John Robson Memorial Lecture Unity Day April 23rd 2026
Napier Pilot City Trust

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He manako te koura i kore ai
Wishing for crayfish brings you none.

Morena koutou katoa – ko te mihi tuatahi ki te mana whenua o tenei rohe – e mihi ana ki a koutou. Rau rangatira ma, nga hau e wha kua tae mai nei mo tenei kaupapa – nga mihi nui, nga mihi mahana ki a koutou.

Ko wai au? He uri tenei no Ngapuhi, Ngati Porou me Ngati Kahungungu. Ki te taha o toku mama, no Hokianga ahau. Ki te taha o toku papa, no Te Tai Rawhiti ahau – ko Hikurangi te maunga, ko Waiapu te awa, ko Ngati Porou me Ngati Kahungungu nga iwi, ko Ngati Rangi me Nga Rakaipaaka nga hapu – e tu ana ahau, ko Khylee Quince toku ingoa.

Good morning and happy Unity Day greetings to you all. To the people of this rohe, my relations of Ngati Kahungungu I extend my warmest greetings. To the people of the four winds who have gathered here today for this wonderful kaupapa, I greet you also. I also acknowledge the Pilot City Trust, in particular the life and work of your late poutokomanawa Pat McGill – okioki atu ra e te rangatira.

My name is Khylee Quince, and I am a Professor and the Dean of Law at AUT in Tamaki Makaurau. I am also a mama of three, an eldest daughter, an avid hokohoko/thrift shopper, crafter, sci fi fan and a long suffering fan of underperforming sports teams, inlcuding the Warriors and Liverpool Football Club.

Thank you so much for the invitation to come and speak with you this morning – this is a great privilege to come in the shadow of a lineup of some of the great thought leaders of our nation, and to speak to a kaupapa bearing the name of Dr John Robson.

I come to this kaupapa as a teacher and researcher of criminal law and justice, former member of the NZ Parole Board, consultant with Corrections and Justice but most importantly as a mokpuna, niece, cousin and aunty of many whanau members who have been terribly impacted by the experience of incarceration. And what a time to be thinking about alternatives to prisons – as we reach an all time high of prison numbers, ticking over 11,000 in January of this year, and an imprisonment rate more than double that of Canada's and significantly higher than Australia's. Our impulse to incarcerate is stronger than ever, in the face of strong evidence of its ineffectiveness in deterring reoffending, and in providing pathways to rehabilitation. The evidence has always been clear that you cannot imprison your way out of social issues – whether that be underinvestment in health, housing, education or employment opportunities. And we know that Maori bear the brunt of this – these are not phenomena experienced evenly across our society. Our appetite for punishment comes at huge opportunity cost for investment elsewhere – in 2024 the budget tagged $803 million over five years for managing the Corrections population, with a further $492 million for five years from the 2025 budget. All Treaty settlements with hapu and iwi combined amounts to $2.7 billion – so the Crown is clearly more committed to providing for cages for our people than our flourishing. $2.7 billion is also just over five weeks of the cost of maintaining our national superannuation scheme.

I don't need to walk through the nonsense that is carceral logic – the justifications for the continued existence of carceral institutions in the face of overwhelming evidence of ineffectiveness. Maori have resisted prisons since the arrival of the colonial settler state – as was evident in the 1843 case of Te Wahu, who on receiving a two month sentence of imprisonment for theft, requested that he rather be put to death by a tomohawk than languish in a cell. Similarly, the refusal of Ngati Toa chiefs Te Rauparaha and Te Rangihaeata to submit to a Crown warrant for their arrest was met with their statement they would rather be dead than imprisoned. Our tupuna did not have prisons and could not understand how you could remove people from community and then return them without addressing the relationships their harm has disrupted.

For decades our experience of justice has been inquitable and this affects everyone in the community, including our children. My partner David teaches in Mangere South Auckland, in a primary school of 600 Maori and Pacifika children. A while ago he taught a unit on essentially civics, inlcuding justice, and he gave the kids a short quiz at the end of the week. One of the questions was "what do you call the group of 12 people in a courtroom who decide whether a person is innocent or guilty?" A Maori boy shoots his hand up to answer. Pakeha.

Now that answer is equal parts funny and horrifying, because that is his 10 year old view of the justice system based on the experience of his community. I drive past Mt Eden Prison every day of the week, to and from work. It is in the middle of my city, and I think about the people in that place everytime I pass them. Many fellow commuters would not realise what those buildings are, but there wouldn't be a Maori in Auckland that does not.

I don't want to spend all of my time talking about the negative stuff, and there is a lot of that – particularly in the past couple of years. So let's move mai te po ki te ao marama – from the darkness into the light and think about the path towards the election and how we can make progress on our shared goals for unity and community.

Now I do not have a strong connection to my Kahungungu whakapapa, which comes via my paternal grandmother Cath Christy of Nuhaka, great great grandaughter of Rakaipaaka rangatira Ihaka Whaanga. However I thought I would reference one of the great Kahungungu whakatauki/proverbs around which to frame my korero today:

He manako te koura i kore ai
Wishing for crayfish brings you none.

A contemporary interpretation of those words might be "do the mahi get the treats." In its original context this proverb speaks to the collective and collaborative knowledge and experience of many minds and hands needed to produce something highly prized. Having crayfish at your hakari or feast for manuhiri symbolises not only that collective effort and what I call the original A.I – or ancestral intelligence, but it also represents the ethos and practice of manaakitanga – uplifting the mana and authority of others – by providing that valued kai for visitors. So to my mind that whakatauki also represents the complementary roles and responsibilities of mana whenua and manuhiri – or tangata whenua and tangata tiriti in the post colonial context. To be mana whenua relates to *exclusivity* – the responsibility of care for the people, things and places within your sphere of mana. To be manuhiri speaks to *inclusivity* – the sharing of those spaces and resources under the ethos of manaakitanga. Each role requires acknowledgement of and respect for the other - it is a form of unity that also respects our separateness.

To get to that goal of koura or crayfish to share with your guests requires the knowledge and effort of many - the maramataka/calendar experts – who know the best time to fish, the efforts of those who

make and repair the pots, and those who set and retrieve them, including knowledge of the best spots to set them down, the skill of those who prepare the catch for eating, the ringawera and those who lead guests to the table and entertain them while they eat. This task represents an ecosystem where people contribute their part to a desired outcome.

I'm no language expert, but it seems there is a lot of wisdom in those seven little words, so I'll give my two cents' worth as to what we might learn from those words in relation to an overall goal of unity or kotahitanga, and a specific one of building communities not prisons, which might be the crayfish we are seeking. I know you will have heard much on that topic over the years, and worked towards that goal in various ways – through the tireless advocacy of Pat and other local champions such as matua Tom Hemopo. Tom's declaration that "you dont have to be special to do what I did", in holding the state accountable for its failure to honour the Tiriti in the Corrections context is a call to action for us all – do what you can, just do something. Even in my briefest dive into the work of Pat and Tom their aroha for others and for what is tika and pono leaps off the page. Local people showing unrelenting love for their community – the ultimate expression of whanaungatanga.

So I have a couple of messages to share; I know they say you should stick to three in a speech, but I'm extra so you're getting four. None of these will be new to you, but in this current local and global context it's good to remind ourselves of what we are doing, how and why:

- Unity is not a prerequisite before taking action
- Tend to the urgent AND the important
- Community is sharing stories
- Celebrate the glimmers

Unity is not a pre-requisite before taking action

The first message is really short and sweet – and I heard this from Tamati Kruger Chairman of Ngai Tuhoe, speaking in the aftermath of their settlement process with the Crown in 2014 – "unity is not a pre-requisite before taking action, it is the ultimate goal in a multigenerational journey." This resonates with my overall korero and the lesson of the whakatauki - which is that everyone has a part to play and something to contribute – and you may be planting seeds in gardens you won't harvest in your lifetime.

The goal is a unifier in itself and the key to keeping on track is effective **leadership –** Tamati was talking in the context of his people not being unified as to what the next steps were after settlement – and in the end he takes responsbility as a rangatira by making a captain's call.

Justice Joe Williams has talked to the necessity of effective leadership in working towards a more just society, where tamariki Maori are not uplifted, where tane Maori are not imprisoned and where wahine Maori are not unsafe in their own homes. Joe's core message is that our response to this challenge requires leadership, comprising **courage**, **hard work** and **vision**, of which vision is the most important.

He also warns against losing sight of all three elements though, as courage on its own is sheer obstinance; hard work on its own is just dumb labour; and vision on its own is empty words, so we need all of those elements working together to move forward.

In this context, courage is evident in standing up for what is tika and pono, what is right and just – what matua Moana Jackson described as "the deep breath before you do something difficult." Courage is also required to pick yourself up and keep going when things don't land, or when you need to choose between accepting a compromise or letting something go to bide your time. The thing is that time moves on, so what might be considered courageous now, may well soon be considered orthodox or normal.

My second message is:

Tend to the urgent AND the important

This concerns how we prioritise where we expend our efforts. My last boss once said to me in my annual performance review that I shouldn't let the urgent get in the way of the important. I thought about that a lot, and decided I disagreed, as this would mean failing to tend to relationships and obligations while striving for a really big prize. If we applied that thinking to our goals of unity, community-building and prison abolition, then we would be waiting a long time before having anything to celebrate, and we would also be ignoring the needs of people caught in crisis – those who are currently incarcerated or recently released for example. I remember asking my uncle Matua Moana Jackson about this when I was having a crisis of confidence some time ago, asking if I was a sell-out for working with inmates and preparing lawyers to advocate for them, rather than dedicating my time to prison abolition? He was unequivocal – all of those efforts are not only necessary and contribute to the end goal, they are connected. Like the goal of crayfish at the feast, each of the tasks to get there is both part of the end objective, but also a valued activity in and of itself. The siloed view of individual effort is also at odds with a collectivist ethos which supports flourishing communities, and what Tamati Kruger termed the multigenerational journey. To use a health analogy, of course preventative and primary healthcare are important and preferable to managing critical health matters, but there is still a need to the emergency department.

One of our core challenges in the abolitionist discourse is thinking about what we might replace prisons with. The obvious answer is somewhere to belong – which leads us to the work of community-building.

I'm sure many of you will have seen the horrifying report from the coroner's office of two weeks ago, reporting that over the past three years, 14 people released from prison have committed suicide. The core theme amongst those cases is a lack of support with reintegration – very much reflecting an "us and them" attitude, leaving former inmates to flounder on their release depsite little to no preparation for that eventuality.

So while we might have justice reinvestment strategies at a national political level – diverting those billions of dollars of budget monies to alternatives that enable better infrastructure and services to both prevent and respond to harm, at a local level we can all work towards making our communities more inclusive. In my view the foundation of a strong community is one where people can see themselves and their stories. So while some people may expend their energies on the direct goal of prison abolition, others may focus on building and strengthening communities so that people are less likely to head down the carceral pathway, or to ensure that released prisoners have safe places of landing care and connection to return to.

Community is sharing stories

I'm intrigued by the catchphrase "building communities not prisons", because you might read into that framing that prisons are *not* communities, when we all know that prisons have many of the features of community – social structures, norms and values, routines and internal rules. We also know from the lived experience of many – most vividly described in the Abuse in State Care Inquiry, that horrifyingly, prison is seen as a place of belonging, acceptance and even safety for some – which says more about the places outside of the wire than in. It is a terrible indictment on a society when people express a desire to return to the brutality of a carceral insitution rather than live in "freedom" outside the wire, but that is the harsh reality of many of the people I encounter as they struggle to survive in a society that shuns and excludes them and fails to support their rehabilitation and reintegration.

A few years ago I met a 50 year old tane Maori at Mt Eden Prison, to prepare a pre-sentence cultural report for him. In our initial small-talk, whakawhanaungatanga I asked him if everything was going OK,

and if he liked his cellie. He gave a huge smile and said he was good, and that his cellie was his bro – that they had first met as 8 year old boys at Hokio Beach School 42 years earlier, and had done many lags together since. These two little boys who had been removed from their whanau, and forged a lifelong relationship in state care and custody.

That story affirms one of the definitions of what I think we mean by "community" – being a group of people who share a story so important that it defines an aspect of who they are. They build a shared story of that community and its characters into their sense of themselves, and they see the world through the lens of that shared story. In and of itself that definition of community is morally neutral – it is neither good or bad, it just is. It is more than sharing a location – and can of course exist outside of that – ex prisoners frequently speak of belonging to the prison community whether in or outside of the wire. So it might be that the *belonging* is the core feature of community, where people understand their place in a community, what expectations there are of them and what they may expect of others – and some communities do not foster or enable the trust, inclusivity and support needed to develop and maintain that sense of belonging.

An aside here to mention one of my teams. I've been a Liverpool Football fan for 40 years – and six months ago I visited Anfield and Liverpool for the first time. That is a very strongly defined community with a clear sense of shared story and character – Scousers are defined by the football, by the Mersey and a dockside history grounded in unionism and northernness, a strong wit and sense of irreverence. I identify with those characteristics and stories despite not being from there.

Not all stories are good ones, and people will of course have different views or emotions attached to stories, and we need to think carefully about who is included or excluded in our stories because in communities they are shared experiences. As a criminal lawyer, one of my core reference points to Ahuriri is that this is where Te Kooti and his supporters were unjustly imprisoned – that is part of the story of this place, and in my view it is important to know it if you live on this whenua. It's a rather obvious thing to say, but if you don't know those stories then you can't create new ones moving forward together.

I strongly believe that humans are hardwired for connection. In Te Ao Maori of course this is expressed in the defining framework of whakapapa – the matrix of relationships that defines who we are in relation to others and place, so we are in community before, after and beyond our own mortal existence. Disruption of whakapapa is the existential threat to our existence, severing the unseverable – including not only individual identity, but also the normative protections and accountabilities that arise from being in community with others and the environment.

I returned from Turtle Island/Canada last week, and was reminded by a Mohawk friend that there is no term in their language for offender or criminal – they merely describe such a wrongdoer as "one who acts as if they have no relations" – ie someone who acts as if they are not in community. They, like us, rely upon the protection and guidance of community to keep people accountable and safe. There is nothing more dangerous than a person untethered to place and community – as we see in the perpetuating statistics of prisoners released here in Aotearoa, and those who have returned as 501 deportees over the past decade.

My small contribution in this sphere has been to share the stories of those entangled in the justice system, particularly those incarcerated, by way of pre-sentence or cultural reports. I became involved in this in 2016, after many years of teaching students about the law that enabled the presentation of cultural information to judges, which noone used. So with a couple of friends we decided to breathe life into that provision and we made up a process to do it. My friends (judges and senior lawyers) would refer clients to me and I would go to prisons and meet with inmates and spend a few hours hearing

their stories. I'd then write it up, and present it to the court – sometimes in person, but mostly as a written report. There was no template and I literally made up what I was doing. I was always clear that this was not what was envisaged by the lawmakers and neither was it the gold standard, which is my view is having community and family members speak without a third party intermediary.

Initially I was worried about whether people would speak to me – I have no training in interviewing or social work, I am a middle class urban Maori, trained as a lawyer, with a very privileged upbringing and of course I didn't KNOW these people. Ironically being a stranger and arms length is considered preferable to the Pakeha way of doing justice, whereas for Maori this is very much a second class approach, so while I felt on the back foot, the system accepted what I had to say BECAUSE I was a supposedly neutral observer.

Interestingly I never had any issue with people opening up to me. After doing a couple of hundred of them I put this down to three things – being older – this places me in the Whaea/Aunty category, being a mum – that's a magic sauce all round, finally, being a day one Warriors fan – always a good diversion for korero – the good the bad and the ugly.

In my experience there were many benefits to this – at an individual level it gave voice to a person sharing their story with another person. Many of the people I spoke to disclosed horrifying childhoods and experiences (the kinds of experiences that were well documented in the Royal Commission); many of these stories had never been shared before – when I asked why, the most common response was that noone asked – and people often missed the connection between what had happened to them and how they in turn caused harm to themselves and others. I cant tell you how many times people said to me "I'm the black sheep in my family." To which I would say "oh really, has noone else in your whanau ever been inside?" "oh yes, my father, grandfather, brothers, uncles, cousins." That is a lot of black sheep. It is astonishing to see the penny drop for people who have drunk the Kool Aid of individual responsibility and agency, when they have lived against a backdrop of collective and intergenerational trauma, dispossession, poverty and spirit harm. That speaks to how effective the colonial project has been.

Within a year or so I could have written a paint by numbers report – that detailed griding intergenerational poverty since the Rogernomics reforms, ongoing family violence, disconnection from school by age 13, problematic alcohol and drug use around the same age, no history of employment. Notwithstanding those similarites, each story also provided details of an individual life. I would always start with "tell me the story of your name" – the same icebreaker I use with students – every human has a name story, and inmates are no different – whether they are named for a Los Angeles rapper, a brand of high performance car, or a tupuna.

The information inmates shared with me was presented to judges at sentencing, generally with a view to presenting both an explanation of how this person came to be before the court and what options there might be to appropriately respond to their wrongdoing. While the law allows for consideration of how an offender's community might be engaged to assist, the most common story centred around significant disconnection and a lack of support and resources to draw upon. So the reality is that many people did not have a kaumatua, priest, or mentor to speak for them as envisaged by the lawmakers in the 1980s. One young man deeply affected me. I met him in Paremoremo where he was on seg and facing a third strike with a potential life sentence without parole at the age of 23. He was raised in Kaikohe amidst eye-watering violence and deprivation, and he entered the well worn path towards gangs, drugs and serious offending. He had little to no knowledge of who he was. However, I found him easy to talk to, and I quickly established that his nan was his place of safety. I asked what his nan thought of his facial gang tattoos and he went silent. When I carefully navigated our korero towards asking about his connections to wider whanau, marae and community he conceded that he didnt

know, but he wanted to learn, and he had something to show me in his cell. We arranged another meeting the following week and the guards agreed to escort me to his cell – where I found the walls covered in all of the Goldie and Lindauer portraits of rangatira – who he said were keeping him safe and wathcing over him. He was trying to figure out which ones he was related to. Week later I attended his sentencing in the High Court – one of the first involving a third strike. He had told me that his Nan was coming, and I assured him I would be there too. When he was brought in by the guards he saw that his Nan was not there, and I was the only person in the courtroom. His whakama and shame was immediately evident and he exploded in anger, smashing the perspex shield and lashing out at the guards. He refused to look at me. The judge was extremely thorough with my report and asked several questions. This young man was incredibly tense and defiant as the story of his life was shared in open court. The judge did not apply the third strike, and gave him a long but finite sentence. When the young man was taken to the cells the judge asked everyone but me to leave the courtroom. When it was just the two of us, he broke down crying, for this young man, what he had endured and survived, the harm he has caused others and also for himself for bearing the weight of responsibility as to how to respond. This very unusual encounter had changed the treatment and outocme for this young man because we had shared his story, and built an empathy bridge with the decision maker.

Within three or so years, the cultural report kaupapa spread throughout the system, so that there were floods of requests for assistance and a growing body of jurisprudence or case law using that information to inform sentencing decisions. It was very successful in shifting the narrative of individual responsibility, to place the harm caused by offenders into the context of collective and intergenerational trauma caused by invasion, dispossession and the suppression of te reo me nga tikanga Maori. Of course it was so successful that this government has pulled the plug on funding reports, although I hope that the years of building this practice has modelled to whanau and communities how they might advocate for themselves – outside of a state funding model.

You might call this work decolonisation and indigenisation – that sounds very forboding and difficult – which is some ways it is. I like the framing of "reckoning and reimagining" – wrestling with how things are, how they came to be like that, and dreaming of different futures. While I'm not afraid of the unapologetic language of racism, white supremacy and discrimination, sometimes we have to re-language to allow others to join the conversation without unnecessary fear or anxiety – to allow others to listen to and learn from stories. I chaired the three year Understanding Policing Delivery project that concluded just over a year ago – where the language was a roadblock from the perspective of the police. This was a project initiated by the then Commissioer to investigate systemic bias in the police, in relate to decisions to investiogate and charge and in relation to use of force.

After months of work, we agreed to concede to the Police request to stay away from the R word, and land on the less loaded terminology of "systemic bias". This was frustrating and infuriating, but by consensus a necessary compromise to enable the work to get underway. Last weekend I re-read Oliver Sutherland's memoir of his work in the 70s and 80s advocating for access to justice in Nelson and later in Auckland with ACORD, and the frustrations of the fragility over the language of racism is an ongoing theme – so not much has changed in 50 years.

My friend Tracey McIntosh, a previous Unity Day speaker, has talked about embracing productive discomfort in these processes – that we need to be comfortable with the uncomfortable so long as it is focussed on a hopeful and positive change. Our Pakeha friend Dr Max Harris has warned of the perils of slipping into white defensiveness when in that space – denying that racism exists, diverting attention to perceived deficits in Maori communities, demanding that Maori move on, that we live in a multicultural or global society. Even when framed in language of structural or systemic bias people feel threatened.

Celebrate the Glimmers

Finally we need to remember to celebrate the wins. Psychologists refer to glimmers as those micro-moments of hope, joy, satisfaction, peace that stand in contrast to triggers. They are often small, highly personal encounters or phenomena. We need to celebrate these glimmers, because much of our work does not pay off. I find in those times that it is good to remind ourselves of the multigenerational journey, and that some kaupapa may be revisited in time. In recent years like many of us I've had several projects upended due to political forces or lack of widespread public support. I spent two years leading the campaign for drug law reform that saw the cannabis referendum very narrowly defeated. A year ago this government voted down another piece of law reform I'd worked on for 18 months – the drafting of the first Treaty clause for the Corrections Act. And last year also saw the government tip over three years' work to formally embed tikanga Maori in legal education. These disappointments can be demoralising and debilitating. In relation to the Police work on the UPD project we could see that the shift in Commissioner and of course government would mean that priorities were going to change and that our work would be consigned to the "woke" basket. But good work will see the light in the right time – I have shelves of seminal reports that were dismissed in their time, but they stand as a testament to the efforts of those who contributed, and may yet be resurrected when the time is right.

So for the past three years we have really walked through te po, through the darkness – but we have also experienced a few glimmers, and these moments serve to remind us to carry on, to savour a job well done.

Arguably David Seymour has done more for the unification and galvanisation of iwi Maori than anyone in recent memory. The glimmer of seeing tens of thousands of ordinary people take to the street in protest under the guise of Toitu te Tiriti. Hundreds of thousands of people learned how to make select committee submissions in response to the Treaty Principles Bill. My son is in a hardcore west auckland kapa haka – Te Taha Tu – full of tough tane Maori who wouldn't recognise a select committee submission if they fell over it. At one of their noho they had a workshop on how to make submissions and they collectively learned how to express their views – which they have since repeated in relation to the Regulatory Standards Bill and other retrograde proposals. Many of them have enrolled to vote for the first time. While not prisoners, they and others express views that they do not having any skin in the game – they feel excluded.

Locally here of course the reclamation of the name of the awa Ngaruroro Moko Tuu aa Raro ki Rangatira was a glimmer resulting from longstanding advocacy of the local hapu.

I've experienced a couple of glimmers recently. I spent New Year's Eve on Ripiro Beach out of Dargaville with my partner and children. We were on the beach as the sun was setting on 2025 – it was stunning, serene and silent. Then my daughters whispered that there was a big black truck creeping up behind us on the sand, with what they described as a scary dude at the wheel. I turned around in the fading light and called out kia ora into the dimly lit cab of the truck. A deep voice called out "is that you whaea Khylee?" Ae, e hoa it is. "you wont remember me, but you came to see me in Paremoremo 6 years ago. I just wanted to let you know that I'm doing well – I've been out for two years, I have a whare, a job and this is my partner. We've come to the north to find my whanau." That made my day – what a way to end the year.

Shortly before that, I'd finished up a very difficult year of teaching. You may be aware that in my pond we have been working towards decolonising legal education and embedding tikanga Maori and te ao Maori teaching and learning into law degrees. For me one of the objectives of this project is to ensure that all lawyers have some basic knowledge and understanding of our ways of knowing, doing and being – so they can better represent Maori in legal matters. If that was successful, then you wouldn't

necessarily need independent report writers or navigators, and lawyers would ask different questions of their clients to better share their story.

This was the result of a long planned strategic campaign by Maori in the legal profession – us academics, judges, lawyers and students working together over many years to achieve our collective goal. Last year was D Day – rolling out new requirements for all law students. In my school that meant me being first out of the blocks introducing tikanga Maori as first law to first year students – the first voice they would hear in their law school journey. We used purakau method and took them on a hikoi to view our campus and surrounds as whenua Maori. Most students loved it. Some did not, and one particular student expressed his rage by following me to my office and screaming in my face that he did not pay good money to learn Maori stories. He was older, a current police officer and a recent migrant. I asked him to leave my office and I emailed him to address his concerns, to which I received no reply. I didn't hear from him again.

The last class of the year was in October. I came back for that lecture, and at the conclusion, a long line of students waited to tell myself and the teaching team how much they appreciated what they had learned over the year. After 15 minutes of this, there was one person left in the 300 person lecture theatre. I didn't recognise him, until he sheepishly made his way to the front. It was the cop – he looked like an entirely different person – his ahua, his effect, his dress and body language – now manifesting humility and slight embarrassment. He nervously told me that he wanted to apologise for his behaviour 8 months earlier. That his life had been changed by learning about the foundations of tikanga Maori, the destruction and despair caused by the imposition of the colonial settler state and its ongoing influence. I was speechless. I then heard from a former student who was working with this man as a Police Prosecutor – she said he was an entirely different person and it was reflected in the decisions he made, and his conduct towards whanau he encountered in his work. This is the effect of expanding the mind of one person, with ripples affecting others within his sphere of influence. A satisfying glimmer resulting from years of hard work.

I had another glimmer at work – one of the privileges and responsbilities of being the boss is having control over hiring decisions. Three years ago I hired a former student, who has lived experience of prison – he was still on parole conditions. I was acutely aware that he would have trouble finding any employment and that the nature of his offending meant he would never be able to practise law – but he could teach it. It was difficult to get permission to hire given that background, but I persisted. My university brands itself as the university of opportunity, and I argued that this was an opportunity to take a risk and show that we did believe in second chances and the arc of redemption. It was our opportunity to disrupt the inivisible sentence that follows many inmates into their lives after prison – poor mental health, insecure housing and employment – a life of precarity and instability. Having this colleague and friend on staff has enabled the sharing of his story with our students – who have learned empathy and aroha as a result. He is an excellent teacher and is now enrolled in a PhD.

I'll end my korero there with a final anecdote about the power of transforming communities. This year we are piloting a new course called Uni 101 to students who are the first in family to attend university, from Maori, Pasifika and migrant communities who have no point of reference as to how to do university or work in a profession. A couple of weeks ago we invited Judge Noel Cocurullo to address them and share his story about being a Maori Italian boy from Dargaville that moved to Otago to study, practiced law for 30 years them became a judge. His advice to them as they entered this very new and initimidating space with a long road to get to their ultimate goal of a degree was really simple "if you want something you've never had before, you're going to have to do things you have never done." If we circle back to our crayfish, this is the same advice, calling for action over dreaming.

Kia ora koutou mo to koutou whakarongo mai.