

# Talanoa Mai Tamaiki

The voices of  
Pacific children  
and young people

## **Disclaimer**

Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki) has made every effort to ensure the information in this report is reliable but does not guarantee its accuracy and does not accept liability for any errors. The views expressed by participants in this report represent their own opinions and experiences and may not reflect or be consistent with Oranga Tamariki policy or guidance. The interpretations in this report are those of the researchers and are not the official position of Oranga Tamariki.

## **The name and design of the report**

Talanoa Mai Tamaiki can be translated to mean, ‘children and young people have voiced their views’.

The conch illustrations represent a pan-Pacific symbol that amplifies the voices of children. In ancient times many Pacific nations would blow the conch to bring people together, including kainga (family), communities and villages to voice their concerns about any issues or celebrate events of cultural importance. In some situations, the conch was used to warn the kainga and wider community about any threat to the wellbeing of the community. The symbol of the conch was gifted by the Oranga Tamariki Pacific team for this report, which aligns with the cultural usage of the conch by Pacific Peoples as a channel to voice the views of Pacific children and young people. To sound the conch is a call for Oranga Tamariki to embrace and take action on the views and ideas of our tamariki and to uphold Pacific cultural values, principles and identities.

## **Acknowledgements**

This report would not have been possible without the Pacific children and young people who gave their time to share their voices with us. Thanks also to the Oranga Tamariki Pacific Panel.

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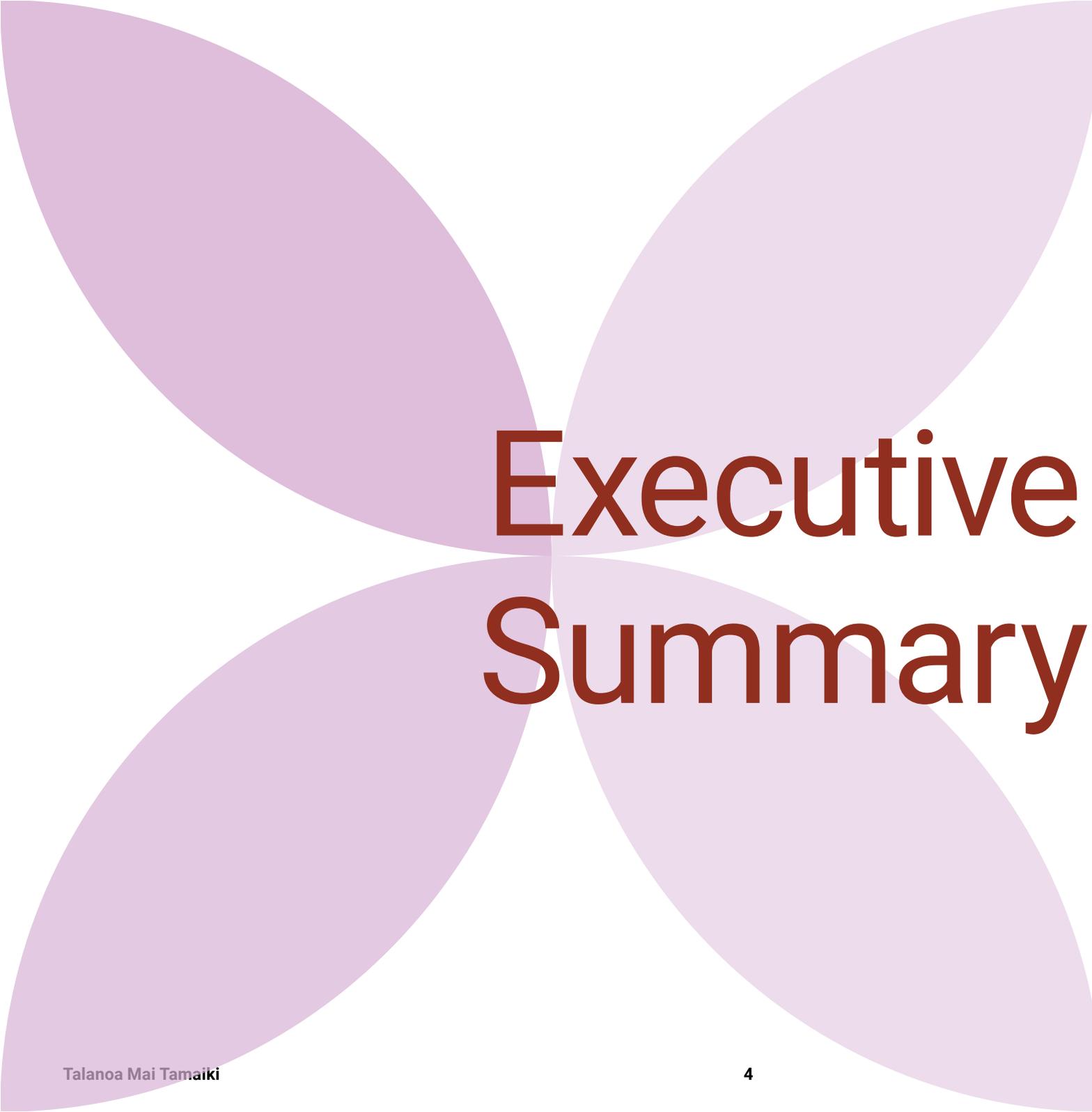
March 2022



Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa

# Table of contents

<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Section 4: Connections to family, cultural identity and faith</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Section 1: Background</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>Family</b>	
Why we did this project	11	Pacific children and young people love and respect their families	29
Pacific concepts of decision-making and the voice of Pacific children and young people	11	Family is intertwined with culture, values and faith	30
Cultural identity, language and faith in Pacific communities	12	Family is not just birth family	31
<b>Section 2: Method</b>	<b>14</b>	Pacific children and young people want to be accepted by their family	32
Participants	14	<b>Cultural Identity</b>	
Interview procedure and consent process	15	Knowledge of culture can create happiness, pride and a strong sense of belonging	34
What we wanted to find out from Pacific children and young people	16	Most Pacific children and young people, particularly younger children, associate culture with food, dance and music	35
Interactive engagement tools	16	Many Pacific children and young people have a limited understanding of their culture	36
Approach to analysis	17	<b>Faith</b>	
Confidentiality	17	Most Pacific children and young people believe in the existence of God	41
Limitations	17	Some enjoy the routines of church while others find these routines boring	42
<b>Section 3: Enabling Pacific children and young people to talk with adults and participate in decision making</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>Section 5: Summary and next steps</b>	<b>44</b>
Pacific children and young people need to feel safe to have a voice	21	<b>Appendix 1: Information sheet for Pacific children and young people</b>	<b>47</b>
Pacific children and young people are more likely to share their views when adults build a relationship with them or with people they trust	22	<b>Appendix 2: Consent form</b>	<b>49</b>
Understanding the culture of Pacific children and young people helps them to share their views	24		



# Executive Summary

Talanoa Mai Tamaiki presents findings from interviews with 29 Pacific children and young people in the Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki) care, protection or youth justice systems.

A project team made up of Voices of Children and Young People ('Voices') team members and Oranga Tamariki social workers spoke with Pacific children and young people in care to better understand:

1. What enables them to talk with adults and participate in decision-making.
2. What their experiences are of being connected to their family, cultural identity and faith.

What we heard will help us to amplify the voices of Pacific children and young people across Oranga Tamariki to influence policy, services and practice decisions.

A summary of what Pacific children and young people in care told us follows.

## Key findings on what enables Pacific children and young people to talk with adults and participate in decision-making

*Pacific children and young people need to feel safe to have a voice.* Pacific children and young people said they would be worried that as children and young people they may not be perceived as having an equal voice to adults. They were scared that if they do speak out, they will be told they are wrong and be put down by the adults around them. They were also worried about the implications for their families if they say something that gets them or their families in trouble.

*Pacific children and young people are more likely to share their views when adults build a relationship with them or with people they trust.* To support Pacific children and young people to share their views, find out who the adults are in their lives that they trust. These adults may act as advocates in situations where they do not feel comfortable to speak up.

*Understanding the culture of Pacific children and young people helps them to share their views.* For some it helped when adults who talk with them are of the same culture. Some Pacific children and young people said that when adults are of the same culture, they understand them more and can better communicate with their families.

## Key findings on the experiences of Pacific children and young people of being connected to their family, cultural identity and faith

### Family

*Pacific children and young people love and respect their families.* Most of the Pacific children and young people we spoke with lived with immediate and extended family members and were settled and happy living with family. Pacific children and young people living with extended family members expressed their appreciation that their wider family cared for them. There were a small number of Pacific children and young people who did not live with family and who felt disconnected. These children and young people were more likely to say birth family was not important.

*Family is intertwined with culture, values and faith.* Of the Pacific children and young people we spoke to, those who lived with family were more likely to express pride in their culture and have an interest in learning more about their cultural heritage. They were also able to articulate the values that were important to them and more likely than the Pacific children and young people who were not living with family to participate in faith-based activities.

*Family is not just birth family.* Some Pacific children and young people viewed family as being broader than just birth family. They identified friends and important adults in their lives, such as teachers, as being their family. Pacific children and young people who had close connections with their immediate and extended family considered children and adults not related to them to be part of their family unit.

*Pacific children and young people want to be accepted by their family.* Most Pacific children and young people we spoke with felt accepted by their families. One did not feel accepted due to being transgender, while another felt they were not accepted due to their offending.

## Cultural identity

- *Knowledge of culture can create happiness, pride and a strong sense of belonging.* Pacific children and young people who were connected to their culture expressed pride in their cultural heritage and had a strong sense of belonging.
- *Most Pacific children and young people, particularly younger children, associate culture with food, dance and music.* The Pacific children and young people we spoke with had prepared Pacific food, danced with or been taught Pacific songs by their family, or had participated in cultural activities at school.
- *Pacific children and young people in care may have a limited understanding of their culture.* Most of the Pacific children and young people we spoke to, including those closely connected to their families, had a limited understanding of their cultural heritage and language. Only a small number of Pacific children and young people had visited their homelands and/or were able to converse in their native tongue. Pacific children and young people who also identified as Māori had a limited understanding of their whakapapa and te reo Māori.

## Faith

- *Most Pacific children and young people believe in the existence of God.* Even though only around a third of the Pacific children and young people interviewed attended church regularly, most believed in the existence of God and described faith as being about Jesus and church. A small number of young people either did not believe in God or did not believe in attending church.
- *Some enjoy the routines of church while others find these routines boring.* Pacific children and young people who attended church regularly enjoyed the routines of church, including getting dressed up, singing and prayer and sharing food at the end of a service. Some said that church can be boring at times.

## Next steps

To amplify the voices of Pacific children and young people across Oranga Tamariki, the Voices and Pacific team will:



share findings internally and externally to raise awareness of the experiences of Pacific children and young people in care

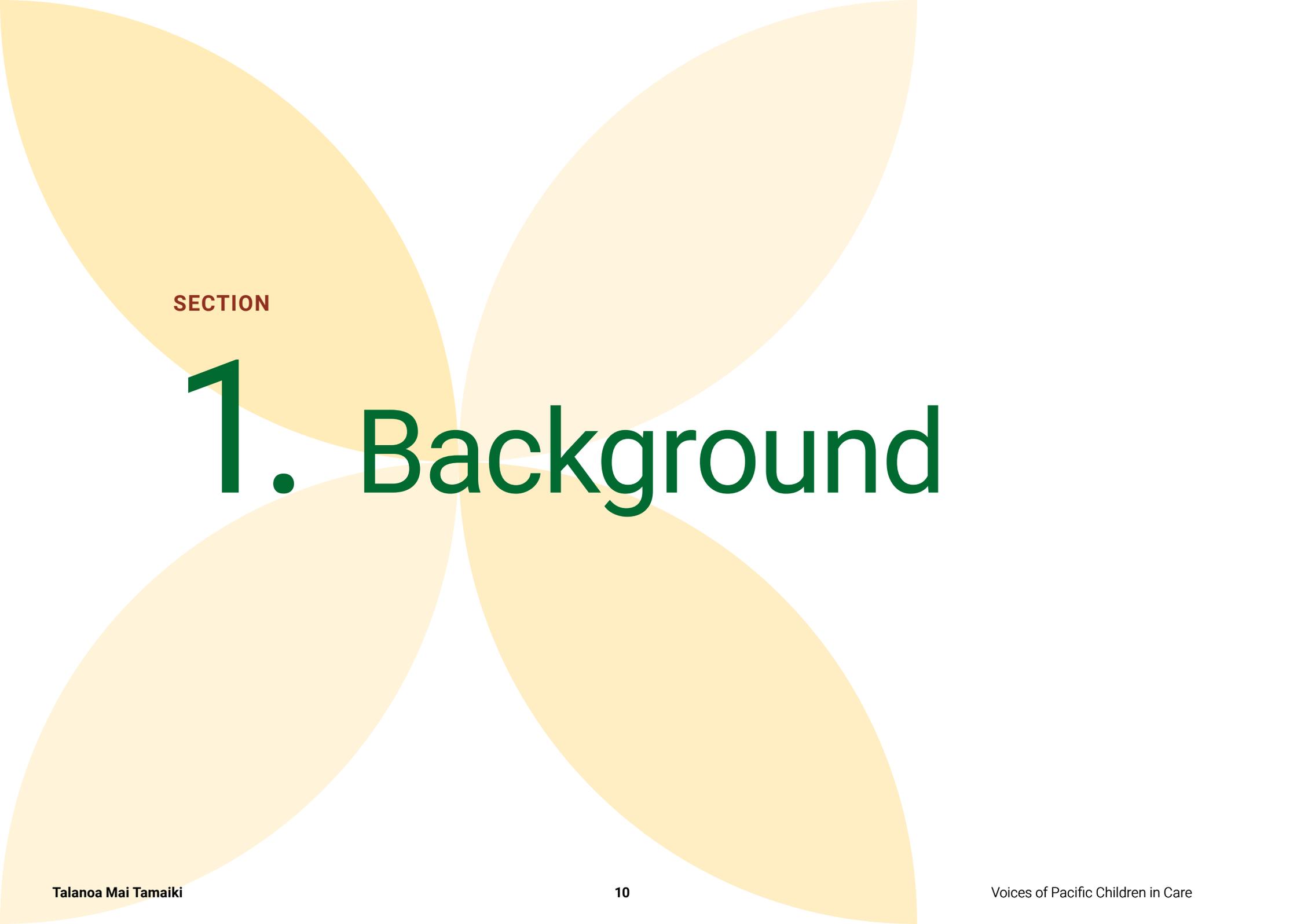


use insights to inform practice and influence initiatives involving Pacific children, young people and their families



advocate for further engagements with Pacific children, young people and their families who have had contact with Oranga Tamariki services, to better understand their needs and experiences.





SECTION

# 1. Background

## Why we did this project

As at 31 December 2020, Pacific and Pacific-Māori children and young people comprised 16% of the population of children and young people in care.

It is important to understand the specific experiences and needs of Pacific children and young people in care, so they can gain the support and services they need. To help gain this understanding this project focused on the following two questions:

1. What enables Pacific children and young people to talk with adults and participate in decision-making?
2. What are Pacific children's and young people's experiences of being connected to their family, cultural identity and faith?

The Voices of Children and Young People (Voices) team led the project, with cultural advice provided by the Oranga Tamariki Pacific team and Pacific staff from the Oranga Tamariki Professional Practice Group.

The Pacific team provided leadership around the naming of the report and gifted the symbol of the conch (which is illustrated throughout the report) as a metaphor to emphasise the need to amplify the voices of Pacific children and young people.

## Pacific concepts of decision-making and the voice of Pacific children and young people

Pacific children and young people traditionally belong to a collective that includes their immediate and wider families, the villages they have familial ties to, as well as other ties such as church associations.

Each Pacific ethnic group has different hierarchical structures informing how decisions are made within families, extended families and communities. In the fa'asamoa (Samoan way) cultural context there is a fa'amata (Chiefly governing system), where the matai (chief) is the head of each extended family. The matai holds authority on lands, titles and is responsible for the overall wellbeing of the wider family – this is their tautua (service) to their families. The Cook Islands has a hierarchical, collective and tribal structure where the ariki is the high chief of each island. In comparison, Tonga is a stratified society, with a monarch, nobles and commoners and all the assigned roles, duties and responsibilities that are associated with a matriarchal social class system.

At a family level, Pacific families make decisions based on what is in the collective best interests of all family members. Having a voice on these decisions is generally afforded to those family members that are of an age, maturity and capability to consider the needs of all its members. In the family structure, children are expected to serve, respect and learn from their elders. In turn, elders are expected to provide guidance and support to ensure the wellbeing of all family members and educate the younger generation about culture, family histories and genealogies.

In the Pacific model of collective wellbeing, it is recognised that everyone in the family has a shared responsibility to uphold the wellbeing of children. The essence of this cultural practice is captured within proverbs such as the Tongan proverb "takanga 'etau fohe" which translates to working together in harmony to achieve the wellbeing of all family members. In this cultural context, to focus only on the needs and aspirations of Pacific children without considering the needs of their families, is seen as not only causing individual emotional harm to Pacific children but also conflicting with the cultural fabric of Pacific society.

## Cultural identity, language and faith in Pacific communities

Pacific children and young people are connected to families, lands, sea, genealogies and histories. When these connections are strong, they provide Pacific children and young people with a sense of belonging and love and provide the resilience they need to confidently navigate the world.

Fluency in one's mother tongue is an important marker of cultural identity for children and young people in terms of how they view themselves and interact with others.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the Ministry for Pacific Peoples (MPP) claims Pacific languages is essential to the health, wellbeing and lifetime success of Pacific peoples and their communities in Aotearoa.<sup>2</sup> However the continuous decline in the number of fluent speakers of Pacific languages in New Zealand implies a diminishing likelihood of a Pacific child or young person knowing their language, further increasing the risk of cultural disconnect.<sup>3</sup>

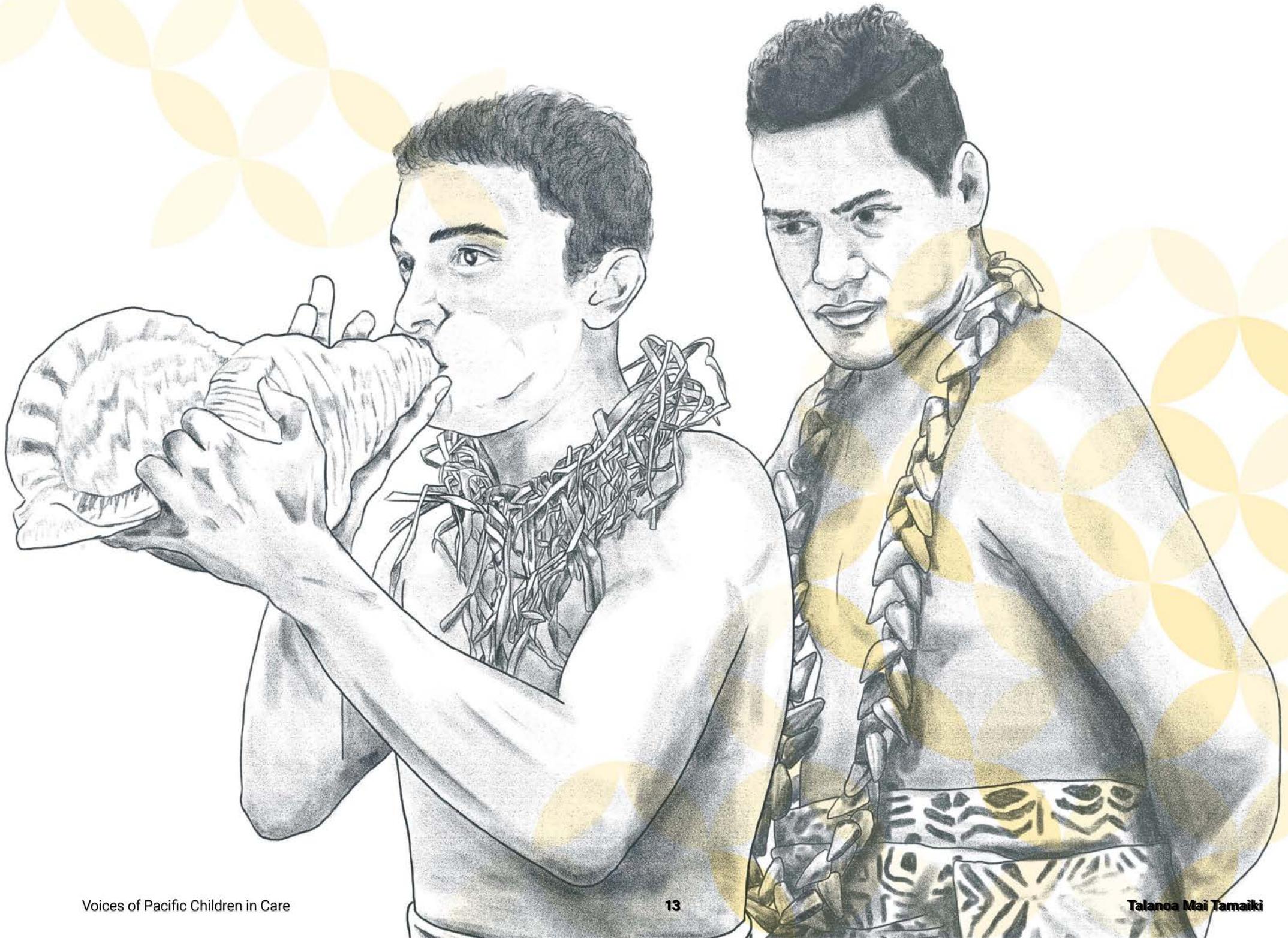
In all Pacific ethnic groups spirituality and faith is important. Christianity is so intertwined within Pacific cultures that it is a foundational pillar of modern Pacific societies. Church is seen as a place of spiritual, economic, social, cultural and political significance, where languages, worldviews, values and rituals are lived and passed on to younger generations.<sup>4</sup>

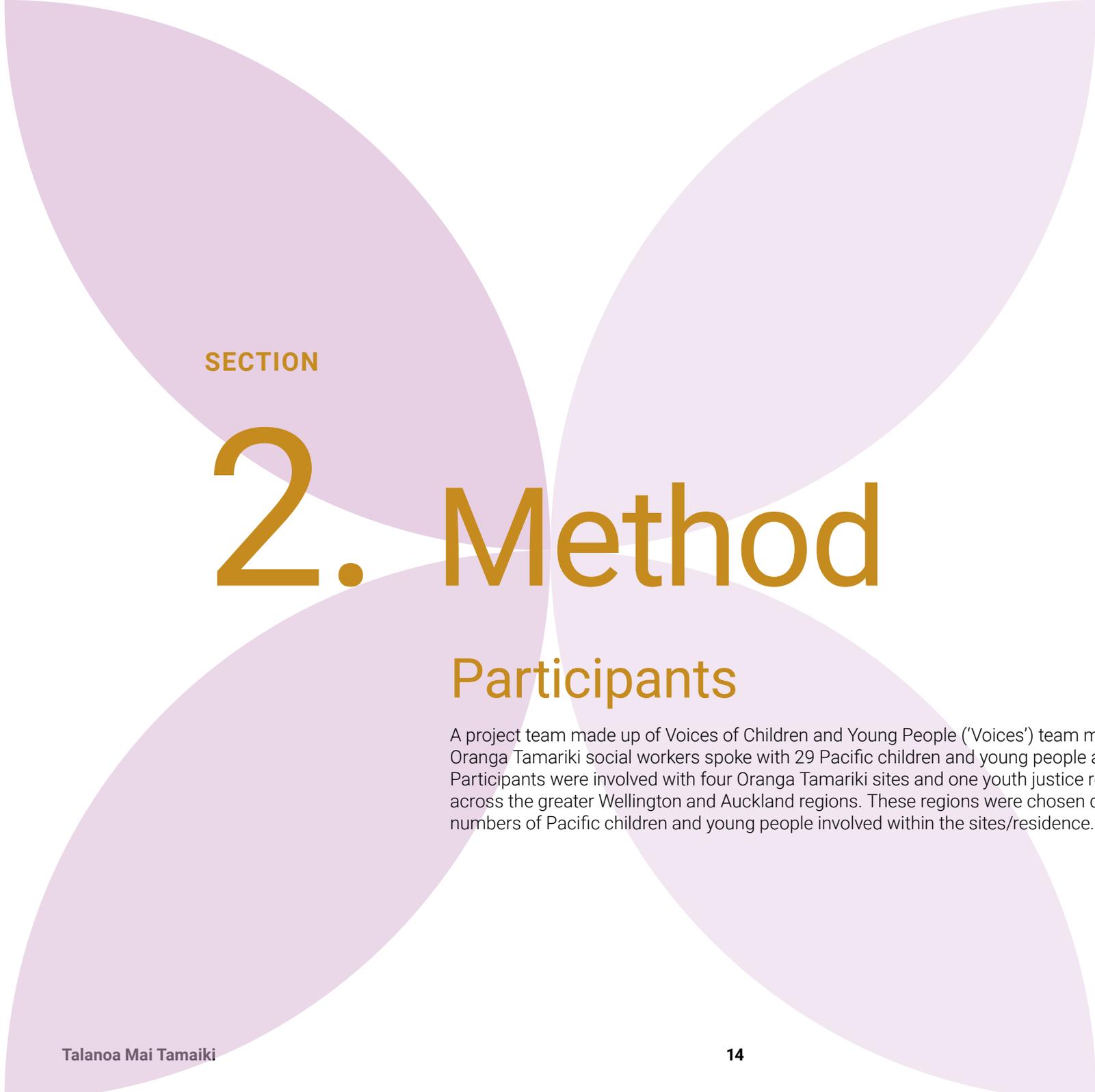
1 Language and the Construction of Self: Developmental Reflections, Nancy Budwig, Clark University. Refer to <https://www.massey.ac.nz/~alock/nancy/nancy2.htm>

2 Ministry for Pacific Peoples: [Ministry for Pacific Peoples – Pacific Language Weeks 2021 \(mpp.govt.nz\)](https://www.mpp.govt.nz/)

3 Pasefika Proud, The Profile of Pacific Peoples in New Zealand, 2016.

4 Contemporary Pacific Status Report A snapshot of Pacific peoples in New Zealand, Ministry of Pacific Peoples, 2016.





SECTION

# 2. Method

## Participants

A project team made up of Voices of Children and Young People ('Voices') team members and Oranga Tamariki social workers spoke with 29 Pacific children and young people aged 7-17 years. Participants were involved with four Oranga Tamariki sites and one youth justice residence from across the greater Wellington and Auckland regions. These regions were chosen due to the high numbers of Pacific children and young people involved within the sites/residence.

## Number and characteristics of children interviewed <sup>6</sup>

<b>ETHNICITY</b>	
Samoan	12
Cook Islands Māori	12
Tongan	10
Pacific/ Māori	17
Other Pacific	2
<b>GENDER</b>	
Male	17
Female	11
Transgender	1
<b>CARE STATUS</b>	
Care or protection	25
Youth justice	3
Not in care	1
<b>AGE</b>	
7 - 10 years	9
11 - 14 years	13
15 - 17 years	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29</b>

Pacific children and young people were eligible to take part in this project if they were aged 7-17 years and currently in the care of Oranga Tamariki, or with recent experience of Oranga Tamariki services.

Children and young people were identified by social workers at each of the sites/residence based on the eligibility criteria. The child/young person's social worker contacted them and, where possible, their parent(s) and caregiver to provide information about the interviews and invite the child to participate.

Social workers were provided with child-friendly information sheets to share with children and young people along with information sheets for their parents and caregivers. The information sheets covered the purpose of the interviews and the relevant ethical considerations such as confidentiality, privacy and consent, including consent for audio recording (see Appendix 1).

All children and young people received a koha of a \$20 Warehouse voucher at the end of the interview.

## Interview procedure and consent process

Interviews were conducted using open-ended questions either in individual or group interviews.

Interviews were carried out by two staff in the Voices team and two Oranga Tamariki social workers of Pacific descent. Two of the interviewers were Samoan, one was Cook Islands Māori/Māori and one was Māori. All interviewers had previous experience engaging with Pacific children and young people.

Interviews varied in length but were planned for up to 30 minutes for interviews with children 7-12 years and up to an hour for interviews with young people 13-17 years.

All the interviews started with an informal conversation between the interviewer and the child or young person to help them feel comfortable. Before the formal interview took place, the child or young person was asked if they would like to open the interview with a prayer. If the child or young person declined, the interviewer would say a prayer and, where possible, in a Pacific language relevant to the culture of the child or young person. After the prayer, food was provided.

At the beginning of the interview the purpose of the engagement was outlined to the child or young person. The information sheet for children and young people was used to guide the discussion and obtain informed consent. The child or young person was then asked to sign the consent form if the form had not already been signed by them and if they were capable of doing so (see Appendix 2).

<sup>6</sup> Pacific children and young people who identified with more than one Pacific ethnic group or as Māori were counted more than once.

Interviewers used creative ways of obtaining informed consent including drawing pictures of the consent process.

## What we wanted to find out from Pacific children and young people

We spoke with Pacific children and young people in care to better understand:

1. what enables them to talk with adults and participate in decision-making
2. what their experiences are of being connected to their family, cultural identity and faith.

## Interactive engagement tools

A range of tools were used to support children and young people to respond to our questions. For question one, some of these tools included:

- scenario-based discussions – children and young people were given a scenario and asked to talk through how they would feel or respond in the scenario. The scenarios focused on relationships between children and adults.
- drawing materials – children and young people could draw an adult in their life they trust and then write or draw the qualities of that person that makes them trustworthy.
- postcards – children and young people could write or draw on postcards, the enablers that support them to feel safe to have a voice and participate in decision-making.

For question two, interactive cards were also used to support children and young people to respond. The cards included four warm-up cards, a three-point rating scale (unhappy, ok and happy) alongside cards that represented the research areas outlined in question two: family, cultural identity and faith.

The rating scale cards were placed in front of the child or young person. The interviewer explained that the rating cards represent how they feel about things, from unhappy, ok and happy. The interviewer then explained to the child or young person that they would be given a card and asked to place the card under the rating card that best depicts how they feel.

The interviewer started with the warm-up cards as a way of getting to know the child or young person and testing their understanding of how the cards work. When the interviewer was confident that the child or young person understood the task, the child or young person was given one of the research cards and after the child placed the card on the scale, the interviewer would ask open ended questions. An audio recorder was used to record the interviews for transcribing.

## Approach to analysis

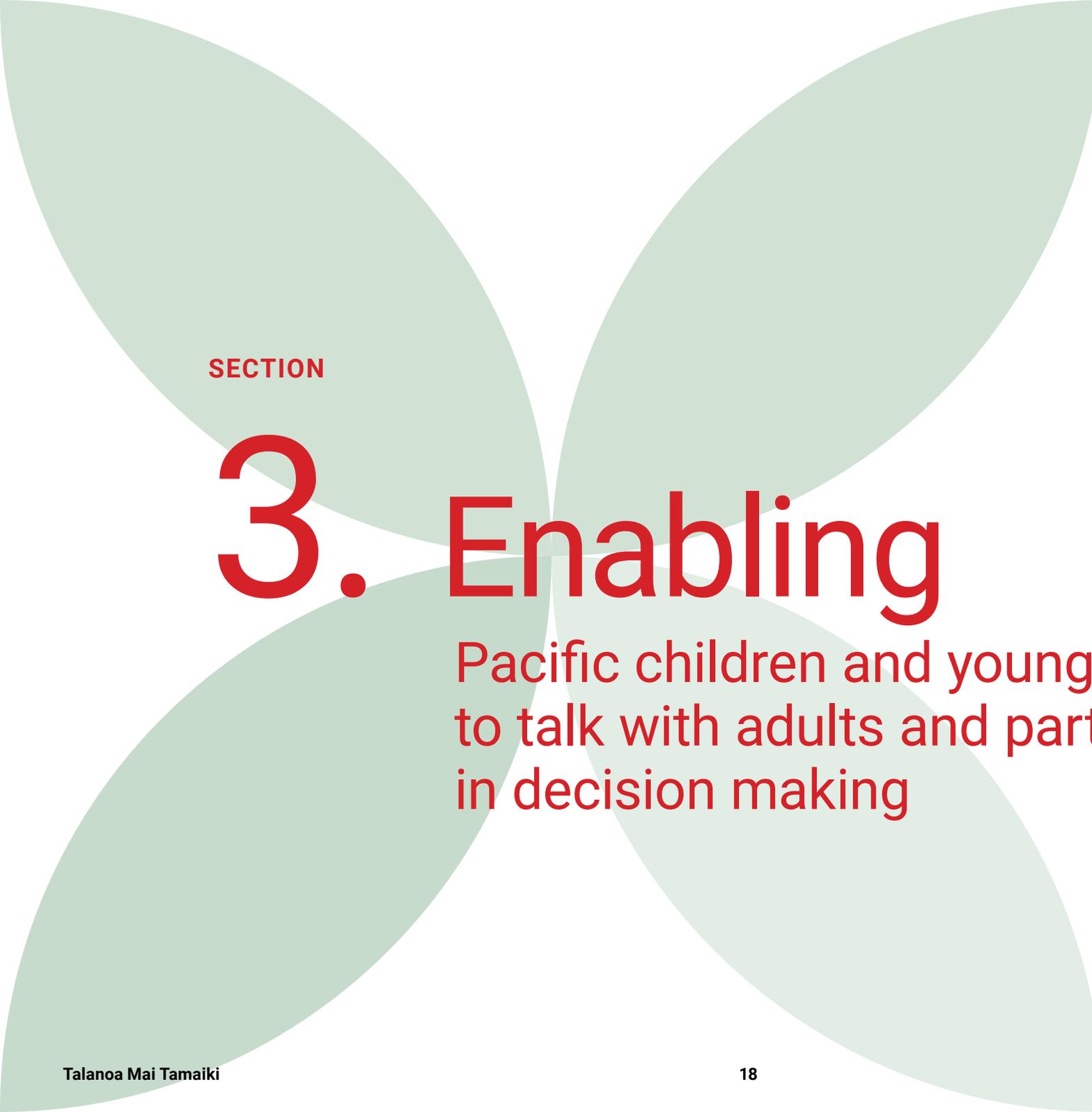
A collaborative process was used to analyse the data. The data was analysed by eight people as part of a two-day analysis *fono* (workshop), including three interviewers and five staff who were either part of the project team or had an interest in the project. Six of the eight analysis participants were of Pacific descent, including Samoan, Cook Island Māori, and Tongan. Their role was to provide cultural knowledge to assist with the interpretation of the data and agree on the key findings. Four of the Pacific participants had not been involved in the interviews and had an additional role to provide a critical and more objective perspective of the information and discussions.

## Confidentiality

Throughout this report, quotes and artwork from the Pacific children and young people interviewed are presented to illustrate key themes. The age, gender and ethnicity of a child or young person is provided where there is a low risk of them being identified. Where it has been determined that there is a high risk of identification, demographic information is not provided in the report. In some cases, for example large group interviews, it was not always possible to record which child or young person provided the quote. In these situations, demographic information is not provided and is categorised as 'unknown'.

## Limitations

Due to the small numbers of children and young people who participated in this study, it is not possible to generalise about the experiences of all Pacific children and young people in care. It is also not possible to extract themes relevant to specific Pacific ethnic groups.



SECTION

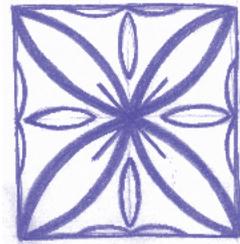
# 3. Enabling

Pacific children and young people  
to talk with adults and participate  
in decision making

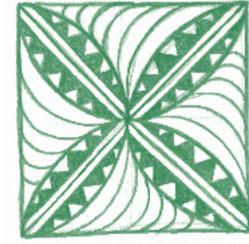
# Overall learnings



Pacific children and young people need to feel safe to have a voice



Pacific children and young people are more likely to share their views when adults build a relationship with them or with people they trust



Understanding the culture of Pacific children and young people helps them to share their views



# Pacific children & young people need to feel safe to have a voice

For many Pacific children and young people in care, talking with adults and having a say in decision-making is foreign and unsettling. When asked what might prevent them from sharing their views with adults, Pacific children and young people said that they would be afraid to share their views because they would be worried about the consequences for themselves and their family and they did not feel confident to speak with adults.

Other reasons Pacific children and young people did not feel confident to speak with adults included fear of authority and the power adults have in their lives, and their worry that they may not communicate their views well or get too angry or emotional to express themselves.

Pacific children and young people were also worried that their views would not be respected, valued or taken seriously by adults. They were worried that they would be told that their views were wrong, that adults would not believe them and that they would be put down.

*"I'm not good around... lots of people."*

16 years, male, Samoan

*"It might get my family in trouble, so I try and keep silent."*

17 years, female, Tongan/  
Tokelauan/Samoan

*"I don't like talking when there's lots of people. I feel funny and I get angry."*

12 years old,  
Tongan/Māori

*"Saying what you want to say but it gets turned down. They [adults] may not believe you."*

unknown source

*"A crowd of people disagreeing with what you are saying. It will make it harder."*

16 years, male, Samoan

# Pacific children & young people are more likely to share their views when adults build a relationship with them or with people they trust

Pacific children and young people are more likely to share their views and participate in decision-making when they are with and supported by adults in their lives who they trust and who care about them. Trusted adults included family members, friends, teachers, social workers and caregivers.

BE LOVING & CARING.  
CALM & DONT RUSH  
ME.  
LASTLY THEY MUST  
ALWAYS UNDERSTAND  
ME & WHAT IM GOING THROUGH.

Promise not to tell  
anyone only if ne-  
eded. They must  
be kind and car-  
ing. They must be  
understanding.

When Pacific children and young people were asked what adults need to do to enable them to feel safe to share their views and participate in decision-making, the most consistent message was that adults must understand where children and young people are coming from and what they are going through. They said it was important that adults:

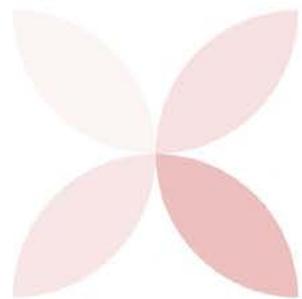
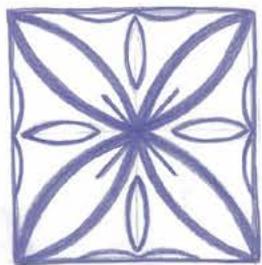
- listen and have a genuine interest in getting to know them
- are respectful and trustworthy
- make them feel safe and keep them safe
- are honest and reliable
- show kindness
- don't rush them to talk if they are not ready to.

*"My teacher – she's like a second mother to me. We have built a relationship and she calls me son...Whatever I say to her I trust she won't say anything to someone else."*

Male, 15 years old,  
Cook Island Māori/ Māori

*"My pops – he's understanding...he believes in both opinions – he bases his decisions on both sides."*

Male, 16 years old, Cook  
Island Māori/ Māori



# Understanding the culture of Pacific children & young people helps them to share their views

For some Pacific children and young people, engaging with adults that are of the same culture makes it easier to build rapport. One young person said that although he did not mind what culture his social worker was, it was helpful when the social worker was the same ethnicity because they were better able to communicate with his family.

Many of the Pacific children and young people interviewed came from diverse ethnic backgrounds including multiple Pacific backgrounds as well as Māori. Providing Pacific children and young people with an opportunity to talk about their cultural diversity enabled Pacific children and young people to feel valued and more comfortable to share their views.

Some Pacific children and young people said it can be intimidating talking with non-Pacific adults. Their reasons for feeling this way included believing that non-Pacific adults were smarter than them or feeling that non-Pacific adults would not understand them. Two young people said from their experience non-Pacific adults, particularly Palagi/Papa'a (Pakeha) adults, can be racist.

*"It's fun because when you have different cultures, they've got different dialects and different ways of bringing up children."*

**15 years old, Samoan/Tongan/  
Cook Island Māori/Māori**

*"They're like, "is that your skin colour" and that...and their like personality sort of."*

**10 years, female, Cook Island Māori/Māori**



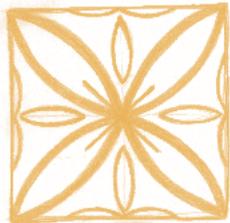


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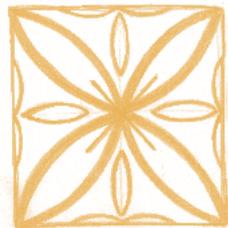
# 4. Connections

to family, cultural identity  
and faith

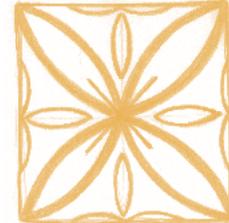
# Family



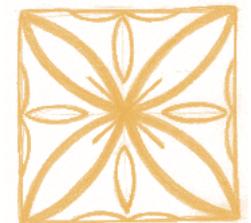
Pacific children and young people love and respect their families



Family is intertwined with culture, values and faith



Family is not just birth family



Pacific children and young people want to be accepted by their family



# Pacific children and young people love and respect their families

Most of the Pacific children and young people interviewed for this project lived with their families including either their mum or dad, a grandparent or an aunty. Most were settled, happy and appreciated that their families were there for them.

*"I love my poppa, my siblings and my nana for taking us in, for looking after us for over these six years, and yeah, I can't thank her [nana] enough for that. I love my father...I know my mum was a good person but, yeah, it just happened. So, yeah."*

10 years old, female, Cook Island Māori/Māori

*"They [family] taught me to be strong, they taught me to not be afraid of [anyone]. They taught me if you're afraid, just walk away and don't let anyone bully you, and be strong for yourself."*

11 years old, female, Samoan

*"I want to go to my family because they're nice."*

8 years old, female, Samoan

*"She [aunty] knows me really well, and even if things are not well, she will make it right and still help me."*

12 years old, male, Tongan

*"Our family is really happy together and... we love each other."*

11 years, female, Samoan

*"What I love about my house is the love and support...from my nan and my siblings and my poppa."*

10 years old, female, Cook Island Māori/Māori

A small number of young people we spoke with felt disconnected from their families or had negative experiences living with their families.

*"My blood family doesn't even like me."*

15 years, male, Cook Island Māori

*"Why do you think that they don't like you?"*

Interviewer

*"They think I'm like the bad boy. Yeah, and I bring shame or something."*

15 years, male, Cook Island Māori

One young person said that he did not want to see his father because he "gets angry fast" and two siblings talked about being treated badly by an aunty who looked after them for some time before they were placed in their father's care.

# Family is intertwined with culture, values and faith

Pacific children and young people who were living in stable placements with their families, were more likely to feel proud of and connected to their culture.

*“Like, I like my culture – like I have only seen pictures of the place [Tonga] and how aunty grew up there and I am close to my aunty and how she grew up there and it sounds cool. And how they know their place...and how they know two cultures.”*

10 years, male, Samoan/ Māori

*“I like to sing songs...and dad always sings too and when he has kava and he tells me he has to go sing. His group they go in the garage and you can hear them singing from the house.”*

11 years, female, Tongan/ Māori

Pacific children and young people who shared they had limited knowledge of their culture, understood that access to their culture was through their family.

*“We didn’t grow up learning our culture. Because we are mixed up with Māori and like other cultures and we never really knew about culture until we came home”*

11 years, female, Tongan/ Māori

*“What do you know about your Samoan side?”*

Interviewer

*“Um, oh, I don’t know about my Samoan side, but my dad told me that I was Samoan, you know.”*

10 years, male, Samoan/ Maori

*“Are you proud to be Samoan?”*

Interviewer

*“Mmm mmm [yes].”*

10 years, male, Samoan/ Maori

*“Why?”*

Interviewer

*“Because my dad’s Samoan.”*

10 years, male, Samoan/ Maori

Pacific children and young people with strong connections with their families were better able to articulate the values that are important to them. They were also more likely to feel positive about and actively participate in, faith-based activities. Some of the values Pacific children and young people said their families taught them included respect for themselves and others, telling the truth, listening, having faith and completing tasks.

*“[family] teach us good ways and being good and believe in Jesus and [to] help each other.”*

10 years, male, Tongan

*“They taught me to clean up so that when I’m older in my own house, I know what to do.”*

10 years, female, Tongan

*“We have to use our manners in our house and also ask before you use something.”*

10 years, female, Cook Island Māori/Māori

# Family is not just birth family

Some of the children and young people described family as not just being their birth family, but also included the adults and friends in their lives who matter to them and who treat them well.

A small number of young people told us they felt rejected by their birth family. As a result, they looked for other adults to replace their birth family and provide them with a sense of belonging.

When asked to describe her family, one child struggled to distinguish the difference between birth family and other adults and children in her life.

*“So when you think about family, who do you think about?”*

Interviewer

*“My mum, my dad, my siblings and that’s mostly it. Oh and some of my friends.”*

11 years, female, Samoan/Māori

*“You see them [friends] as your family as well?”*

Interviewer

*“One of them.”*

11 years, female, Samoan/Māori

*“Do you mind telling me about your family?”*

Interviewer

*“Um, oh, I’m adopted, miss, by a Māori family.”*

15 years, male, Cook Island Māori

*“So who adopted you?”*

Interviewer

*“My bro’s mum.”*

15 years, male, Cook Island Māori

*“So when you were thinking they [family] make you happy, you’re talking about your adoptive family that make you happy?”*

Interviewer

*“Yeah.”*

15 years, male, Cook Island Māori

*“And why’s that?”*

Interviewer

*“Just get treated better.”*

15 years, male, Cook Island Māori

*“Who is your family?”*

Interviewer

*“Me and my family next door and sometimes me and my brother come here and we can sleep over. And we play with the kids here.”*

10 years, female, Tongan/Samoan

# Pacific children and young people want to be accepted by their family

While most Pacific children and young people felt accepted by their families, there were two exceptions. One young person felt that their family did not accept them because they identified as transgender. The other young person felt that their family had rejected them because of their offending and the shame it brought to their family.

*"It's kind of like hard because I don't get along with my Samoan family."*

details withheld

*"Why is that?"*

Interviewer

*"Because of how I'm trans...they don't really accept it. They think I'm just gay."*

*No, I'm fully fledged."*

details withheld

*"You mentioned just before that it's hard with your family who have strong religious beliefs and for you being transgender."*

Interviewer

*"Yeah, 'cos Jehovah's Witnesses, they're against homosexuality. Homosexuality is, like a sin...a man shall not lay [with] another man for unnatural purposes. That's what it says in the Bible, if I'm correct."*

details withheld

*"So you left home at 10?"*

Interviewer

*"Yeah."*

details withheld

*"Did you run away from your family because you were trans?"*

Interviewer

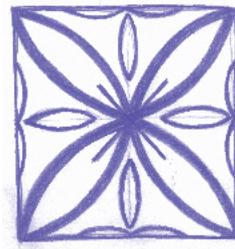
*"Yeah. They didn't accept it. It's really hard, but you know."*

details withheld

# Cultural Identity



Knowledge of culture can create happiness, pride and a strong sense of belonging



Most Pacific children and young people, particularly younger children, associate culture with food, dance and music



Pacific children and young people in care may have limited understanding of their culture

Knowledge of culture  
creates happiness,  
pride and a strong  
sense of belonging

Pacific children and young people  
who were connected to their culture  
expressed pride in their cultural heritage  
and had a strong sense of belonging.

*"I've been taught to get a  
bowl with soapy water for my  
elders when they are eating.  
That way they don't need to  
get up to wash their hands."*

12 years old, male, Tongan

*"Where my nana comes  
from is...and my poppa  
comes from...Because there's  
15 islands in Cook Islands...  
which represents the 15 stars  
on the Cook Islands flag."*

10 years old, female,  
Cook Island Māori/ Māori

*"What kind of cultural things do you do?"*

Interviewer

*"I once joined the Samoan group at our old school."*

10 years, male, Samoan/ Māori

*"Culture is the beach, certain food like koko laisa and kopai."*

8 years, female, Samoan

# Most Pacific children and young people, particularly younger children, associate culture with food, dance and music

When children and young people were asked to describe what culture means to them, many associated culture with food, dance and music. Some of the children and young people who were not taught about their culture directly from their family, talked about how they had participated in cultural activities through school.

*"I...like watching boys do sasa because they do it hard."*

11 years, female, Samoan

*"I seen my nana cook it [Cook Island potato salad known as minus]. My Nan makes potatoes and then she takes them out...The veggies, the beetroot, the mayo and also the egg."*

10 years, female, Cook Island Māori/ Māori

# Many Pacific children and young people have a limited understanding of their culture

Many Pacific children and young people interviewed for this project had not visited their homelands and had limited knowledge of their language and/or cultural history. Where children identified that their parents could speak a Pacific language, they said that their parents mainly spoke with them in English.

Some children and young people who identified as Pacific and Māori also had limited knowledge of their Māori whakapapa.

Despite Pacific children and young people having limited cultural knowledge, most were proud of their Pacific and/or Māori heritage.

For a small number of children and young people, culture was not seen as an important part of their lives.

*"I don't know much [language]. Mum knows a bit but it's mostly Nana. Mum can speak but is not fluent. I can't speak."*

15 years old, male, Samoan

*"Does your dad speak Samoan?"*

Interviewer

*"He can"*

11 years, female, Samoan/ Māori

*"Does he speak it to you?"*

Interviewer

*"No, he speaks English."*

11 years, female, Samoan/ Māori

*"Because I'm lucky to have the culture, to be the culture that I am."*

10 years, female, Cook Island Māori/Māori

*"I like the lifestyle [living in the Pacific Islands] I would like to live on the islands for a little bit, but not forever."*

15 years, male, Samoan/Niuean

*"I mean Māori had made a deal with the United States."*

11 years, female, Samoan/ Māori

*"Oh with the Treaty of Waitangi?"*

Interviewer

*"Yep."*

11 years, female, Samoan/ Māori

*"Are you proud to be Māori?"*

Interviewer

*"Yep, because of that, yep."*

11 years, female, Samoan/ Māori

*"Why's that?"*

Interviewer

*"We didn't really have a choice. Māori didn't have a choice. If they didn't sign it, they would have been attacked."*

11 years, female, Samoan/ Māori

*"Do you know what your iwi is?"*

Interviewer

*"Iwi?"*

10 years, male, Samoan/ Māori

*"Do you know what an iwi is?"*

Interviewer

*"Oh, family – mountain?"*

10 years, male, Samoan/ Māori

*"It's a river."*

11 years, female, Samoan/ Māori

*"...if you are Māori you will have an iwi."*

Interviewer

*"Yeah, I don't know."*

11 years, female, Samoan/ Māori

*"I don't know much about my Niue side."*

15 years, male, Samoan/ Niuean

*"When you think about your culture, what do you think about?"*

Interviewer

*"Um, I don't think about my culture, it's only when someone talks to me about it."*

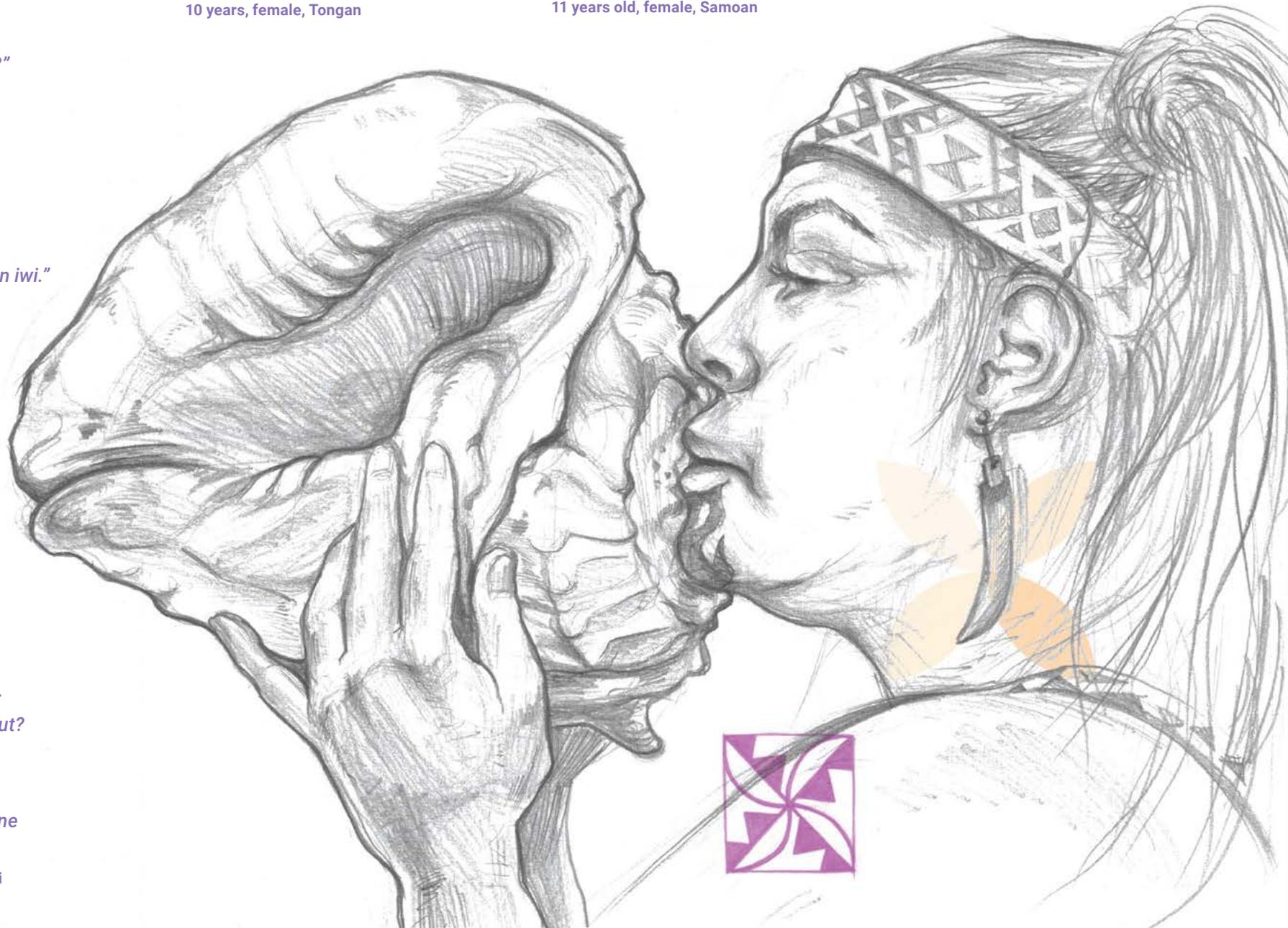
15 years, male, Cook Island Māori

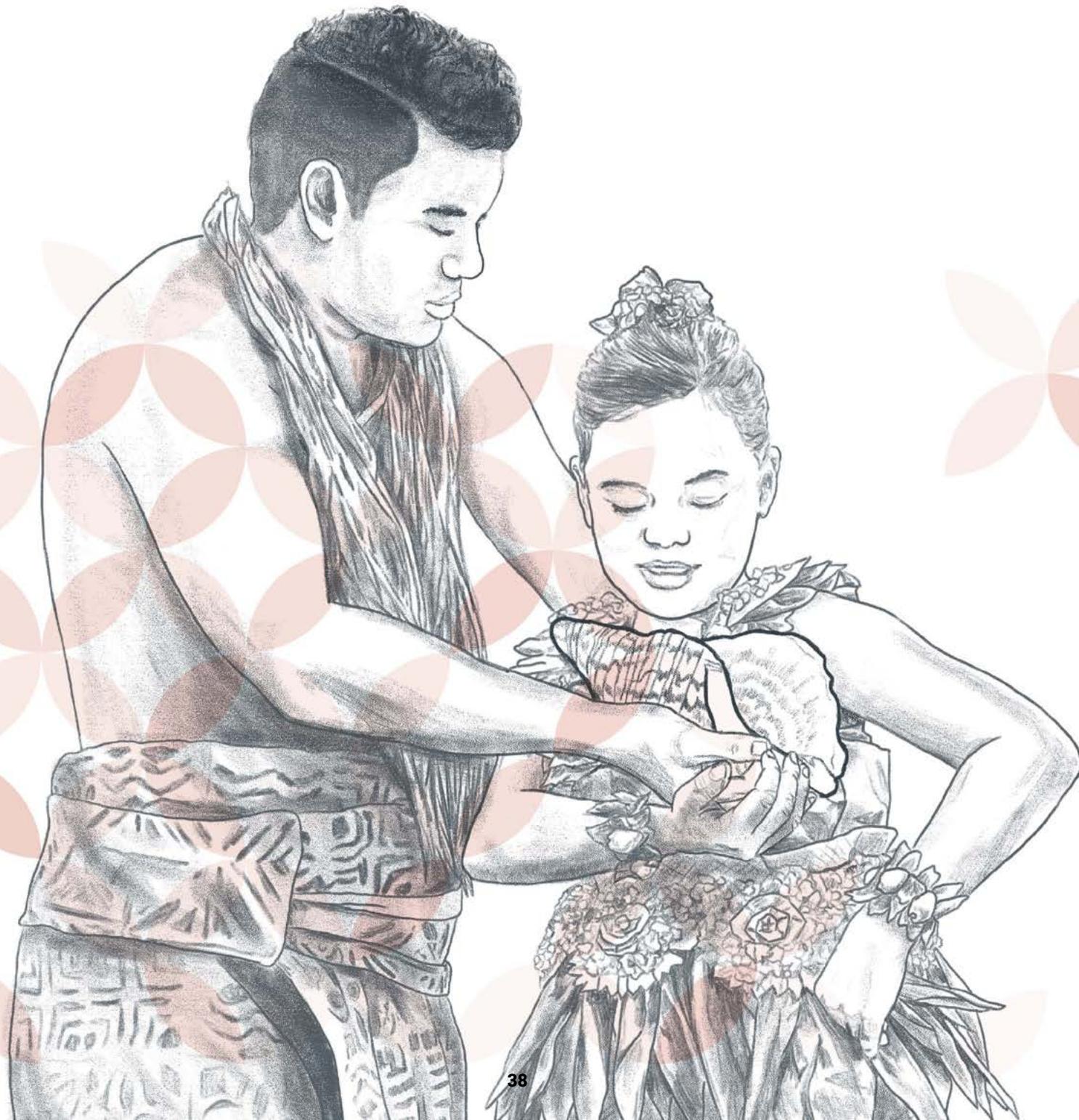
*"I don't know where I come from and I don't know how to speak my cultures."*

10 years, female, Tongan

*"I come from New Zealand... I've never been to Samoa... and I'm from Samoa."*

11 years old, female, Samoan





# Faith



Most Pacific children  
and young people  
believe in the  
existence of God



Some enjoy the  
routines of church  
while others find these  
routines boring



# Most Pacific children and young people believe in the existence of God

When asked to describe what faith means to them, most children and young people described faith as being about God, Jesus and church. Most children and young people believed in the existence of God, including those that did not attend church regularly. About one third of the children and young people interviewed attended church regularly, whilst others did not attend church at all.

A small number of young people said that they did not believe that there was a God or did not believe in attending church.

*"I don't have a faith due to, like to me, the Bible was made from man, not God."*

15 years old, Samoan/  
Tongan/ Cook Island  
Māori/ Māori

*"I like going to church and praying to God."*

9 years, female, Cook  
Island Māori/ Māori

*"Faith is about Jesus the bible and it makes me feel good."*

11 years, female, Tongan

*"I used to go to church a lot when I was young, but since I was nine years old, I don't believe in it, but I have respect for it."*

15 years old, male,  
Samoan/Niuean

*"When reading the bible and talking about God and Jesus it feels like I'm reading with Jesus."*

10 years, female, Tongan/  
Samoan/Cook Island Māori

# Some enjoy the routines of church while others find these routines boring

Children who attended church regularly talked about the activities of church and how they enjoyed many of those activities.

Whilst some children and young people enjoyed church activities, others didn't enjoy church because it was boring.

*"Faith makes me happy...  
the pastor is kind."*

8 years, female, Samoan

*"Faith makes me  
happy - we sing songs  
that I love...we pray  
and we shake hands."*

11 years, female, Samoan

*"...God's a happy thing...and  
they're [church participants  
are] always happy and  
always dressed up."*

10 years, female,  
Cook Island Māori/Māori

*"Faith makes me  
happy because we  
sometimes have  
morning tea."*

8 years, female,  
Samoan

*"Faith makes me  
happy because  
church is short."*

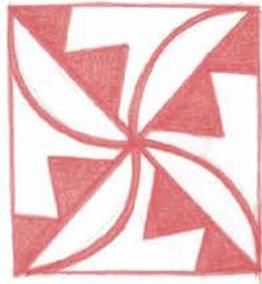
8 years, female,  
Samoan

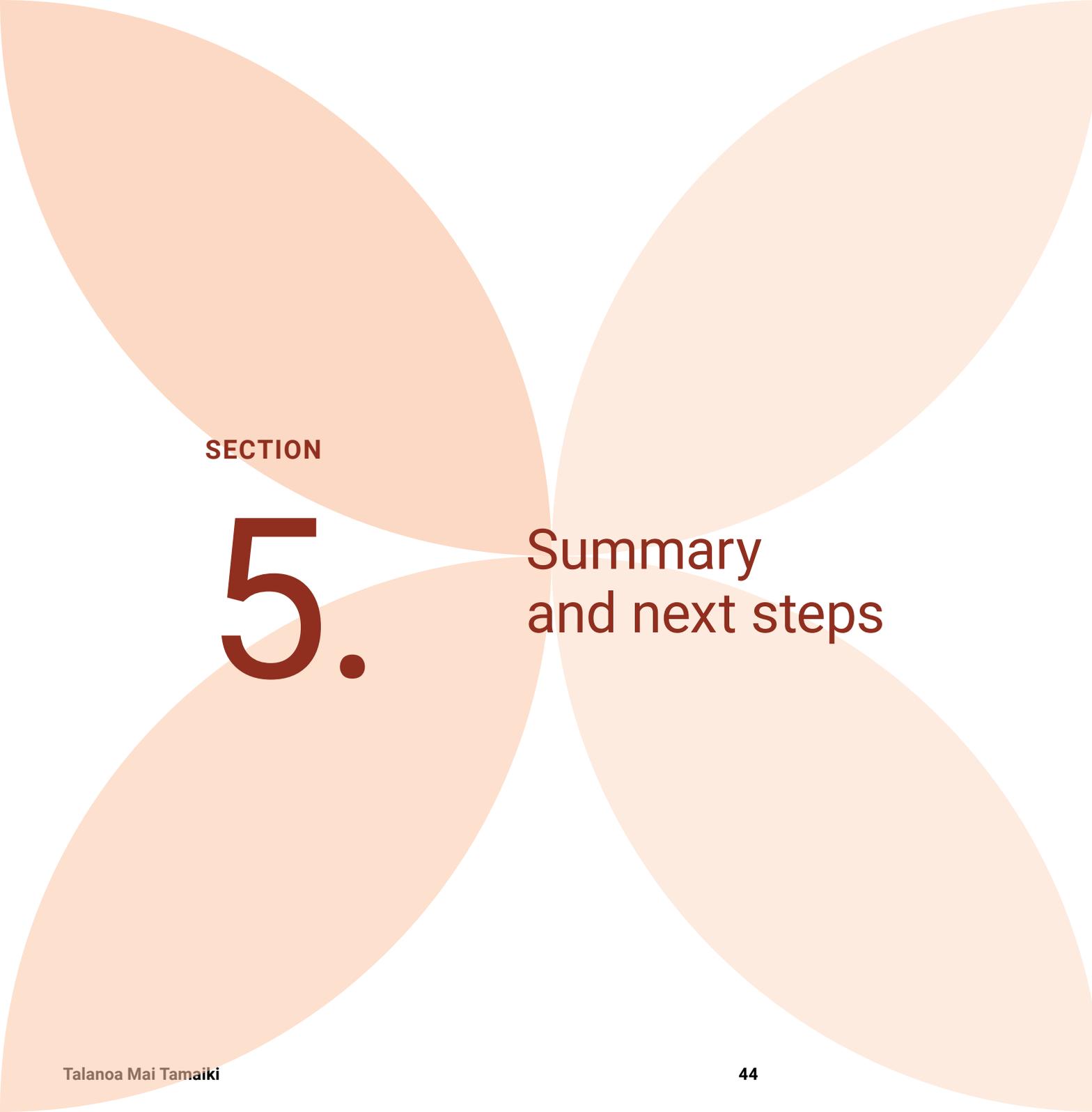
*"It's [church] is  
too boring."*

13 years, male,  
Cook Island Māori/Māori

*"Church can be  
boring sometimes."*

10 years, female,  
Cook Island Māori/Māori





SECTION

5.

Summary  
and next steps

## Table 2

Summary of key finding from interviews with Pacific children and young people in care

The following table provides a summary of the key findings from the Pacific children and young people in care that we interviewed.

<b>THEME</b>	<b>FINDINGS</b>
Enabling Pacific children and young people in care to have a voice	<p>Pacific children and young people need to feel safe to have a voice.</p> <p>Pacific children and young people are more likely to share their views when adults build a relationship with them or with people they trust.</p> <p>Understanding the culture of Pacific children and young people helps them to share their views.</p>
Experiences Pacific children and young people in care have of family	<p>Pacific children and young people love and respect their families.</p> <p>Family is intertwined with culture, values and faith.</p> <p>Family is not just birth family.</p> <p>Pacific children and young people want to be accepted by their family.</p>
Experiences Pacific children and young people in care have of cultural Identity	<p>Knowledge of culture can create happiness, pride and a strong sense of belonging.</p> <p>Most Pacific children and young people, particularly younger children, associate culture with food, dance and music.</p> <p>Pacific children and young people in care may have a limited understanding of their cultural heritage and language.</p>
Experiences Pacific children and young people in care have of faith	<p>Most Pacific children and young people believe in the existence of God.</p> <p>Some enjoy the routines of church while others find these routines boring.</p>

## Next steps

Key findings in this report will be used to:



raise awareness of the experiences of Pacific children and young people in care



inform practice and influence initiatives involving Pacific children, young people and their families



advocate for further engagements with Pacific children, young people and their families who have had contact with Oranga Tamariki services, to better understand their needs and experiences.



# Appendices

## Appendix one

### Example information sheet

Oranga Tamariki Interviews with Pacific children

February 2020

Information sheet for children being interviewed

We would like to invite you to take part in an interview about what helps Pacific children tell adults what they think and what they want, when they are being cared for. We also want to talk with you about what makes you happy and what makes you feel connected to family, communities, culture, faith and values.

We'd like to talk to you about these things so we can let social workers know how best to help Pacific children have a say about things that matter to them and to help them stay connected to these things.

Your social worker or caregiver will help you understand what this project is about and how you could be part of it, then you can decide if you want to take part.

**WHERE WILL THE INTERVIEW TAKE PLACE?**

We will meet you at a place that you feel comfortable (home, school, Oranga Tamariki Office). We will talk and if you want, we can do some drawing or play games while we talk.

If you would like your caregiver or social worker with you to help you feel comfortable that's OK

---

**HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?**

The interview will take about 45 minutes. It might be shorter than this or longer. That's completely up to you how long you want to talk with us.

---

**DO I HAVE TO JOIN IN?**

No. It's completely up to you whether or not you take part. It's not a test and there are no right or wrong answers.

Sometimes it can be hard to talk about things that happen to you. If there's something that you don't want to talk about, you don't have to. If you feel upset and want to talk to someone about it, you can tell the interviewer or your social worker and they can find the right person to help.

If you start joining in but then don't want to keep going, that's ok.

---

**WHAT DO I GET OUT OF BEING PART OF THE INTERVIEW?**

The things you say will be used to help other children in care. You will also receive a \$25 Warehouse voucher to thank you for helping us.

---

**WHAT INFORMATION WILL BE RECORDED?**

If you agree, we will write down what you tell us and record your voice so we can listen to your ideas later and make sure we don't miss anything. The recording will be written up and the recording will be destroyed.

If there was anything you shared but would like to change or remove, you can let us know.

---

**WHO WILL KNOW WHAT I SAID?**

Any information about you will be kept private. No one except the people working on this project will see it. We may share some of what you say, but we won't write your name anywhere, so no one will know who said it.

Your name will not be shared with anyone unless we are worried about your safety or the safety of someone else. If this happens, and we need to share something you said, we will do our best to tell you before we do it.

---

**WILL I GET TO SEE WHAT YOU FIND OUT?**

Yes! We will send you a summary of what we found out.

---

**WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?**

If you are worried or want to ask questions, your caregiver or social worker can help you. You can also contact (name of contact person).

---

# Appendix two

## Example consent forms

### Things to know

Before you agree to take part in the interview, you need to know that:

taking part in the interview is your choice and you can stop at any time without having to say why

if anything happens in the interview that upsets you, you can tell the person running the interview and they will find someone to help you

you will receive a koha of a \$25 Warehouse voucher to thank you for taking part

the person running the interview will get in touch with your social worker to tell you what happened as a result of the things you shared in the interview

if you are worried about how information about you is treated, you can complain to the Privacy Commissioner on 0800 803 909 or online at [www.privacy.org.nz/about-us/contact](http://www.privacy.org.nz/about-us/contact).

### Things to agree to

There are some things that are important for you to understand and agree to before the interview can go ahead. Please tick beside each statement if you understand and agree.

- I understand that this interview is about what helps me to have a say in stuff about me and the things that make me happy. Some of the questions I will be asked include:  
What helps you to feel listened to?  
What makes you happy?  
What makes you feel connected to your family and community?
- I understand that taking part in this interview is totally up to me. I don't have to answer every question if I don't want to and I can stop any time, without having to say why.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the interview without having to say why.
- If I withdraw there will not be any negative consequences.
- I understand that some of the things I say may be shared, but my name won't be written with them, so no one will know it was me who said them.
- I understand that if someone is concerned about my safety, or the safety of others, they will tell someone who can help me. If possible they will talk to me before they do this.
- I understand any recordings of what I say will be stored securely in a locked cabinet or folder.

## Things to choose

There are also some other things that you have a choice about. Please tick the boxes below depending on what you would like to happen.

1. I consent for the people interviewing me to:

- Write down what I say
- Record my voice

2. I consent for the things I say to be shared (anonymously) with:

- Other people who work for Oranga Tamariki
- Other people (not just people from Oranga Tamariki)

3. I consent to being contacted if the people interviewing me have any follow-up questions:

- Yes
- No

Consent from child/ young person:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your details (you don't have to write anything here if you don't want to):

Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Consent from parent:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to child: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_





**ORANGA  
TAMARIKI**  
Ministry for Children

Te Kāwanatanga o [Aotearoa](#)