am queer, I am Māori and I am tangata ira tane [a trans man]. And I have this entire community backing me up whenever I use that identity”  
– Nathaniel



“The diversity of Māori who hold this identity is I think really beautiful. For me, it’s a great word, because I don’t have to be specific about how I identify”  
– Morgan



# Taha Wairua: Spirituality & Interconnectedness

**Trusting Our Tūpuna (Ancestors):** Connection to tūpuna is one way that Māori access the spiritual support they need in life. For takatāpui rangatahi and their whānau, calling on those tūpuna helps on the journey.

“My Māoriness is about whakapapa and even if I can't see it really clearly and I don't have faces necessarily to put to those people, I can feel them 100% and they guide me. They lead me and they support me all of the time” – Kassie



“Daily I ask my ancestors, ‘what would you do?’ And the answer always comes back inside of me, ‘you never turn your back on one of your own’. So I have to uphold the principles of my ancestors. I'm a hypocrite if I don't” – Matahi (Dad)

“[Mum] died about 35 years ago. And I kinda thought... what would she do in this situation? She was an awesome and loving person. And she told me, ‘this is what you need to do’. And I did it” – Angelique (Mum)

“I always remember who I am. I always go back to that. And at times of hardship I think about my family. I think about my ancestors and remember where I came from. That gives me strength” – Ariki



**Spiritual Reconnections:** Gender identity and expression, sexual identity and being true to yourself are integral to being takatāpui. It is a part of your wairua. When that is trampled on through discrimination and rejection, the distance between takatāpui rangatahi and their whānau increases. Spiritual reconnection is a whānau responsibility.

“Nothing has really felt right until takatāpui, because to me takatāpui is about whakapapa. It is about connection to a huge history and trajectory of whānau and of amazing people and communities who have always existed” – Kassie



“You understand but the emotional and wairua re-connection takes a while” – Raipoia (Mum)



# Taha Hinengaro: Psychological Well-being

**On The Inside:** Discrimination, isolation and fear of rejection from whānau takes a toll on the mental health of takatāpui rangatahi. It affects their confidence and their ability to be in the world, as well as their outlook on the future. It can lead to high rates of depression, self harm and suicide.

**Right to Belong:** To be Māori means being born into whānau, hapū and iwi. Creating a sense of 'belonging' however, relies on building connections and relationships. Whānau must ensure that takatāpui rangatahi know their inclusion is never in question, that they don't have to leave parts of their identity at the door to belong.

"You've got to make an effort... if you're part of this whānau. If you don't, what are you doing? What are you here for?"  
– Morgan

"Being Māori means... you always belong somewhere no matter where you are or what you do. Everything you do in your life, you will always belong"  
– Nan Kapua (Nan)



**Beyond Acceptance:** True support of takatāpui rangatahi means more than just accepting them as an individual member of your whānau. It extends to the partners they bring home, the friends they find and the Rainbow organisations and activism they may become involved with.

"We don't want more suicides because of non-acceptance. That's just not something that should be accepted in our society. Every child has the right to be accepted and loved for who and what they are"  
– Kellie (Mum)



"As the years have gotten on we've accepted that people are allowed to choose how they want to live"  
– Nan Kapua (Nan)

"It's quite interesting when you see the dynamics of it really, because the extended family have probably accepted it more than the immediate family"  
– Nathaniel



"No one runs down family. Whānau over everything"  
– Molly (Cousin)

# Taha Tinana: Physical Well-being

**On the Outside:** The care of tinana has particular implications for takatāpui rangatahi who may be born into whānau who do not support them or who suffer routine discrimination in other parts of their life.

**“If you know your whānau backs you, that no matter if anything else happens, that your family are going to be there – such a huge protective factor. Such a huge difference to how your life is going to go” – Kassie**

**Having Their Back:** Whānau is the first and most important place of protection all rangatahi have. In wider society, takatāpui rangatahi are likely to face violence and abuse in their lives because of their diverse sexes, genders or sexualities. They need to know their whānau have got their back.

**“[The gang members] didn’t accept gays in general but they accepted [Cam] was gay. They never rubbished him, they never spoke down to him. They all just treated him how they treated him prior to that. But they stopped using homophobic words around me... ‘Cause I’d get upset... There would be consequences”  
– Frank (Dad)**



**In Charge of Your Own Body:** Takatāpui rangatahi with diverse bodies and gender identities often have negative experiences with health services. Takatāpui rangatahi may need to transition from the gender they were assigned at birth. For them, transitioning is an essential part of the journey to align their tinana with their wairua. However, the treatments and surgeries necessary for this are either very costly or not readily available.

Takatāpui rangatahi who are intersex are born with diverse bodies and sex characteristics which may not be 100% male or female. It is likely that they have already experienced unnecessary surgery as an infant. Throughout their lives, takatāpui rangatahi with diverse bodies often suffer trauma and a loss of privacy in their dealings with the medical profession.

**“There’s been no hiding in our family. We roll as one unit and if you don’t like it – ka kite anō!”  
– Ellen (Aunty)**

**“Whānau is about awahi and tautoko” –  
Frank (Dad)**

**Healthcare Advocates:** Whānau must ensure that takatāpui rangatahi receive the competent and affirming healthcare they are entitled to with as much privacy and sensitivity as possible.



**“If you care about Māoritanga [Māori way of life] and you care about Te Ao Māori [the Māori world] and all of our taonga [treasures], then part of that is making sure that takatāpui are safe and nourished and have space to live and grow”  
– Emilie**



# Taha Whānau: Extended Family & Relationships

**Standing in Mana:** Whānau is still the foundation of Māori culture and Māori society. It is key to the survival of takatāpui rangatahi. Whānau support contributes to building up the confidence and resilience of takatāpui rangatahi. Support from immediate whānau and especially kuia kaumātua (elders) helps them to stand in their own mana – to be strong in who they are and to face whatever challenges will come their way.

“I feel like my job as a parent and my role in life is to be able to allow my children to live their truth. Whatever that’s to be” – Robert (Dad)



“You just wish that you could give a child enough confidence that when they walk out that door, their shoulders go back, their head goes up and they own it. And it’s their ownership that they take. Their mana” – Kellie (Mum)

“Parents must realise, you’re not losing face, you’re not losing reputation, you’re not losing mana. You stand by the one you made” – Matahi (Dad)

**Facing the World:** Having broken the ice to tell immediate whānau, takatāpui rangatahi now face telling the extended whānau and everybody else who matters. This is when whānau allies can step up to support them.

“Now that everyone in my life has been told pretty much... my life has been a lot less stressful. A lot less to manage” – Emilie

“[My family] gave me the courage and the strength to be who I am. And to pursue who I believe I am and go out there in the world and not worry what people say [or] care about what people think” – Ariki

“That is the only difference between us aye? Is our sexualities. Nothing else. We’re still all people, we’re still all iwi, we’re still all whānau. Kotahitanga [unity] is how I see it” – Natasha (Mum)

“I was with Cam every step of the way when he told each and every one of our family members” – Monique (Sister)

“I told my Mum first and then I didn’t tell my Dad till a couple of weeks later... but in that time, he had already figured it out so he was hurt” – Mere-Ana



# Moving Forward Together

## It May Not Be Easy

"I learned from the 23rd Psalm [The Lord is my Shepherd] that you had two choices to make in life. You could take the easy road or you could take the high road and face the challenges of life and overcome them. I think we've done that as a whānau"  
– Nina (Nan)



"One Sabbath we were learning the lesson of 'if you have not sinned, cast the first stone.' And I guess my whakaaro [thinking] had to go back to that. Who are you to throw stones, whether it be your moko, your daughter or anyone, without looking at yourself first?"  
– Ellen (Aunty)



"My advice is to take a big, big breath in. You need to ask yourself some very important questions. 'Do I still want to have this connection?' And if I do, we need to find steps to move forward. And if I don't, we need to ask more questions as to why" – Angelique (Mum)

## Let Aroha Be Your Guide

"Children are the most important thing. They are our biggest gift. It wouldn't have mattered what [Morgan] came out as. You know, because it was the love that I felt for her. For parents out there that don't have family that have come out before, it's safer now than it was back then. And don't hide behind your fear... Bottom line is, they're our gift. We need to embrace them and love them regardless of what they are"  
– Kellie (Mum)

"Hang in there. Love will heal all"  
– Raipoia (Mum)

"The journey is different for everybody but I hope that we all end up in the place of acceptance and love because if you do that, it's better for everybody, including your own heart"  
– Robert (Dad)

"Love conquers all I think. If you genuinely love someone, nothing should matter. My love for [Cameron] conquered everything that I was facing. It's unconditional and that's what got me through it" – Frank (Dad)





## Don't Give Up!

"We never walked away or got really angry 'cause that would not have helped. It never entered our mind. It was more like 'how can we adjust?'" – Raipoia (Mum)

"It's really going to be okay because what you'll have is a happy person. Trust in that"  
– Robert (Dad)



"We're on this journey and we're not going to abandon it. Don't abandon who you made. Don't make life miserable for you and your offspring. You know, handle it" – Matahi (Dad)

"You've got to keep pressuring them [to talk]. At the same time I was backing that up to say 'I love you, I care about you.' You have to try and get the answers... but you have to be very clear about how much you love that person and nothing should change"  
– Angelique (Mum)

## Seek More Information

"Having more resources about takatāpui is a great start... I know that when I was trying to explain gender and identity to my Mum or to my eldest cousin, they wouldn't have it. So having things that can inform our whānau so we don't have to. Because sometimes it's not safe" – Morgan

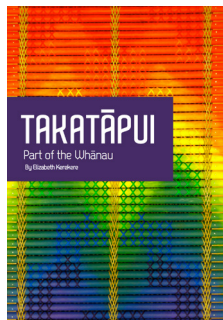


"Embrace that child and make sure you do everything in your power to research, to look at resources" – Kellie (Mum)

"My Mum went out of her way to research and understand exactly who I was and even though that took time, it's gotten to the point where it's amazing" – Nathaniel



# Resources



To learn more about this resource, order copies, listen to whānau interviews, get further information and read part one in the series **Takatāpui: Part of the Whānau**, visit:

**[www.takatāpui.nz](http://www.takatāpui.nz)**

## Other Resources to Check Out:

**[www.mentalhealth.org.nz](http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz)**

*Takatāpui: Part of the Whānau*: on takatāpui well-being  
*Tīhei Mauri Ora: Supporting Whānau through Suicidal Distress*  
Common Ground website - identity section

**[www.ry.org.nz/resources](http://www.ry.org.nz/resources)**

*You, Me, Us: Ko Koe, Ko Au, Ko Tāua, Ko Tātou*  
on healthy relationships  
*Queer & Trans: A Super Simple Comic Guide* for definitions

**[www.tapatoru.org.nz](http://www.tapatoru.org.nz)**

Tātou bi-monthly e-zine promoting positivity and wellness for takatāpui who are trans/gender diverse and their whānau

**[www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)**

*Families Like Mine* multimedia guide for families

# Organisations

## Tiwhanawhana Trust

For takatāpui to “tell our stories, build our community and leave a legacy”

**Email:**  
[tiwhanawhana.com@gmail.com](mailto:tiwhanawhana.com@gmail.com)  
**Website:**  
[www.tiwhanawhana.com](http://www.tiwhanawhana.com)

## RainbowYOUTH

Offers support, peer-groups, a drop-in centre, resources and education for queer and gender diverse youth as well as their friends, whānau and wider communities

**Phone:**  
09 376 4155  
**Email:**  
[info@ry.org.nz](mailto:info@ry.org.nz)  
**Website:**  
[www.ry.org.nz](http://www.ry.org.nz)

## OUTLineNZ

Counselling service for Rainbow communities, friends and families.

**Helpline:**  
0800 OUTLINE (0800 688 5463)  
**Website:**  
[www.outline.org.nz](http://www.outline.org.nz)

## Intersex Trust of Aotearoa New Zealand (ITANZ)

Provides information, education and training for those who work with intersex people and their families.

**Phone:**  
Mani 04 472 7386  
**Email:**  
[mani.mitchell@extra.co.nz](mailto:mani.mitchell@extra.co.nz)  
**Website:**  
[www.ianz.org.nz](http://www.ianz.org.nz)

## Mental Health Foundation

Towards a society where everyone enjoys positive mental health and well-being

**Phone:**  
09 623 4810 or 03 366 6936  
**Email:**  
[info@mentalhealth.org.nz](mailto:info@mentalhealth.org.nz)  
**Website:**  
[www.mentalhealth.org.nz](http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz)

## Lifeline Aotearoa

Free 24/7 Suicide Hotline

**Helpline:**  
0800 543 354





# Elizabeth Kerekere's Top Takatāpui Tips

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Takatāpui embraces all Māori with diverse  
sexes, gender identities, and sexualities

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Being takatāpui is based on whakapapa,  
mana, identity and inclusion

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We all inherit our gender and sexuality from our  
ancestors – it is part of our wairua

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Takatāpui are part of the whānau –  
always have been, always will be

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Whānau don't need to get it,  
they just need to be there

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Discrimination (transphobia, homophobia and  
biphobia) hurts all of our whānau

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Mana Wāhine is the platform for fighting  
discrimination against takatāpui

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Being takatāpui does not foster depression and  
suicide, discrimination does

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Takatāpui identity proudly celebrates our unique  
Māori selves without apology or shame

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The takatāpui movement honors our ancestors,  
respects our elders, works closely with our peers  
and looks after our young people

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Takatāpui well-being rests within whānau,  
friends and Rainbow communities

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Takatāpui allies promote acceptance and  
challenge discrimination wherever it occurs

[www.takatāpui.nz](http://www.takatāpui.nz)

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Te Puni Kōkiri  
REALISING MĀORI POTENTIAL



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