

Editorial

Tēnā koutou katoa. He mihi mahana ki a koutou me ō koutou whānau whānui.

I'm sitting in my home office, typing this editorial after many weeks of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions in Auckland. We're told that keeping us at home helps curb the intrusion of the Delta strain of COVID-19 into our communities, allows our health system to cope as well as prepare for things getting worse, and encourages people to get vaccinated. Of late, we've been promised a new traffic-light system of restrictions if we—people living in Auckland, Waitemata, and Counties-Manukau district health board regions—achieve a 90% fully vaccinated rate. And we're almost there.

During all this, we've heard the persistent dissenting voices of Māori experts about the way the government has rolled out the vaccination programme, set vaccination targets that may leave many Māori and Pacific peoples unvaccinated and therefore at risk of disease and possibly death, and implemented a new COVID control regime that lacks cultural responsiveness. This is at odds with the first COVID-19 lockdown in 2020. During this lockdown we were all finding our way, and this presented communities with a window of opportunity that Māori stepped in to fill—often in collaboration with non-Māori

government and non-governmental agencies in their area. Formal and informal, in-person, on the phone, and over social media support networks sprang into action to keep people's spirits up and food on the tables of those who might otherwise have gone without. The mahi aroha—work undertaken out of a love for the people—shown in 2020 was much celebrated, and I was moved to write about it to join in with this celebration but also to express my concern that the housing crisis was undermining Māori (and no doubt other people's) capacity for mahi aroha (Cram, 2021).

As an evaluator I'm also concerned that the success of the 2020 COVID-19 initiatives that Māori were involved in does not appear to have influenced government decision making about the roll-out of the vaccine or how best to care for those impacted by lockdowns this year. This means that what I expressed in my opening paragraph is tempered by expert views that Māori will potentially be left vulnerable in the race to an “opening day” for Auckland. Even so, calls for the 90% vaccination rate to apply to Māori are offset by conversations that making this a Māori target will result in a backlash, the blaming of Māori for the continuation of a lockdown that Pākehā feel has passed its use-by date. In other words, a racist response to a call for more caring for Māori wellness as an integral part of a Treaty-based public health system.

By the time this volume of the journal goes to press, the Auckland-opening dilemma will probably be in the past and we will be living with the outcomes of the decisions made. Aucklanders may also have discovered that they are the ‘new’ ostracised population group because the rest of the country does not want us to visit, or we may be out blissfully mixing and mingling across the land. Regardless, the memory of yet another Treaty breach will remain with us as we try and figure out how to go forward as a country when we have once again been complicit in the heightened vulnerability of Māori and of

our tuakana, Pacific peoples, when other evidence-informed, protective pathways were there for the choosing.

Turning now to the content of this volume of the journal. We have included here the writing of three of our ANZEA conference keynote speakers. There was such good feedback about each of these speakers when we saw them in-person or joined them virtually that it's wonderful to be able to include them here. The first is Katrina Bledsloe, who was a keynote in 2018 when we were able to gather in-person. She generously shares about her upbringing and family with us so that we can gain some insight into what motivates her as an evaluator. Into her personal story she weaves her analysis of where the field of evaluation has come from and where it's going, encouraging us to consider the importance of community engagement, getting to root causes, design thinking and innovation, and data visualisation and presentation to the future of evaluation.

From our 2020 virtual conference, Robin Lin Miller also generously shares about her family and contrasts the experiences of her European ancestors with those of her enslaved African ancestors. She describes herself as “existing in a middle position of ambiguity and paradox” which has, to my mind, made her well-suited for evaluation work that shines a light on issues of oppression, inequity, and marginalisation of peoples impacted by HIV and AIDS. Her article in this volume is a powerful second chapter to her CREA conference keynote in our 2018 volume.

Glenda Eoyang also joined us virtually as a keynote in 2020 to share with us her insights into wellbeing in our uncertain times. She begins by describing her own upbringing and family, and how “change was an ever-present part of life”. Her interest in complex adaptive systems should probably then not be surprising, along with her assertion of the need for us to be able to navigate this system and find wellbeing. She canvasses the role of tensions and wellbeing

through a series of paired concepts, including stillness and motion, and stretch and fold. Her article is as much a thought piece for us as people as it is for us as evaluators.

We then move to Elena Moretti's research about evaluation capacity building in early learning services. Evaluation capacity building in organisations is intertwined with the accountability concerns as well as a desire for reflective learning among early learning service staff, with Elena finding that the personal disposition needed to sustain evaluative effort flourishes within a workplace improvement culture. This research on evaluation gives us much to think about that is applicable beyond early learning services.

In responding to our call for commentaries about COVID-19, Juha Uitto writes broadly about the hazards our world is facing and the implications of these for evaluation. These hazards exacerbate existing inequities and challenge wildlife, the life-giving properties of the land, and the viability of humanity. His article was such a provocation that responses were sought to it. Dawn Hill Adams, who was featured in the 2018 volume of the journey, writes the first of our three responses with Stuart Barlo and Jo Belasco. They write a bridge-building, gap-spanning narrative to enable non-Indigenous peoples to understand the role of ceremony in healing the land. In the second response, Tero Mustonen describes how a "Fire Event" in the village of Selkie, in North Karelia, Finland provokes a response to arguments drawn from Juha's commentary. In the third response, Mat Walton and Virginia Baker bring their expertise in systems to think about how evaluators understand system change and its implications for responding to the hazards described by Juha. This collection of writing is a reminder of the importance of how we look at hazards, how we understand our world, and how we must seek out opportunities for healing the land on our evaluations as well as our personal lives.

John Njovu then joins us again with a commentary on evaluation in Zambian civil society. He tells a recent history of Zambia that positions civil society as pivotal to decolonisation efforts in Northern Rhodesia (as Zambia was known before its independence). Civil society then became a scene-setter for monitoring and evaluation. John describes present-day challenges for evaluation in Zambia and makes suggestions about how these might be met through strengthening the role of civil society. He also canvasses lessons from Zambia's experience for other civil society in other countries. This is a good follow-on from John's article in last year's journal volume.

Finally, Asela Kalugampitiya provides us with his review of *Institutionalization of Evaluation in Europe*, a 2020 volume edited by Reinhard Stockmann, Wolfgang Meyer and Lena Taube. The chapters in this volume span 16 countries, along with the European Union, with Asela providing insightful commentary as well as advice back to the Evaluation Globe project about this and the next three planned volumes that together will span the globe.

I hope you find this volume thought-provoking for you both personally and professionally, and that you and your loved ones have held on tight to a spirit of hope for 2022.

Mā te wā, he whakatau mai
Time will tell

Fiona Cram, Editor-in-Chief
November 2021

References

- Cram, F. (2021). Mahi Aroha: Māori work in times of trouble and disaster as an expression of a love for the people. *Kōtuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1177083X.2021.1879181>