



What's The Culture Of My School?



What is culture? Some people associate culture as your heritage that may be European, Samoan etc. but culture doesn't always have that meaning. Culture can be your morals, traditions, values, customs and ritual patterns of practice like in school, work, the house you grew up in and the home you're in now.

Growing up, I was faced with the struggle of having to frequently move schools which made change an essential feature of my schooling life. With my experience being in many schools, I can compare so many differences in culture. For example, having festivals that celebrate the seasons as opposed to a church service with both being compulsory to attend. But one is a celebration and the other is a teaching to help understand the meaning of life. In a mainstream school a bell is rung to indicate a change of lesson whereas at the school I attend now, no bell rings as we're expected to learn self-management. Two different customs showing each school's cultural practices are different from one another.

At your home you may have a tradition of eating a classic roast on Sunday preceded by a drink whereas at work or school you may have takeaways followed by a drink. When we read our calendars or diaries, we have traditions repeated on their assigned days. At home when you're growing up you may have been taught not to swear but when with friends or others, you may swear like a sailor because it feels comfortable and is accepted there while at home it's opposed. So here we see a change in morals and cultural practices.

So culture isn't just what bloodline you come from. It's what happens around you and what rituals, traditions, customs, values and morals you've chosen to internalise wherever you go.

Chyna-Rose Solomon, Hastings

CORE VALUES

- Caring
- Integrity
- Humility
- Respect
- Loving-Kindness
- Forgiveness
- Compassion
- Justice

Trust Projects

- Facilitate** an independent transformative action process with schools building inclusive cultures
- Enable** youth to discover their capacities, and strengths for particular projects & activities
- Encourage** facilitators to support new ventures that challenge and extend the capabilities of youth
- Deliver** cultural services focussing on work themes of concern to youth mentors
- Better** use networking to help volunteers form friendly alliances with one another
- Mentor** troubled youth to prevent them being abused or stereotyped
- Communicate** with youth leaders providing worthwhile activities valued by young people and whanau



Te Whakaritorito News

Being Alert Through Stillness

Often life experience seems like we're shape shifting from one activity to another whether we're working hard, learning or recreating. It's like we feel we're required to keep moving to be productive whether we're accountable to family, friends and work colleagues or whether we're reinventing our own time to keep fit and creative.

The only time we're regularly still is when we're asleep. To be still during working hours by reflecting on experiences or doing absolutely nothing is rare and goes against our routine for habitually being in synch with culture and values that usually surround us. It's almost as if the only time we have a decent chance of being still would be if we went on holiday.

If someone suggests doing nothing for a while can be beneficial, we immediately associate stillness with monks meditating cross-legged in the mountains or a monastery. This is because most of us continually look outside with our two eyes whereas the suggestion to look inside is filled with apprehension and defensiveness.

It may surprise you to know stillness or meditation if practiced regularly even for short periods can have a calming and peaceful consequence for our lives. Backed up scientific research reveals meditation is good for our immune health, memory and emotional well-being. The stillness of meditation isn't like sleeping. Nor can it be mistaken for mere body relaxation or therapy to overcome stress and anxiety. They have their value but meditation is more than those.

To meditate find a suitable place where you won't be interrupted. Turn off your mobile phone. Sit still and upright with your back straight. Put a cushion behind your back if this makes you feel more comfortable. Close your eyes lightly. Sit relaxed but alert. Start by centring your body and mind through five deep in-breaths and out-breaths. Breathe in through the nose deeply into the lower abdomen, hold the breath for a short moment and then breathe out slowly and gently through the mouth. It's important the out-breath is longer than the in-breath. While breathing in this way try to focus only on your breath. Notice how the air enters your nostrils, travels down the body and how your lower abdomen expands. Then focus on the breath travelling up and out of your body through your mouth. You can count the breaths. If you feel the need, do the practice



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Warming Hearts  
Inspiring Minds

News Desk:

Editors:  
Roger McNeill  
Ann Gieskens





## Te Whakaritorito News

longer. Breathe in hold your breath, then breath out gently and slowly. Repeat at least five times.

Now continue by breathing calmly. Watch you're in and out breaths without changing your breathing rhythm in any way. When you notice thoughts or feelings, let them go without identifying with them or judging and gently come back to watching your breathing. If you're thoughts are repetitive and distractive, you can say a mantra to the in breath –“Ham” and to the out breath –“So”. When thoughts or feelings emerge come back to repeating the mantra. The mantra means “I am that” and can be likened to what Jesus said once. “The kingdom of heaven is within you”. But here he meant the higher ‘you’ not the reactive ‘you’. The space between the breaths is the space of that higher Self. By witnessing thoughts or feelings and letting them go you are identifying with your larger Self that’s the witness. This enables you to be more at peace and open to intuition and insights not available to you when you’re hooked on identifying with lesser thoughts and feelings that are constantly chattering away like a monkey.

Another way instead of going straight into stillness is to play some beautiful music you love that enables you to feel calm and relaxed for a start. Immerse yourself in the music for a while, then turn it off and go straight into meditation by watching your breathing and repeating the mantra. Then you’ll find the purpose of meditation is to keep you in that peaceful space of nothingness rather than meditation being the purpose of getting you there.

I remember a time when we used to teach stillness to children at the end of a session where they’d been practicing kapa haka and mau rakau, This was at a point when they were naturally ready to rest after so much activity. For a start, a few children would try and be smart to get approval from their mates by jumping into the stillness but we just ignored this and kept still. Then after a few sessions the children themselves saw the benefits. They’d been so busy jumping here and jumping there with their mates it hadn’t even occurred to them they could look inside for calm support and strength. After they began to feel the benefits, if we made out we’d forgotten to include the stillness time, they’d remind us, “Hey we haven’t had our stillness time”. It’s my belief practicing stillness with children helps them to stay more focussed and on task when they need to be as they’ve let

go many of their habitual distractions through practicing stillness.

Something else to consider is as children many of us were brought up not to share our feelings leaving us overly dependent on our thoughts. We didn’t know it was okay to share feelings and that it wasn’t unmanly to cry. So bottling up feelings left us expressing mainly anger in a crisis which when linked with blame became harmful to others. On the positive side it helped us be self-reliant and introspective.

The good news is we can all change our attitudes and hanits whenever we like. We don’t have to be imprisoned by our habitual mind-sets and upbringing. I saw a video recently where prison inmates were invited to practice meditation in one of the worst prisons in America. They were mostly all on death row. The staff encouraged this because they had to work there every day and it occurred to them the prison was as much their home as that of prison inmates. So why not all try and improve their environment from within. After practicing meditation for a week, one of the inmates convicted for life for murder which he hadn’t committed got to feeling because he was with the perpetrator when the offence happened, his anger was just as risky as the person who’d committed the murder. So he was able to forgive himself and all people responsible for him being wrongly imprisoned in the first place. Everyone could see straight away his attitude and countenance had changed as a result of changes he’d made within himself so he was recommended for parole and discharged back into the community.

My own upbringing especially later in life has led me to appreciate solitude. I’ve reached a space where I feel contented with my own company. I’ve come to accept no-one is perfect including myself and when my friends, colleagues or a child behaves inappropriately, I know it’s not their fault, They’ve just slipped up facing unexpected stress or been burdened with the problems of someone they know close to them. My best stance is to listen caringly and don’t think it’s my role to change them. Instead, give them space and encouragement that enables them to be confident enough to let go feelings without judging themselves or others. Then they can free up energy to focus on higher states such as loving-kindness, compassion, equanimity and wisdom that helps them realise they’re step by step becoming truer to their higher Self.

**Roger McNeill, Community Mentor**



## Te Whakaritorito News

### MENTORING SERVICES SURVEY

We provide learning activities with young people, youth mentors, parents, teachers and volunteers. We’re interested in getting feedback from supporters to find out how we can develop a relationship of mutual interests . You can do this at [www.mentor.kiwi.nz/mentoring](http://www.mentor.kiwi.nz/mentoring) Examples of questions to be answered are as follows.

What topics would you like to see covered in the newsletter?

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We publish the newsletter quarterly, during summer, autumn, winter, spring. Would you like to continue receiving our newsletter?

**Yes/No**

If yes, could you please provide us with your name, phone number and email address?

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We provide group mentoring activities with children and support for young people. Would you be interested in receiving news of shared learning workshop events (Wananga) in Hawkes Bay?

**Yes/No**

Do you work or volunteer with an organisation or club that provides services to children and young people?

**Yes/No**

If you said yes, would any of your colleagues be interested in attending as well?

**Yes/No**

If so what is the name and address of your organisation?

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Would you like to share learning stories based on your youth work experiences in our newsletter? If so please contact the editor, Roger at [info@mentor.kiwi.nz](mailto:info@mentor.kiwi.nz) or call/ text him on 027 2324 700.

**Yes/No**

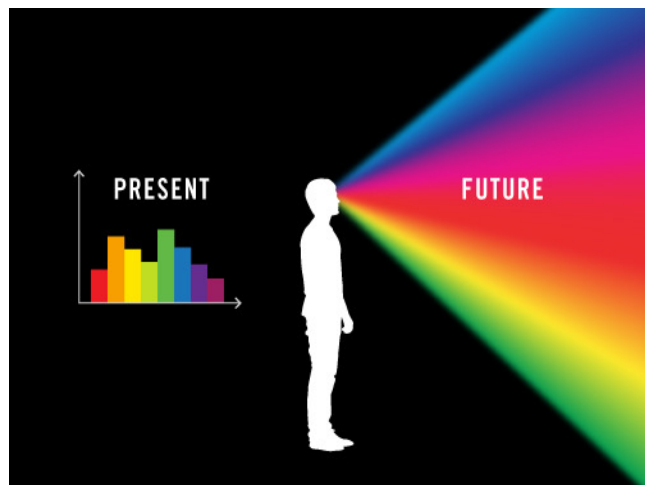
Do you know young people and their whanau who could benefit from mentoring?

**Yes/No**

If so please invite them to contact us at [info@mentor.kiwi.nz](mailto:info@mentor.kiwi.nz)

## Visioning is About Visualisation

Ron Rowe spoke on visioning at the AGM on 24th September. He began by quoting from Tikanga Maori and Biblical traditions. Kingi Tawhiao Potatau Te Wherowhero said, "without foresight or vision the people will be lost". And from Proverbs 29, "Without vision the people perish".



We can widen our horizons in what we do, by having a wide vision and seeing the big picture. Visualize the future we want and create a mission statement by writing it down. We don't go anywhere without vision, so it's important to have one. It needs to be demonstrated and felt by ALL of our senses (big picture) for seeing the way ahead. Having positive expectations packs power. Bring emotion and inspiration into the picture, because logic alone doesn't work. Our visions take hold when we share them. Remember a plan without a vision is not a plan at all. We must connect vision with venture and step up the stairs. Our foundations are goals and objectives. It also pays to keep it simple.

**He rangi ta Matawhaiti, he rangi ta Matawhanui** (The person with a narrow vision sees a narrow horizon, the person with a wide vision sees a wide horizon).

Visualization is so essential in boosting the power of the mind to create the best circumstances for life and for seeing the way ahead.

***Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision is just passing the time. Vision with action can change the world.***

**- Ron Rowe**

***"The development of growth plans should entail more than lip service involvement of young people and family who need to be seen not just as consumers of services but as co-creators of solutions"***

**- Roger McNeill**



Warming Hearts  
Inspiring Minds

### Te Whakaritorito Trust

**We mentor tamariki and Whanau with creative activities that enable their potential to be fulfilled**

### Trustee & Chairperson Vacancies

We're seeking trustees and a new chairperson to work with our whanau team. If you have governance, management, financial or project development skills and a caring, creative attitude, that would be great.

Te Whakaritorito provides free training with positive feedback enabling you to improve your contribution in unique ways. The positions are voluntary and you are required to attend a minimum of 6 hui per year.

**If you're interested in becoming a trustee**

**Ring Roger on (06) 8706448**

**Text him on 027 2324700 Or**

**email your CV to [info@mentor.kiwi.nz](mailto:info@mentor.kiwi.nz)**

## Creating A Safe And Caring School Climate

Understanding why people engage in bullying can be useful as schools explore ways to build a safer and more caring school climate. Understandings about bullying behaviour have changed over time as new research evidence has emerged. It seems now rather than there being one definitive explanation for this behaviour, different or multiple explanations can be meaningful in different contexts. Earlier explanations tended to see bullying as an individual or family "deficit", whereas more recent research shows the role of the wider social environment in shaping and influencing behaviour.

### Effective approaches:

- have staff commitment
- use a whole-school approach
- promote pro-social behaviour along
- take a multifaceted approach that works at different layers in the school culture
- select activities that fit the context and goals of the school
- include universal strategies that build all students' skills and competencies along with targeted strategies for some students
- use programmes that can be adapted to the school
- use strategies and components that have been evaluated and shown to work
- think about what is age and developmentally appropriate
- target younger students
- plan and implement activities thoroughly and well.

### Effective processes:

- build awareness of bullying behaviour
- work collaboratively with the school community, including parents and students
- develop a school-wide policy
- have a continual and intensive focus rather than short bursts
- provide ongoing training for staff
- provide information or training for parents
- monitor changes and make adjustments

### To be effective, a whole-school change process needs to:

- **Consider the bigger picture.** Any approach or intervention to create a safer school environment needs to fit the ethos, values and goals of the school.



- **Undertake a self-review.** A process of self-review led by representatives of stakeholder groups will raise awareness, identify what is known already and assess what other information is needed.

- **Involve all stakeholders in the process.** Getting students, staff and members of the wider school community involved is integral to a whole-school approach as it strengthens links to potential resources, increases the sense of ownership and supports sustainability.
- **Develop a plan of action with multiple components.** Once information has been



gathered, the next step is to develop an action plan which details actions for the year ahead based on what the review has shown about the needs in the school.

- **Monitor change and make adjustments.** Needs assessment as part of self-review will provide some baseline data against which the effectiveness of strategies can be assessed. Other forms of stakeholder feedback could also be collected to assist continual reflection and improvement.

<http://www.nzcer.org.nz/system/files/wellbeing-at-school-booklet.pdf>



## Creating a Caring Classroom Family

## Emotional Awareness Wananga



At our Wananga at the Green Shed we learnt how to find common ground to avoid conflict over an upsetting situation. Be still — don't fill the silence until you can find the right person to speak with. Follow your intuition, because the first thought is often the right one. Behaviour is linked to our thoughts and feelings about a situation, which in turn are coloured by our perception of it. When you identify that there's an issue/problem, communicate with everyone involved. Don't ever make it personal against the other person/people involved. Make sure you know what you are doing and what your plan is. After the situation is resolved, take time to reflect back and ask yourself:

**Why did that happen?**

**How do I change my reaction and my thoughts?**

**How can I prevent the same thing from happening again?**

**What needs to change?**

**Embrace your feelings and accept them!**

Changing the environment brings hope and a sense of achievement. Identifying where your reaction comes from helps too. Allow yourself to express and deal with your feelings. You CAN do your best all the time, with the resources you have at that given moment. Seek support from a mentor or counsellor if you feel the need to do so.

**- Ann Gieskens**



Warming Hearts  
Inspiring Minds

**Te Whakaritorito Trust**  
**PO Box 264 Hastings**  
**Youth Mentors**

We're seeking youth mentors to work in schools. You need experience working with groups of school children in a particular activity such as Kapa Haka, Pasifika, Creative Dance, Self-defence, Maori Visual Arts, Crafts, Music, Organic Vegetable Gardening.

You need to be caring, an active listener, self-motivated and creative with children from different cultural backgrounds. By fostering social interaction, encouraging children to be responsible for their own learning and imparting leadership skills you can become a much needed role model for children wanting to discover their cultural identity and increase self-confidence.

The Trust provides free training with positive feedback enabling you to evaluate your progress in unique ways. These are part-time paid positions on a weekly basis and you need to have a full NZ driver's license.

**If you're interested in youth mentoring**  
**Ring Roger on (06) 8706448**  
**Text him on 027 2324700**  
**Or email your CV to [info@mentor.kiwi.nz](mailto:info@mentor.kiwi.nz)**

## Youth Mentoring Services

Youth mentors offer group activities with an agreed plan for children to work towards. Goals for the children are decided at a hui with mentor, school principal/lead teacher, Community Mentor and Youth Mentor Coach. Activities the Trust offers are Creative Dance, Kapa Haka, Pasifika, Maori Visual Arts, Weaving, Theatre Sports, Therapeutic Arts, Vegetable Gardening and Adventure Training. Te Whakaritorito advertises for mentors to provide alternative activities relevant to the needs of schools and community agencies. Mentors are encouraged to share with school staff who already know the children. An increased knowledge of context and school values helps mentors better support a challenging child, talented student or young person needing more confidence. Mentors are encouraged to attend training Wananga with the team to discuss issues they face when working with children and young people.

