

Editorial

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa. He mihi mahana ki a koutou me ō koutou whānau whanui.

My warmest greetings to you.

It is with great delight that I write the editorial for this second volume of *Evaluation Matters—He Take Tō Te Aromatawai*. In the early days of many of us thinking about a home-grown Aotearoa New Zealand evaluation journal there was some scepticism about whether evaluators had the time or inclination to write about their work. I'm happy to say that a steady stream of submissions to the journal has dispelled this early cynicism. And as with the 2015 inaugural volume, our evaluation community has stepped up to the task of review and once again offered encouraging and supportive feedback to authors.

This volume brings to you John Gargani's keynote address to the 2015 ANZEA (Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluation Association) conference. As with his address, John's paper initially weaves his personal and family history to give us a sense of both where he's from and where he's coming from in his evaluation work and leadership. This sets the scene for a series of articles in this issue that all touch, in one way or another, upon the theme of being in relationship with others. We know this well in Aotearoa, as there are only two or three degrees of separation between us all. While other societies may struggle to know stakeholders or support a community's advocacy based on

evaluation findings, we live in proximity to one another. Compared to other countries there is just a short distance from our flax roots to those who sit round our board and cabinet tables. If we don't know someone, someone we know will know someone who knows them or one of their relations. For me, the articles in this volume demonstrate that this impacts upon how we think about and practice evaluation.

Many of us will also have had the experience John describes in his keynote address of trying to explain to someone just what we evaluators do for a living. Even the growth in evaluation training opportunities and voluntary organisations for professional evaluation (VOPEs) has not yet made what we do more well known and understood. For John, growing people's understanding of evaluation is also about taking our values and expertise to the business world. As at the time of the 2015 conference, his keynote address challenges us to strengthen our efforts as evaluators so that everyone is better placed to respond to a world marked by, in his words, "growing wealth disparity, political gridlock, and international instability" (p. 16).

In the second article, Carol Mutch and Annie Weir describe their experiences undertaking an evaluation with The Salvation Army in Christchurch in the wake of the 2010/11 Canterbury earthquakes. The Salvation Army wanted an evaluation that would provide them with an account of how they responded to the earthquakes, and how they could ensure that any future response by them in a traumatic context would be appropriate and effective. Carol and Annie reflect on the development and implementation of the evaluation, including what the literature did and did not prepare them for. Perhaps most importantly we learn that such evaluations require time and flexibility as evaluators negotiate emotional, political, and traumatic contextual territory.

Kelsey Deane and Niki Harré encourage novice evaluators to become "thoughtful" practitioners in their article. They provide a

general introduction to evaluation that covers its early beginnings through to the diversity of evaluation methodologies that now abound. From this background they draw upon the features that can inform evaluation methodologies within Aotearoa New Zealand, and how these mix with a local context in which multicultural validity begins with a bicultural, Māori–Pākehā responsiveness. Their thoughtful approach is about evaluators: clearly articulating the values underpinning their work; developing an understanding of methodology and evaluation design so that their evaluation work is credible; gaining an understanding of the context in which they are working; and engaging in ongoing self-reflection. This is illustrated by reflections on their own evaluation practice during a randomised controlled-trial outcome evaluation.

Helen McDonald’s article brings to the journal her insights from developmental evaluation theory and case studies. She encourages evaluators to consider developmental evaluation when situations are complex and unpredictable, and when collaboration with stakeholders is desired. What evaluators should bring to these situations is a deep understanding of the initiative they are evaluating, and the expertise to adapt evaluation methods to suit changing contexts. Of particular interest to readers will be Helen’s thoughtful consideration of what developmental evaluation looks like within Aotearoa New Zealand.

Andrés Santamaria, Melinda Webber, Lorri Santamaria, Lincoln Dam and Sharona Jayavant describe kaupapa Māori theory and critical race theory as “complementary methodological frameworks” (p. 99) that enabled them to evaluate whether Te Ara Hou—The Māori Achievement Collaborations (MACS) were having a positive impact on Māori and non-Māori principals and on school culture. The authors provide insight into education evaluation when a key aim of an intervention is “to provide an education that enhances

what it means to be Māori” (p. 101). Their evaluation highlights the type of school leadership needed to achieve this aim.

Annie Weir and Christa Fouche provide a case study of “Dancing with Data”—a capacity-building programme carried out by a philanthropic trust to improve the evaluation of its grants. The case study provides insight into the receptiveness of non-government organisations (NGOs) to building their ability to undertake internal evaluation activities as well as to engage on a more even footing with external evaluators. As many of us will have seen in other contexts, time, resources, and staff buy-in often prevent the NGOs from engaging in their own evaluation activity following evaluation capacity building. The ongoing support of a philanthropic trust that is interested in evidence may well be key to overcoming such barriers.

In my article with Donna Mertens, we promote a dialogue between indigenous evaluation and the transformative paradigm promoted by Donna. We do this by exploring the nature of a paradigm and the philosophical assumptions that characterise transformative and indigenous ethics (i.e., axiology), how reality is conceived of (i.e., ontology), how the relationship between a knower and what would be known is viewed (i.e., epistemology), and what appropriate approaches are to systematic inquiry (i.e., methodology). A key part of this dialogue is the expansion of social justice and equity agendas to include decolonisation and indigenous sovereignty.

I trust you’ll find things to read and titbits that inspire you in your evaluation work in this volume. I’ve enjoyed reading these articles (and writing one too), and being reminded yet again that evaluation in Aotearoa New Zealand is rather special. As such we have some important things to share about our place and our craft—with one another, and with the world.

Unuhia te rito o te harakeke, kei hea te kōmako e kō?

Ui mai ki ahau, “He aha te mea nui o te ao?”

Māku e kī atu, “He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.”

If you remove the central shoot of the flaxbush, where will the
bellbird find rest?

If you were to ask me, “What is the most important thing in
the world?” I would reply, “It is people, it is people, it is people.”

Fiona Cram, PhD
Editor-in-Chief