**Dr Mereana Selby – Ōritetanga Learner Success Conference, August 2019**

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Tēnei rā, ā, te mihi nui ki a koutou katoa kua whakakotahi mai nei i tēnei rangi i raro i te kaupapa nui o te angitutanga mō ngā tauira i roto i ō tātou whare wānanga puta noa. Well, greetings to everybody and a big thank you to the TEC [Tertiary Education Commission] for inviting Te Wānanga o Raukawa to this hui, and asking us to speak to you. This is something that we're very pleased to do. And I hope that we can share a very good story with you today.

I have to say that on a personal level, I didn't foresee myself speaking at an ICT conference. I'm not a millennial, and this has been quite a challenge for me to get my head around-- actually, over quite a period of time-- where we're going as an organisation. But I'm really happy to be able to share that with you-- and gee, do I know how to work this machine? I just thought about that. I don't know-- not a millennial. So I'm thinking that the green button means-- right, OK. Very good.

OK, well, I want to start by saying that the last 12 months has been a period of change within my organisation, Te Wānanga o Raukawa. And the change that I refer to is one of a planned and implemented business transformation. Its key driver was one that might have motivated the establishment of our organisation nearly 40 years ago. That is the creation of a tertiary education model that focuses on maximising the potential for a successful student experience. Something that was and still is all too rare for Māori learners.

I'd like to share some of the thinking behind the business transformation that has taken place. The way in which it's been rolled out and the very early impacts that we have seen already as a result of the change. Before I do that though, it's important to set the scene in context within which these changes have taken place. So I'm going to tell you a little bit about our organisation.

Our organisation, Te Wānanga o Raukawa, came about as a result of an iwi or tribal development strategy that focused on the circumstances of three tribes, Te Ati Awa, Ngati Raukawa, and Ngati Toarangatira. A confederation of tribes that held about 150, 160-year history of engaging together in joint ventures. The plan created in the mid-1970s was a response to the desperately poor state that the people of our three tribes were in at that time. I'm referring to all the socioeconomic indicators that we know very well. And you can be assured that our three iwi featured are registered in undesirable ways and with regard to those indicators, health, housing, education, employment, and so on. Just as troubling though, was the dramatic loss of language and cultural capital among us.

Now, we all deal with data-- data, metadata, predictors-- I'm not going to go through the whole list, but we know that we know a lot about data. And actually, we could run the risk these days of drowning in data each day in our organisations such is the accessibility to information at the moment. And one of the challenges for us is to decide what data matters and what doesn't. But there was one piece of critical data in 1975 that was discovered in a not very scientific way by our three iwi-- and it was this.

We found out that within our three iwi, there was no one under the age of 30 that could speak our language. So all other data-- the indicators aside, this one thing that made us sit up and think about that and what was it telling us. And it told us that the steady decline in the state of our people had reached a crisis point.

If you just think about what does that say, it says that none of our children can speak Māori in 1975, and for the most part neither could their parents. And so, we were looking at registering predominantly two generations with absolutely no language capital and then eventually or consequentially, no cultural capital. And so, we were facing language death in the mid-1970s and cultural capital death. And what would that leave us as an iwi as three iwi? Who would leave us with our DNA that was Māori, and that would be all.

Also challenging for us was the comment made at the time, which was that we could become known as the first tribe in Aotearoa to lose its language-- and we didn't want that World Cup. So we realised that with regard to the extent of language loss, we were on what environmentalists describe as a threshold beyond which there would be no clawing back should we not find a solution or do something very quickly, very smartly about it.

And now, we should say that for most of our people-- and this didn’t really register because there were other bigger things to deal with at the time like putting food on the table. But for some of our people, they took a hold of this information and decided to put together a tribal development plan. And so in 1975, a tribal development plan was designed as a 25-year strategic plan. And thinking about strategic plans and how long that we tend to do them for 25 years was pretty ambitious in 1975, but the idea was that we would have a look at what could be achieved in the space of a generation. So that at the turn of the millennium, in the year 2000, our people would look very differently from what they did in 1975. So take a generation-- the span of a generation and see what we can do. And see if we can turn this very dire situation around, reclaim our language, reclaim our culture, and achieve better education, health, employment, outcomes for us-- essentially to revitalise our people. We wanted to be in the year 2000 stronger, fitter and faster and in control of our destinies-- took a 25-year outlook to do that.

There were four principles of that plan. The first was that our people are our wealth-- and this was kind of a new idea because up until then-- it wouldn't surprise you to know that it was an accountant who came up with this principle-- but up until then, people and wealth the idea of commodifying people, those two ideas hadn't come together. But in fact, what this principle told us was that the capacity lay within us. So despite the fact that we were at a very low ebb as iwi, as people, and under stress, it told us look into ourselves, the capacity is there. And we had what it takes. It needed to be nurtured and developed but we would find the answers from within us. And so out of this plan came a target. Out of the first principle of the plan-- the ‘our people are our wealth’ principle-- that we should establish our own centre for higher learning.

In 1981, April, our three iwi declared Te Wānanga o Raukawa was underway. It offered a Bachelor's Degree in Māori and Administration, had no crown recognition, registration, accreditation, funding, but it had an iwi tribal mandate. It had two students enrolled, and made it into the Guinness Book of Records for being the smallest university in the world. But we were on the map, and we were underway.

The purpose of Te Wānanga o Raukawa then, and it hasn't changed, is to maximise our contribution to the survival of Māori as a people. So again, we're not just about wanting Māori to go on but we want Māori to survive as Māori. All that we do must be measured against that statement and as I said it still is today. It is quite relevant to where we've gone in terms of the business transformation.

It's such a key reference point for us. We meet this aim by way a kaupapa framework, 10 inherited values that our kawa or our code. And it is from these values that everything we do in everything we do must arrive. So we say that anything that takes place at Te Wānanga o Raukawa at any given minute of every day, any day has to be an expression of one or a combination of those kaupapa identifiably so, and if not, we must cease and desist.

That way we can be confident that we are operating within a kaupapa Māori framework, and that we are true to what we say we are in terms of our purpose to maximise our contribution to the survival of Māori’s people. It helps us stay on track. We are then compelled to produce graduates who are not just Māori in the DNA but who are Māori and how they think, act, and behave.

Now that's quite a big challenge for us but to that end, we are very prescriptive in our academic model. We tell our students we know what's good for them. I know that doesn't go down very well but it all relates back to that purpose you see in our kaupapa. In order to meet that purpose, we are very prescriptive. And our prescriptiveness in one way is that we require all of our students to study te reo and to complete a series of research papers on iwi and hapu studies, which essentially is about themselves.

Over a three-year undergraduate degree period or a two-year postgraduate degree period, they do quite a lot of research about themselves and they are very strong at the end of that in understanding about themselves. Their hapu, their marae, their literature, their history, their genealogy, and so on. And interestingly, some students come to us early on in their education journey and say, look, I came to train to be a teacher. I came to train to be a social worker, came to train to be an environmentalist, why do I have to do all these papers over here? Come the end of the degree period, they typically say those were the most fulfilling papers of all and without them they wouldn't be the Māori environmentalists. They wouldn't be the Māori teacher. They'd be the teacher that happens to be Māori.

And so, these papers we have held onto. They're also very difficult papers and I say that because those of us that have learned a second or third language, know it's not a walk in the park, and it's a very difficult thing to do to become bilingual. And we require all of our students to be that. It's extremely challenging for them. It also impacts on our completion rates-- Kim. And we battled with that. We battled with that.

Because again, in order to achieve our goal, we want them to be linguistically competent within their own language. And doing that is difficult and it sometimes lengthens the study period. But we do take on board that it's our problem, not theirs. And we need to do better with it. But these two curriculum areas are non-negotiable, and they do ensure that the point of difference that we seek is achieved. In that what we would say, our students are able to contribute positively to the Māori nation and to the mātauranga Māori continuum and that they are moving that as well.

Oh, see, now I'm going too slow. Those were the 10 kaupapa. And most of you will be familiar with those kaupapa too. So let's go to the next one.

And here we are, nearly 40 years old. And you can see that in 1981, there were our two students. We could register 100 percent male. Student demographic-- we could say that our average age was about 20 probably 19. And that we were offering one program. Now in 2019, here we are with 5,000 students. This is Ōtaki, Ōtaki has got a population of 6,000 people. And so, we've got 5,000 people enrolling in an organisation in Ōtaki. It's a great information, really of our model. But it certainly puts a-- thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

It puts a lot of burden-- I shouldn't say, burden-- I mean it in a good way-- on us to do the right thing by those people. We've heard a lot about that this morning from Tim [Renick] and we certainly feel that responsibility too. And we have got a lot to answer for over the years, and some of the things we haven't done-- well, some real doozies. But we're still seeking to get better and I see a stronger, fitter and faster-- sounds like a netball team. It's not. It's Te Wānanga o Raukawa.

So we now offer these things. 18 undergraduate degrees and a number of post graduate degrees. Interestingly, we've got an average age of 39. Now that completely changes things because we're not talking about 18 to 25-year-old school-leaver, high-flyer, carrying a bursary. We've got the mature learner who's trying to juggle children, sometimes grandchildren, sometimes older parents, sometimes one-income family, you know, teenagers? What teenagers do to parents, things like that. And at a relatively low-paying job, and some reason, they still want to come to Te Wānanga o Raukawa because they see in us perhaps an opportunity not for themselves but to create a better life for the next-- it's intergenerational thinking.

Our students are different. Our students are not typically individually thinking. They're thinking about the collective that they're responsible for, the dependencies in not wanting the difficulties or the tensions or stresses that they maybe have grown up and carry on. So 39, 40 years, that’s been consistent over the years-- except for year one on our profile, and we have to respond to that profile. We can't make them what they're not. So we've had to think about what is the model that will enable them.

The other thing, 75 percent woman, we've heard about 60 percent I think for Georgia State, 75 percent it says it speaks to us about the need for us to find better ways to engage our men. We've tried different strategies. We still can't get the percentage of male learners up, and I think that's again probably related to the average age being 39, 40. It's a big call, I guess, for men to come out of employment, to try and study. However, we are very well aware of that.

Many of our students come as first-timers even though they're mature students in the tertiary space. And they come with lots of history and failed-- a bit like people trying to give up smoking-- failed efforts over the years, which has diminished confidence. And we have to deal with all of that. So the assumptions on which we build our model and on which we build our student support are really quite different to many other more-- we're very happy with the people that come to us, but there are challenges-- challenges. They're juggling a raft of personal responsibilities. And we have to understand that if we're true to ourselves and true to our kaupapa. We have to understand that. And we have to change the mould to fit them not the other way around.

Their education journey is big picture, and they are very much driven, but yet, they also needs a lot of assistance, which we find typically. Actually, the motivation is there, that's one thing-- we don't have to spend a lot of time motivating our students. It's really about the building blocks, about the tools that they need. And knowing when to intervene with some extra assistance when required.

So our academic model, including the way in which we support students on their journey needs to be informed by the dynamics that they bring. And we need to be agile enough to respond to them. That's a challenge for us. Our purpose in our kaupapa and our values tell us this.

An example. We regard an enrolment - and this is, you know, we can talk about what's your worldview and how do you see things. We have always regarded an enrolment as an act of mana-enhancement towards our organisation. Why? Because students have got options these days. They can go to all sorts of places. Why on earth would they come to Ōtaki? And somebody reckons that Porirua was the centre of the Earth. We love-- Ōtaki—you know.

I'm going to say that when someone chooses us that is definitely, in our view, a gesture of mana-enhancement towards our organisation. What do you do when your mana has been enhanced? You reciprocate. So our staff are all aware of this issue for us. When someone expresses mana, enhances our mana, then we've got to do the very best we came to reciprocate, and that means to treat them with generosity, with energy, with belief, and with as many ways in which we can help them on their journey as we can. And it's not to leave them out hanging out to dry on their journey.

We assume that they come to Te Wānanga o Raukawa because they've got dreams and we've heard someone else refer to dreams. They have dreams. They have aspirations. And they think that we can help them fulfil that, otherwise why would they come? So we have to show every student that enrols thinks that their dreams can be achieved at Te Wānanga o Raukawa. It's a huge [INAUDIBLE] to us, and we've really got to respond positively to it. So it's on that premise that our work and student support is shaped.

I wanted to just refer to the changing demographic that we've seen or the change in demographic that we've seen over time at Te Wānanga o Raukawa. So, in the early years, nearly all of our students were full-timers and we worked off the basis that was the case. Now that has completely flipped and it's changing each year. And so we're up to now about 90 percent of our students are part-timers-- it's why we've got so many students, the 5,000 aren’t 5,000 full-time. But they are 5,000 people we've got to look after. And so that changing demographic we've had to get our heads around. What we're finding is that, as things change and that in our environment, government and policy change as economic environment, global trends, social unemployment trends, and so on, so does the way in which we have to look after our students.

This shift in full-time versus part-time students has, in the fact, that it's really been impacted upon because of employment, so someone who's maturer and has got a job wants to keep their job, does not want to risk giving it up to go and study. So the study as your work, study as you earn model we have here to try and get our head around and say, how can we best facilitate that?

So with nearly 90 percent of our students part-time, I think it's 92, someone told me this morning. That also mirrors the percentage of employed students that we have. It's not surprising as I said given our demographic. But we have had to rethink the academic model so that employed people with families and responsibilities came still pursue study pathways and can still achieve success. Again, they don't have to fit into our mould we have to fit into theirs.

Now this changing demographic led to a complete revamp of our academic model. And we're an organisation -- we're probably like most organisations I'd venture to say, where you know, change doesn't work for everybody. And there's a time when you just have to say it's going to be like this. When you stop the discussion and say, OK, I've heard it all. We're going to be like this. And this is what we did.

About five years ago, we said we have to change our academic model because it's not working for our people. So we started to introduce the blended learning requirement for every single whare or faculty that they had to bring a blended learning element. And we have incrementally increased that up until last year, where we introduced this new academic model, where all of the papers had to be delivered at six week packages. So we reduce the amount of face-to-face and yet we've increased it, if you know what I mean. We've reduced the physical face to face, but we've actually increased the online engagement with our students.

And I should add that many-- I don't know if it was many, but some of academic staff were a bit suspicious when we moved to this academic model, the blended learning model, because they believed that this was some kind of smokescreen for trying to cut staff kind of thing as people do. And what we've found is that they're busier because they have so much more to do in the online environment and often it's on an individual basis. So they're very busy in communicating synchronously or asynchronously online with their students. And that's created more work for them, which is the flip of what they thought it was going to be.

So this allows flexibility of learning to happen and our students own their space and time. Interestingly-- and it might be largely a Māori response-- a lot of our students really want to hang on to the real face-to-face. They still want to come to Te Wānanga o Raukawa. They want to have our residential seminars. They want to see and engage on a one-on-one with teachers and to feel and smell and touch the place. And so we retained that and think that's really important to our model as well. But we have increased-- and not just increased the online engagement-- but the quality has really improved as well. We set ourselves some benchmarks. We have a team that vets everything. We have a quality assurance team, and it has taken things to another level.

Now this change, while a good response to the student circumstances, highlighted some capacity issues within our organisation. Infrastructure, business systems, staff competencies to carry off this model. That's very good to say, OK, we're doing it all like this, but our organisation wasn't set up adequately to do that. So the realisation hit that a complete overhaul was needed of our systems, and a substantial training package for our staff-- all of us even baby boomer had to be put in place because we all needed to move together. We couldn't take passengers and we couldn't take spectators. So it needed to be an all of organisational shift and that's quite challenging as well.

We took a look at things from a student's success view. So we said what does it look like for the student? And what does that journey look like? And we were shocked, and I've heard again, refer back to Tim, him talk about them doing similar things like this-- we were shocked when some of the things that we required the students to do. Some of the things that could easily flip a student out or make them disappear or put them off over something so minor. And there's similar things to that which Tim talked of, things like, birth certificates, you know? That plagued us for years.

And saying that a mature learner actually has difficulty finding their birth certificate-- anyway, you get the idea on that. But we learned a lot about ourselves. So we learned more about ourselves than we did about the learners and what we learned bothered us. We found that we had challenges, and one was the holistic view of the student. Seeing the student in all of their circumstances and understanding it, and making ourselves agile enough to respond to it.

Look, our content management system-- I feel like I'm telling tales on Te Wānanga o Raukawa. There are board members here today. But look, our content management was just all over the place and we kind of knew that, but we didn't confront it as we might have. We had databases or-- so we didn't have truth happening. We had all sorts of interpretations of and people insisting that theirs was the truth.

So we had records, operational documents, course-related material, and all sorts of different repositories around the place. And we needed to deal with it. We need to get real about that. We needed to reduce the handling for the students, so a poor student that came to Te Wānanga o Raukawa got handled and processed and over handled and reprocessed. And sent here and sent there. And we needed to automate our processes much better and it's extraordinary once you can get to that. You look back and go all those poor students.

And we found that much of the learning experience could be enhanced through the use of a digital classroom. We had siloism-- was alive and well at Te Wānanga o Raukawa and we had to deal to that. It created confusion for students. And we all need to be on the same team even those on the bench, they're all in the same team. And so we need to get rid of that siloism. And we knew that technology could offer some solutions but we had to get the right solution, the right processes. And so we got on with the project.

So what we had done was we've revamped the academic model. We then had to come in behind that academic model with the systems to be able to cope with it. And to do that, we engaged an IT company to come and do a feasibility study. And opened all doors-- no secrets. Students could talk, staff could talk, anybody could talk, and they were able to get into all of our information databases and come back with us with an assessment of what we looked like. And no surprises really, we weren't surprised because we kind of knew. In the end to say, this is what we would propose as a way forward.

They proposed a business transformation project that was about nine months in the making and it really has transformed our organisation infrastructurally, to be able to manage the academic model that I showed you before. It's a simple solution with little or no customisation. So they didn't do a customised package for us. But they did use software that's easily available and adapted it to our place, which means that as changes happen that software is going to be updated. If we had a customised solution, then five minutes after it's been delivered, a bit like a new car, and it goes out to date what are we going to do? So there was that.

We needed easy-to-use. We needed cost-effective. And we needed something that could support change, and that we could improve and enhance. We needed a bridge between our administration, our finance, and our teaching platforms. And we're not there, that's where we're moving towards now.

We wanted our electronic system to be more agile, innovative, and responsive to the changing education environment. We needed a simple source of information. So we call it the one-stop-shop. I can't remember what Tim [Renick] called it, but the one-stop-shop where that information sits, and there is your source of truth. And anything else around the campus, don't care. This is the source of truth, the one-stop-shop. So it's been very good for us and, gosh, it's just simplified things. Got rid of all those information banks. And we have now got visibility-- this is the most important thing-- and again, we've got visibility over student's journey. But we now can track a student's journey every step of the way. We know where the pressure points or pain points are, and we now are developing ways of intervening because we can see it, and so can the students. There are student portals as well and they can see exactly where they are at.

The visibility has been a major breakthrough, I have to say, in our organisation that we now have this very good, simple straightforward way of picking up where a student's been, where they are, and where they want to get to. Lots again of alignments I guess for some of the things that Tim talked about.

I know that I'm running out of time, aren't I? So I'm going to just-- I don't want to go too much further than just use up all your time. But I want to say that one of the biggest challenges-- and we were told this by the IT company who came and facilitated this change for us-- was moving our people. Because of what I said before, you've got all the dynamics in an organisation when changes taking place. You've got people to embrace change and you've got people who no matter how good change looks, they want to stay with what they've got.

And so, we put into place quite an extensive staff training package. We provided repeated, repeated, repeated trainings to use our new systems, and it didn't even run out-- it wasn't like if you haven't got it after three times that's it. We just kept saying, you can keep going back to trainings and you can keep going back to trainings. We had regular updates for all staff of where we were at it. We had a pop-up shop put on in our library building so that any staff member or student actually could go on at any time and seek any information they needed about how we'd made this change.

But I'm going to say one of the important things was that when we knew that everybody had got to a particular point across a lines-- so a number of lines as we've been moving through this-- got across a line, we took the line away so they couldn't get back. Because we were seeing people reverting and it was frustrating because you were two steps forward and three back kind of situation. So we took the line away, took away their ability to get back to where they used to be. And that's been pretty critical. It hasn't it hasn't been easy but I can say that there's a whole new language at Te Wānanga o Raukawa now around our new technology environment. We think we're really cool. We can use words that we didn’t use to even know the meaning of and we just stood amongst each other kind of thing--and oh, yeah, that's cool.

And this change management has been a capacity builder within our organisation. So people who thought that they were being dragged through a process have actually increased their capacity, their mātauranga. They're stronger, they're fitter, they're faster, and they like it. And so it's had a really big impact on our organisation. I'm not going to get into the detail of it because I don't have time to do that.

We did a bit of a metaphor I suppose for how this is going to roll out for us so that our staff would understand. The clouds sitting above-- I know you all know that-- but those are the Tararua Mountains that we look at and see in Ōtaki. And down here, we've got the Ōtaki River, where the streams of water coming into, and then all of that good pure water that comes down from the Tararua Mountains. That's all being fed back into the environment and to us as people. So that was the analogy that we used with our staff, that they're all a part of this change.

And we also talked about the change management thing. What we did was use these avatars. So we described different personalities of people. And see that each of the staff could identify themselves with one of these personalities. I'm going to have to tell you who I was because you're not going to pick it. I'm Kuikui. And that's the person who's not the digital native, who is absolutely terrified of what the hell's going on in this organiation and I think I'm going to have to resign because I'm not going to get there. And then we had the digital natives-- the young ones, who they would learn a new thing and then they became the trainers. So within each of the academic faculty, we had digital natives, we had Kuikuis, we had these different avatars, the different descriptions of people or where you're at in the journey. And they became the sort of the manifestation of this change that was going on. So people could find their place and feel OK about it. And it was a bit of fun.

So where are we at, and I've kind of said these things. But what's been the point of this? Well, I think it's to see that importantly, having the visibility over the students that we've got now is just absolutely fantastic. It's really changed our world. We don't have to guess anymore. We know. And so do the students know where they're at.

We've got control of all of our information finally. And we've stopped people doing their own thing. Our silos have just kind of just dissipated and they're not happening anymore because there is a one-stop-shop and everybody operates within that.

We've got better standardised and streamline processes so people can't create their own processes anymore. We're all following the same rules and it's really helpful for the students.

We're finding more and more ways to express manaakitanga to our students. It's so important we have to treat our students well and we have to treat them generously. We're finding more ways to do that.

And as I said, we're stronger, fitter, and faster regardless of whether we're on the team or coming off the bench. We feel more ready. We feel more work-ready. We've got so much more to learn. As I see this project, in terms of the infrastructural building-- only concluded in March and that was sort of the phase one and now we're into the implementation with earnest has changed our world. And we're much happier now that our students get a better deal from us from us. And that's what it must be about.

I should say that our completion-- I should have said too that-- we have about 80 percent plus of our students are Māori. That's a dramatic drop from what it used to be. It used to be in the 90 percentages for years and years and years but it's dropped more recently with our online offerings. And with the huge interest that there is nationally in te reo that has impacted on our… So we have never been able to extrapolate Māori out, so to speak, to see what those results are. It's just been the organisation that has been Māori results for ever.

And I'm going to say on that point is that when I hear about organisations that have less than 50 percent completion for Māori-- we've never been able to hide our performance because our organisation has been nearly all Māori. We've never been able to hide it in a bigger mass and neither had we wanted to. And I'm really pleased that people are being held to more account about this. We've got to do better for our people. And Te Wānanga o Raukawa as I see has got a long way to go, but we have taken a new turn in our journey and we're enjoying what we're doing and we look forward to the challenges that are ahead.

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa.

[MUSIC PLAYING]