

Emerging Diversity and Inclusion: Fletcher Building

Video link: <https://vimeo.com/album/4446506/video/229800255>

Fletcher Building's Whakatapu Māori Leadership Programme is ensuring the business has a higher representation of Māori in leadership roles, a more diverse leadership team and a staff which is able to reflect and engage with diverse clients.

Fletcher Building is a global organisation with around 20,000 employees across 34 different businesses, operating in 40 countries. The Fletcher Building businesses cover the construction, manufacturing and distribution industries. About 10,000 staff work in New Zealand.

Whakatapu means "to grow" or "plant the seed", and the programme, introduced as a pilot scheme in 2016, is focused on developing a pipeline of Māori leaders and supervisors, by encouraging participants to explore their heritage and what leadership means to them, and to develop their future.

"We want to allow participants to embrace their diverse background and abilities as well as grow their confidence and competence to achieve their full potential, allowing them to bring the strengths of a holistic and community-based culture to Fletcher Building," says programme manager Emma Collins.

"Whaia te iti kahurangi ki te tuohu koe me he maunga teitei. Seek the treasure you value most dearly: if you bow your head, let it be to a lofty mountain - we use this proverb in our programme to remind us to aim high and search for what is truly valuable. It also encourages our Fletcher Building whanau to be persistent, and to not let any obstacles get in the way of what we do," she says.

Fletcher Building partnered with the Centre of Vision and Leadership and Indigenous Growth Ltd to build the Whakatapu programme, which received funding and support from Te Puni Kokiri.

To ensure the programme was authentic and effective, it was built around an indigenous framework first, incorporating tikanga and universal indigenous values, then programme content was added in, says Emma.

The Whakatapu programme consists of four two-day workshop modules, two of which are held on a marae with an overnight stay, pre and post-module work, four one-on-one mentoring sessions with an assigned coach, informal mentoring from programme alumni and a group project relating to building a Māori network within Fletcher Building. A graduation ceremony with participants' family members and Fletcher Building executives is held as part of module four.

Kaumatua attend all modules, providing a unique perspective, contributing their experience and acting as the custodians of tikanga.

Fifteen Fletcher Building staff members took part in the 2016 pilot programme, and following its success, Whakatapu was offered to 38 participants across two intakes in 2017. The programme is promoted via messaging from CEO Mark Adamson as well as other division Chief Executives and team leaders throughout the business, backed up by articles, a promotional video on the company intranet and by alumni from the pilot scheme. Participants come from a range of different business units and locations around New Zealand and Australia.

The programme is supported from the top down, Emma Collins says. GM of Winstone Wallboards David Thomas, a senior Māori leader in the business, is one of the executive sponsors of Wakatapu, and spoke at the orientation session, painting a realistic and relatable picture of his leadership journey. He also hosts the graduation ceremony, which is attended by Chief People and Communications Officer Kate Daly and other senior leaders.

More than 60 percent of programme participants are not based in Auckland and managers support the programme by paying travel costs, supporting their employee throughout the learning and getting regular updates on what their direct report has learned.

Emma says even after the programme has finished, participants continue to build their network and bond through arranging social events, creating social media groups both internal and external to Fletcher Building and by sharing the knowledge they have learnt on the programme with other employees. This is helping to establish a Māori network within Fletcher Building, creating an opportunity for other Māori employees who have not been on the programme to also be a part of a whanau.

As part of the programme, participants work on group projects which they implement in the business. Some examples include guest speakers of Māori descent who share the story of their journey to success, increasing the use of Te Reo across the business, and a Māori 101 guide highlighting key words and protocols which can be incorporated at work.

A number of Whakatapu participants have received promotions, career development from working on additional projects or taken on further education following the programme.

For many of the participants, the programme has enabled them to connect with their Māori heritage. One Fletcher staff member who had previously seen few benefits in being involved in his "Māori side" has now applied to a post-graduate Business in Māori Development programme. "I always dreamed for my kids to go to university and now I can lead by example."

Another participant involved in his culture outside of work didn't know how to bring it to the workplace, and found himself "counting down to retirement." Following the programme he has been promoted to team leader and holds a weekly toolbox hui where he encourages his multicultural team to start and finish with a karakia.

One of the women on the programme gave this feedback: "Since the programme I have changed the way I carry myself, the way I see others and the way I approach life/ situations and this has paid off with home life and mahi (work)."

