

**Mātātahi tū, hāpori ora**  
**Stronger young people,**  
**thriving communities**

**Winston Churchill Fellowship on**  
**Positive Youth Development**

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Mātātahi tū, hapori ora.

# Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of a Winston Churchill Fellowship focussed on positive youth development (PYD), with travel to the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK). The objectives of the Fellowship were twofold; to enhance my understanding of PYD and to research how PYD can be adapted and applied in Aotearoa New Zealand, to encourage authentic engagement and contribution of young people in community and philanthropy.

A review of the contemporary literature both in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally informed the first phase of this research. PYD is an approach that focusses on building and nurturing the inherent strengths of young people in order to promote their healthy development. PYD research is positioned in a relational developmental systems metatheory, and there are many frameworks and models used to explain PYD. PYD research and programmes are motivated by a social justice and social change agenda.

The 5 Cs model is explored in this Fellowship, which suggests that when a young person's internal strengths align in a resource-rich environment, inter-relationships occur that result in the 5 Cs of Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character and Caring. Over time, these constructs then predict the Sixth C of Contribution, where a young person develops their sense of agency, responsibility and the importance of actively engaging in making positive changes in their communities and the wider world. Effective youth development programmes elicit the 6 Cs.

The Fellowship travel itinerary encompassed meetings with a diverse range of people and organisations within the ecosystem of PYD. The research approach employed a combination of exploratory research, discussions, interviews, visits to places of youth development, observations of programs and activities, attendance at team meetings, and participation in forums and programme events. Key questions centred on understanding the PYD frameworks used by organisations, the purpose and theory of change behind these frameworks, strategies to increase engagement and contribution of young people, and the challenges and opportunities faced by the sector.

The findings of this Fellowship provide valuable insights into PYD and its potential application in Aotearoa New Zealand. These learnings highlight effective approaches, structural considerations, and enablers that can promote thriving among young people, the sector, and communities. Grouped by different actors within the ecosystem, the learnings aim to inform and inspire.

For everyone:

- focus on creating systemic change
- genuinely involve young people
- shift to an optimistic view on young people; and
- recognise rangatahi as leaders.

For those working in philanthropy:

- invest in PYD, including funding large-scale PYD research in Aotearoa New Zealand

- foster collaboration
- remove funding hurdles
- partner for the long term with youth development organisations
- honour overhead; and
- pay good wages for people doing good – especially when research consistently cites it is the people who support young people who have a fundamental influence on their developmental journey.

For those in governance roles:

- involve young people on your boards and in your decision making.

For PYD practitioners and organisations:

- In Aotearoa, continue developing home-grown Māori youth development models
- ensure the essential 'Big 3' elements of PYD are in programmes (positive and sustained positive relationships between young people and adults; life-skill building activities; and youth leadership opportunities)
- stack leadership opportunities within programmes
- encourage development of purpose; and
- partner with and employ young people.

For the PYD sector, researchers, policy-makers and allies:

- continue strengthening the youth development ecosystem.

In conclusion, the findings of this research report emphasise the promise and inherent value of young people, and the role that PYD plays in supporting their healthy development. By emphasising the strengths of young people and providing opportunities for engagement and contribution, PYD can help address the social issues of our time and create a stronger, more vibrant community.

The Winston Churchill Fellowship provided a unique opportunity to connect with and learn from leaders in the ecosystem of PYD in the US and UK. The global perspective gained through this experience has been invaluable and the challenges and opportunities identified can be easily translated to the Aotearoa New Zealand context. Here, youth development practice often assumes a PYD perspective, and local, culturally relevant research, models and frameworks are burgeoning.

As individuals, organisations, and communities, we have the responsibility to support and empower young people as they navigate the challenges and opportunities of adolescence and early adulthood. Investing in young people is not only an investment in their potential, but also in their whānau, their school, their community, our society and ultimately a world we all can thrive in.

# Introduction

## Winston Churchill Fellowship

Founded to honour the memory of Sir Winston Churchill, the Fellowships provide New Zealanders with the opportunity to travel and study internationally. The aim is for Fellows to return home armed with new knowledge, skills, networks and inspiration to be shared within their circles, sector and communities for the benefit of Aotearoa New Zealand.

My Fellowship supported travel to the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK) to connect with community and philanthropic organisations involved in positive youth development.

The intention was to:

- further learn and strengthen my own understanding of positive youth development from observing its applications in international settings.
- inform how positive youth development may be further adapted and applied in Aotearoa New Zealand to encourage authentic engagement with, and contribution of, young people in community and philanthropy.

## Fellowship Report

This report collates and shares the knowledge gained through my Fellowship for the purpose of completing my Fellowship requirements. It includes the background to this research and offers my key learnings which are interconnected with recommendations. A more extensive summary of learnings from each person and/or organisation is included in the Appendix.

## Key Learnings

Combined with my practical experience in the community and philanthropy sectors, the review of contemporary youth development research both internationally and in the Aotearoa New Zealand context, deepened my understanding of PYD. I had the opportunity to apply and test this knowledge in various settings through engagements during my Fellowship travel. These interviews involved people from across the PYD ecosystem, from sector leaders to youth development practitioners, educators to academics. As a result, I identified numerous effective opportunities to leverage PYD for enhancing the engagement and contribution of young people in community and philanthropy. The breadth of these learnings has been extensive, making it challenging to summarise them within this report. Nonetheless, these collective insights shed light on the broader structures, actors and enablers that can foster thriving among young people and our communities. These interrelated learnings are interconnected with recommendations and are presented alongside the Appendix, which outlines my key insights gathered from each person and/or organisation.

## For everyone

- **Focus on creating systemic change**

This is what young people continue asking for.

This is my most important learning, through my deepened understanding of PYD.

This also has to go first because without the system changing, we will not create a world where everyone thrives.

Systems change is about advancing equity through an intentional process to shift the conditions that hold a problem in place. Systems change aims to create lasting change by altering underlying structures and supporting mechanisms to address complex challenges and create sustainable, long-term impact. These structures and mechanisms include policies, practices, resource flows, relationships and connections, power dynamics and mental models.

One example of systems change needed for PYD is to fix the broken system that not-for-profits operate within. Society's expectations are that charities - including PYD organisations - must operate on shoestring budgets, rely heavily on volunteers, limit compensation on salaries, and keep overhead down. This undermines the ability of this sector to address complex social issues effectively by limiting their growth, ability to attract and retain top talent, scale, experiment, innovate, evaluate and potentially solve the biggest issues of our time.

We all need to aggregate better around common goals for solving societies' problems. For years we have tried to solve social problems in silos, as if they are disconnected from one another. Solving all of them together is the only way we will ever solve any one of them.

Interestingly, several people - including global thought-leaders Dr Pamela Cantor and Dr Jacqueline Lerner - noted the size of Aotearoa New Zealand is a strength for us to leverage. The much larger populations of the UK and US make their efforts more daunting, whereas our population size, geographical size and comparatively smaller youth development ecosystem works in our favour. There are obviously complex challenges for Aotearoa New Zealand to overcome, however systems change here feels possible.

- **It's not just the youth sector who need to involve young people**

Participation and genuine involvement at policy and decision-making level needs to be done across government, the private and public sector.

- **Shift to an optimistic view on young people**

How all adults within the community view young people is important because high quality adult-youth relationships are seen as a primary mechanism of change (Deane & Dutton, 2020). Push back against the storm and stress narrative and deficit thinking about young people. Labelling young people "at-risk" on the basis of their behaviour

drives a deficit-focus. Taking a PYD approach counters prevailing and persistent negative narratives (in literature, media and society) that surround outcomes for marginalised young people. If we want transformative change, we need mindsets to shift, and PYD offers a powerful discourse shift on how we value young people.

- **Recognise that young people are already leading**

Terms such as 'leaders of the future' and the 'next generation' are overused and downplay how young people can and are leading, contributing, finding solutions and adding value now. 'Futurity' acknowledges the potential of young people but positions this value in futuristic terms. Young people are already leading, for example in the digital world, in celebrating diversity and by calling for urgent action in response to the climate crisis (younger people are more affected by climate change because it is of most relevance to their lifespan; it is no wonder they want to lead this). To enable young people to contribute to the solutions, recognise they are already leading and walk alongside them.

## **For those working in philanthropy**

- **Invest in PYD research, programmes, organisations and the sector**

PYD is an excellent return on investment. When young people are developed, they contribute. They continue to contribute as adults. They then further catalyse PYD by being more likely to include young people themselves when they are adults. This investment creates an upward spiral of feedback.

- **Fund and partner in PYD for the long, long-term**

Each of my conversations with not-for-profits cited funding as their biggest challenge. Every. Single. One.

It cannot be overstated how this limits the growth and impact of not-for-profits. From their inability to innovate (too risky), take out long-term loans for infrastructure critical to their operations (too much overhead), dream (too expensive) or attract and retain employees (too little pay). Funders need to move to 'value investment' partnerships that are longer than 10 years - long enough to "build the solution, prove the solution and scale the solution" (Dr Pamela Cantor, personal communication).

- **Invest in the long-term running of programmes**

Even though they may not be as bright and shiny as new collaborations, organisations and programmes that have been operating successfully for decades still need funding. Maintaining, evaluating and growing programmes needs more funding, not less.

- **Fund large-scale PYD research in Aotearoa New Zealand**

Deane and colleagues (2020) expressed the need for more work to build a fuller picture of wellbeing for young people, especially exploring the complexities of systemic factors. In Aotearoa New Zealand, the availability of research funding is limited and the fields of humanities and social sciences (where a lot of youth development research happens) do not attract the same level of external research funding compared to other disciplines.

Without access to substantial funding resources, PYD researchers face significant challenges in undertaking large-scale projects aimed at addressing these complexities.

- **Pay good wages for people doing good**

Youth development research consistently cites that it is the people who support young people who have a fundamental influence on their developmental journey. Youth practitioners are allies, important people and connecting agents for young people and their relationships are fundamental to positive youth development. Increase salaries of youth practitioners, from youth workers in programmes to teachers in schools. Just like in the for-profit sector, people in not-for-profits do their jobs better when they are well-remunerated.

- **Fund overhead**

Recognise people are important overheads in not-for-profit organisations and are especially vital in youth development organisations. The traditional focus on overhead ratio as a measure of not-for-profit efficiency is flawed and hinders social progress. The concept of overhead needs to be re-evaluated and re-defined to include essential investments in infrastructure, marketing, and talent that are necessary for not-for-profits to achieve their missions effectively. Dan Pallotta is a world-leading authority on this and emphasises that not-for-profits should be allowed to invest in these areas to grow and maximise their impact, rather than being penalised for spending on administrative costs. He advocates for a shift towards measuring not-for-profit effectiveness based on outcomes and societal impact, rather than emphasising low overhead costs.

- **Increase open collaboration**

Funders joining forces to tackle the big, complex issues of our time is crucial and clever. Together, funders can identify gaps, avoid duplication, and find ways to work more efficiently. Other funders who are more aware of each other's activities can make better decisions about how to maximise their resources.

Entities like the Funders Collaborative Hub and Young People's Foundations Trust exist to scale impact by providing best-practice, open-source information and templates for other organisations and groups to follow. One example from the Hub included an example of a trust funder and a local council collaborating on a strategic work partnership that involved the development of a 'barter economy' for youth development organisations to share and borrow staff. This was only made possible by the funders joining forces, instead of creating competition for funding.

- **Redesign funding processes**

Competitive funding processes disincentive collaboration. Short-term funding sometimes is not worth the effort of applying. Reporting and accountabilities take time. Make it all easier.

- **Involve young people in your organisation's decision-making**

Young people are often the beneficiaries of philanthropy, with a growing number of charities existing to serve them. However, although young people are central to the purpose of these organisations, they are usually not at the decision-making table. The 'end-users' of youth services whom funders intend to serve often have little or no influence on your organisations' decisions. Share decision-making power and utilise participatory practices - for example, NPC's Spectrum of User Involvement, to ensure the voices of those impacted are centred (Lamb, 2022). Co-design, co-production and user-led approaches are the most effective for people with lived experience having a more substantial influence on shaping and sharing decisions.

## **For those in governance roles**

- **Involve young people on your boards**

"If you're working in the space of young people, you should have young people in your space. And a caveat to that: with lived experience" (Charlotte Lamb, personal communication). Inter-generational perspectives enable better decision making. Be aware the current voices in youth spaces can often be the most privileged young people. Challenge and change your board processes to be more inclusive of young people. Instead of a youth advisory group, consider different models, for example, a split of tuakana-teina (younger-older) or a younger board empowered by a senior advisory group.

- **Value lived experience alongside professional expertise**

Young people with lived experience of the issue being addressed are best placed to lead the change needed.

## **For PYD practitioners and organisations**

- **Continue home-grown youth development**

Aotearoa New Zealand is becoming an increasingly multicultural society, operating in a bi-cultural nation underpinned by Te Tiriti o Waitangi, in an increasingly globalised world. Resources and programmes that reinforce the cultural identities of young people is a powerful contribution to their positive development.

To repeat an earlier section from Deane and colleagues' report (2019):

Recognise, value and invest in youth development approaches informed first by home-grown Māori youth development models in concert with Western approaches – approaches that:

- 1) affirm young people's mauri,
- 2) enhance their mana,
- 3) are characterised by manaakitanga,
- 4) facilitate whanaungatanga,
- 5) remain mindful of young people's whakapapa, and
- 6) are informed by rich and diverse mātauranga. (p. 14)

- **Ensure the 'Big 3' are in your programmes**  
 Along with psychological and physical safety, the 'Big 3' are the essential elements of a PYD programme:
  - Positive and sustained relationships between young people and adults
  - Activities designed to build important life skills, and
  - Opportunities for youth to build agency through participation in and leadership of valued community activities. (Lerner, 2004).
  
- **Layer youth leadership opportunities in your programmes**  
 Youth leadership is a potent part of the 'Big 3' in growing contribution and engagement. Young people benefit when they are supported to engage in authentic participation, service and leadership opportunities. Through my Fellowship I observed many innovative ways of doing this - for example, Next Generation Politics create work experience opportunities across youth-led social media, youth-led podcasts and senior positions in their programme; IntegrateNYC have an intergenerational leadership model between young leaders and adult coaches; YPI create the opportunity for young people to lead engagement with the not-for-profit sector; The Prince's Trust exploit volunteering opportunities (see the Appendix). Emphasise and promote leadership opportunities through your programmes.
  
- **Encourage young people's development of purpose**  
 Purpose plays an important role in optimal youth development. Emphasise to young people the value of them contributing to a better world through citizenship, social justice, environmental guardianship, and healthy, equitable communities.
  
- **Partner with young people in your space**  
 Your organisation exists to serve young people; therefore, they should be genuinely involved at every level of your organisation. The approach you take to genuine involvement depends on the type of support and engagement required and also the influence the involvement will have on your decision-making. What is important is that it affects how your organisations make decisions. Youth-led participatory action research considers youth to be partners in creating and leading solutions to problems that affect them, this is an example of balancing power. Ensure youth involvement is made sustainable, consider accessibility, payment and timing which reinforces, reimburses, recognises and compensates young people's participation. Reporting back on the 'next steps' or the difference a young person's involvement has made is crucial.
  
- **Employ young people**  
 In PYD it is often helpful if the facilitators' identity matches the participants in the programme. 'Older' young people facilitating programmes can be tuakana. Career exposure and work experiences expand and then prioritise possible futures that young people can contribute to. Inspire young people into this sector, and develop them within

it, by making wages, work-life balance and career progression obvious, attainable, attractive and sustainable.

## **For the PYD sector, researchers, policy-makers and allies**

- **Continue strengthening the youth development ecosystem**

The building blocks for this sector are all in place - we are backed with a Ministry for Youth Development (MYD), and Ara Taiohi, the peak body for youth development in Aotearoa New Zealand.

MYD and Ara Taiohi see growing capacity within the sector as a key strategy. Youth practitioners are units of impact. Focussing on them is going upstream in pursuit of systems change. These people need to be adequately supported through accessible and research-informed training and education.

The current strategic plan for Ara Taiohi focuses on connecting the sector, raising standards of practice, championing youth development and promoting sustainability. MYD has a strategic leadership role across the youth sector, in government and as an advocate and champion of young people. During engagement with more than 1,200 rangatahi in October 2019, young people cited that they want to be involved in important government decisions, but the process is not always easy, and they do not feel like they are really heard or that action is taken. The Youth Plan 2020 - 2022 acknowledged that the government need to change how the system works with and for rangatahi (Ministry of Youth Development, 2022). MYD are currently refreshing their Youth Plan (Ministry of Youth Development, 2023) and this group of actors need to be engaging with its development.

Models like those of the Young People's Foundation (YPF) could be replicated in Aotearoa New Zealand. YPFs bring together organisations that work with children and young people in a local area, including local government, businesses, funders and with large and small charities. They place emphasis on understanding a local community's needs and priorities and involving young people in the research and co-design processes. Collectively, they raise and distribute funding, encourage collaboration and build capacity. These models can be powerful and effective, highly adaptive to local circumstances, while replicable at scale.

## **Fellowship Itinerary**

I designed my itinerary to connect with a large number of people and organisations who play key roles in the ecosystem of youth development in the UK and US.

Some organisations are leading the way in their development of positive youth development frameworks for marginalised communities (The Brotherhood Sisterhood Sol, YWCA); others are trying to redesign the systems and structures of these sectors to enable more collaboration,

funding and outcomes (Dan Pallotta, NPC, Funders Collaborative Hub); several are recognised leaders publishing critical research on youth development (Dr Jacqueline Lerner at Boston College; Dr Heather Malin at Stanford University); some are education institutions transforming learning (Codman Academy, Nativity Preparatory School) and some are delivering innovative and impactful positive youth development programmes (YPI Scotland, The Prince's Trust, Next Generation Politics).

This Fellowship provided an opportunity for exploratory research, offering the chance to engage in conversations and observations with experts and stakeholders in the field of PYD, as well as reflecting on my own experiences and insights.

Four phases of work were completed:

- a review of contemporary youth development research both internationally and in the Aotearoa New Zealand context
- travel to the UK and the US (August - October 2022) to meet with people and organisations (as outlined in the Appendix - Fellowship Itinerary)
- continued online meetings held in the months following travel; and
- synthesising the key learnings and insights, including a peer review (February - April 2023).

During the Fellowship travel, engagements included:

- discussions and interviews with people of the organisations
- visits and tours of youth development spaces and schools
- observing youth development programmes and activities, engaging with young people where possible and appropriate
- taking part in team meetings; and
- attending forums and programme events.

Key questions asked:

- What positive youth development frameworks are used in your organisation?
- What is the purpose or theory of change of these frameworks?
- How does your organisation grow engagement with young people in community and/or philanthropy?
- How is the contribution of young people in community and/or philanthropy valued and encouraged by your organisation?
- What are some of the challenges facing this work, your organisation and/or the sector that limit engagement of young people?
- What are some of the opportunities in this work, your organisation and/or the sector?

# Background

## Youth Development in the Aotearoa New Zealand Context

Much-needed research on Aotearoa New Zealand youth development has grown extensively over the last two decades. Ngā Tikanga Whānaketanga – He Arotake Tuhinga (Deane et al., 2019) is a literature review of contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand youth development research. It links to the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa which has been pivotal for the sector since its launch (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2002).

The report provides a broad and valuable oversight, Deane et al. (2019) summarise:

- Young people<sup>1</sup> in Aotearoa New Zealand are doing well but there is still work to be done.
- Most young people report holding strong positive relationships, good health and optimistic aspirations for their futures.
- Improvements in development and wellbeing, along with reductions in risk, have occurred for young people across the four largest ethnic groups: Pākehā<sup>2</sup>, Māori<sup>3</sup>, Pasifika<sup>4</sup> and Asian.
- Aotearoa New Zealand is becoming increasingly diverse, with an increasing number of young people who identify with more than one ethnicity. Young people continue to lead the way in understanding and celebrating diversity, and importantly, most young people are proud of their ethnic backgrounds. This pride is an important asset for their development.
- Research consistently demonstrates some young people's basic needs are not met, and this compounds for marginalised young people.
- Māori, along with other marginalised young people, still feel the effects of historic oppression and colonisation.
- Over a number of years, the Aotearoa New Zealand government has maintained a focus on targeting four priority groups, these are: rangatahi<sup>5</sup> Māori, Pasifika young people, rainbow young people<sup>6</sup> and disabled young people. Rangatahi in these priority groups experience disadvantage and marginalisation based on their ethnicity, sexuality, gender identity and disability. As a result, they are likely to experience worse health and wellbeing outcomes. Rangatahi who identify with more than one of these groups are at greater risk of marginalisation.

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<sup>1</sup> Generally aged 12 – 24 years, the current Ministry of Youth Development - Te Manatū Whakahiato Taiohi (MYD) definition, adapted from the United Nations' definition.

<sup>2</sup> New Zealanders of European descent.

<sup>3</sup> Māori are the tangata whenua (Indigenous people) of Aotearoa New Zealand.

<sup>4</sup> New Zealanders associated with, and descended from, the Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Islands outside of New Zealand itself.

<sup>5</sup> Younger generation, youth.

<sup>6</sup> The MYD Youth Plan (2020) uses 'rainbow young people' as an umbrella term to include all rangatahi who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, asexual, pansexual, gender diverse, gender fluid, transgender, takatāpui, intersex, fa'afafine, leiti, queer, or whose sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics differ from majority, binary norms.

In their review, Deane et al. (2019) put forward a number of recommendations including:

- Focus on systemic change to improve the environments in which young people are embedded.
- Disrupt entrenched mindsets that perpetuate oppression and prioritise Western ideals over Indigenous and other cultural perspectives.
- Grow research on the developmental experiences of marginalised young people, including those with intersecting, marginalised identities.
- Develop research-informed strategies and best practice guidelines to better support marginalised young people.
- Invest in building an evidence-base about young people in the digital world and bridge the generational digital divide - enable young people to lead this.
- Disseminate case exemplars of, and clear best practice guidelines for, authentic and effective youth participation involving diverse groups of young people.
- Invest resources in creating positive organisational, school, and family environments for young people.

Deane and colleagues' report (2019) concludes youth development in Aotearoa New Zealand needs to:

Recognise, value and invest in youth development approaches informed first by home-grown Māori youth development models in concert with Western approaches – approaches that:

- 1) affirm young people's mauri,
- 2) enhance their mana,
- 3) are characterised by manaakitanga,
- 4) facilitate whanaungatanga,
- 5) remain mindful of young people's whakapapa, and
- 6) are informed by rich and diverse mātauranga. (p. 14)

Definitions (noting more comprehensive understandings of these Te Ao Māori concepts can be found in the report):

**Mauri** - Potential, passion and identity

**Mana** - The authority we inherit at birth and accrue over our lifetime (agency, integrity)

**Manaakitanga** - Care, generosity and investment in relationships (where the collective responsibility lies with the side with greater power or authority)

**Whanaungatanga** - Inherent need for connection, sense of belonging and positive relationships, particularly with those considered whānau

**Whakapapa** - Systems that link cultural heritage, historical events, stories, and policies that have culminated in the here and now

**Mātauranga** - The importance of sharing the valuable knowledge we have accumulated from different perspectives and different sources over time to inform the way forward

(Deane et al., 2019)

## **Positive Youth Development & Wellbeing – Adolescent Health, Resilience & PYD**

Deane and Dutton (2020) published a further review on the factors that influence positive youth development and wellbeing, exploring the contemporary debates and tensions of different conceptualisations from three prominent international perspectives: adolescent health, resilience and PYD. Each perspective has a different slant on what is and what leads to positive youth development and wellbeing:

- Adolescent health research is characterised by an aim to better understand the risk and protective factors. This perspective is more problem-oriented, with an emphasis on reducing or eliminating maladaptive behaviours to develop well.
- Resilience research explores successful development in those who are up against the odds, who have or are facing considerable adversity. While the risk and protective factors framework is for those facing challenges, resilience research has moved towards strength-based approaches by including promotive factors, which are good for everyone regardless of whether they are currently experiencing adversity that interferes with their development.
- Positive Youth Development research emphasises a complex, systems-based understanding with a focus on young people thriving. This is the most strengths-based perspective. The capitalisation of PYD denotes this as a particular philosophy and metatheory of youth development.

Deane & Dutton (2020) summarise that these three different strands converge on the most common critical factors which include:

experiences of mastery tied to self-efficacy and a positive sense of self; self-regulation and other related life skills; school engagement and connection within a safe and supportive school setting; and supportive relationships with peers and adults who have high expectations and enforce clear boundaries. In particular, positive relationships and cohesion within the family unit and effective parenting skills – are consistently singled out as essential for young people’s positive development and wellbeing. (p. 6)

Alignment can exist between PYD programs aimed at improving thriving and those focused on promoting resilience in the face of adversity and trauma. Through utilising resources that enhance their capabilities and strengths, young people can overcome contextual challenges (Lerner, et al., 2021).

Importantly, although PYD is a prominent perspective in youth development practice, the balance of published research in Aotearoa New Zealand sides with adolescent health research (Deane & Dutton, 2020). This perspective is the least strengths-based and most popular approach to youth development research and may continue to perpetuate the storm and stress narrative that has historically underpinned research on adolescence (Arnett, 1999). The absence of a large-scale PYD research programme in Aotearoa New Zealand means we lack a full understanding of youth development and wellbeing.

## What is PYD?

PYD is an approach that focuses on building and nurturing the inherent strengths of young people in order to promote their healthy development. It emphasises the importance of providing opportunities for youth to participate in activities that are meaningful and engaging, and that help them develop the skills, knowledge, and abilities they need to become successful and productive adults (Lerner et al., 2005).

According to Lerner et al. (2005), PYD involves "an intentional, pro-social approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organisations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognises, utilises, and enhances young people's strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths." (p. 10)

The PYD conceptualisation of wellbeing is contribution and community focussed. Furthermore, contemporary PYD scholars believe that the responsibility of positive youth development is shared by whole schools and whole communities, not only youth development programmes. Positive Youth Development is therefore the most relevant perspective in the context of this Fellowship and explored further in this report.

Hamilton (1999) identified the field of PYD is tripartite and understood in at least three inter-related but different conceptualisations:

1. A developmental process (theory)
2. A philosophy or approach to youth programming (models or frameworks)
3. PYD-focussed programmes and organisations are considered an expression of PYD (programmes and delivery).

## PYD Theory

In the 1990s, shared interests in the fundamental process of human development, strengths-based conceptions of young people, and the mutually influential links between individuals and contexts coalesced to foster the concept of Positive Youth Development (Lerner, J. Personal Communication, October, 2022; Lerner, J., et al., 2009). Practice and research have continued to converge and evolve PYD, for example new information about the extraordinary plasticity of brain development (Cantor et al., 2019).

Contemporary PYD research, as well as resilience research, is situated within a Relational Developmental Systems (RDS) metatheory (Lerner & Callina, 2015). This emphasises that the process of development takes place within a complex and changing context, involving mutually influential relations.

While the positive youth development approach recognises the existence of adversities and developmental challenges that may affect children in various ways, it resists conceiving the development process mainly as an effort to overcome deficits and risk.

Instead, it begins with a vision of a fully able child eager to explore the world, gain competence, and acquire the capacity to contribute importantly to the world. The positive youth development approach aims at understanding, educating, and engaging children in productive activities rather than at correcting, curing, or treating them for maladaptive tendencies or so-called disabilities. (Damon, 2004, p. 15)

Promisingly, Lerner et al. (2021) highlight that young people's pathways through life are malleable:

That is, no matter where young people start in life, no matter the adverse character of their experiences and context (Masten, 2014; Masten et al., 2015), the development of every young person can be enhanced by aligning their strengths (including their biologically based plasticity; Cantor et al., 2019; Immordino-Yang et al., 2019) and the resources in their sociocultural contexts (e.g., Osher, Cantor, et al., 2020). (p. 1116)

## **PYD Models**

Many researchers have created frameworks, models and theories to explain PYD. Notable models include the 5 Cs of PYD (Lerner & Lerner, 2005), the Search Institute's Developmental Assets (Scales, 1999) and the Circle of Courage (Brokenleg & Van Bockern, 2003).

The 5 Cs model of Lerner and Lerner (2005) is likely the most well-known model in the youth development field. For the purpose of communicating concepts learned through this Fellowship, the 5 Cs will be referred to.

Lerner et al.'s (2005) theory of PYD suggests that when a young person's internal strengths align with a resource-rich environment, inter-relationships occur that result in the 5 Cs. The 5 Cs are defined as follows:

1. Competence: the ability to effectively function and adapt in different environments and activities.
2. Confidence: the sense of self-efficacy and belief in one's own abilities and potential.
3. Connection: the sense of belonging and attachment to others, including family, peers, school, and community.
4. Character: the development of values, morals, and ethical principles that guide behaviour.
5. Caring: the concern for others and the willingness to act on that concern.

These five constructs are distinct but inter-related facets of PYD that predict the 'Sixth C' of Contribution and other wellbeing outcomes over time (Lerner & Lerner, 2013).

6. Contribution: the sense of agency, responsibility and importance of actively engaging in making positive changes in their communities and the wider world.

## **PYD Programmes**

PYD programme design has been influenced by hundreds of studies that sought to identify the attributes of programmes that link to indicators of positive youth development. Lerner (2004)

proposes structured PYD programmes should comprise these 'Big 3' features of effective youth programmes:

- Positive and sustained positive relationships between young people and adults
- Activities designed to build important life skills, and
- Opportunities for youth to build agency through participation in and leadership of valued community activities.

When safety and the 'Big 3' characterise programme settings (both in-school and out-of-school), the probability of PYD and, as well, positive civic engagement and contributions to family, community, and civil society increases (Lerner et al., 2015).

PYD advocates maintain that PYD does not just happen through programmes, it is the responsibility of all community members, and they advocate for whole-community and whole-school approaches.

## **PYD & Social Justice**

One part of the PYD movement is the growing focus on the contributions that developmental science can make to advancing social justice (Fisher & Lerner, 2013). PYD research is motivated by a social justice and social change agenda and a hope that it will inform policy programming and practice. Lerner et al. (2021) propose that continued PYD research with a focus on social justice can "advance understanding of the impacts of systemic racism and health, education, and economic inequities on development and, as well, on the ways in which specific individual-context relations can promote thriving in these settings."

## **PYD in Aotearoa New Zealand**

Youth development practice in Aotearoa New Zealand often assumes a PYD perspective (Deane et al. (2019). Mana Taiohi are Aotearoa New Zealand's youth development principles and provide the foundation for work with young people in this nation (Ara Taiohi, 2019). Authored by the youth development sector, the principles are informed by young people, people who work with young people, Te Ao Māori and Aotearoa research and literature. The principles are interconnected, holistic and exist in relation to one another. They focus on the mana young people inherently hold – mauri, whakapapa, hononga, Te Ao Taiohi – and how a youth development approach enhances this mana through whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, whai wāhitanga and mātauranga.

**Definitions** (noting more comprehensive understandings of these Te Ao Māori concepts can be found in the Principles):

**Mana** – The authority we inherit at birth and accrue over our lifetime

**Mauri** – Life spark inherent in all young people

**Whakapapa** - Systems that link cultural heritage, historical events, stories, and policies that have culminated in the here and now

**Hononga** – Linked to whakapapa, it is about connection to people, land/whenua, resources, spirituality, the digital world and the environment

**Te Ao Taiohi** – The world of the young person, impacted by big picture influences such as social and economic contexts and dominant cultural values

**Whanaungatanga** - Inherent need for connection, sense of belonging and positive relationships, particularly with those considered whānau

**Manaakitanga** - Care, generosity and investment in relationships (where the collective responsibility lies with the side with greater power or authority)

**Whai wāhitanga** - Recognises young people as valued contributors to society, giving them space to participate, assume agency and take responsibility

**Mātauranga** - The importance of sharing the valuable knowledge we have accumulated from different perspectives and different sources over time to inform the way forward  
(Ara Taiohi, 2019)

The number of home-grown PYD models and frameworks is increasing, and so too is the demand for them. A current constraint of locally-grown PYD models and frameworks is that they are culturally relevant but less tested than more established international models and frameworks. More work and investment is needed to test and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of them.

We can learn from international models, and they can be applied here with some success however, there is a significant and valued group for whom these models will not work. By drawing on our Indigenous knowledge and perspectives, we have the potential to develop models that are more inclusive and better suited to more people, including those who have been left behind or harmed as a result. In the last decade there has been a growing body of theoretical literature addressing issues of diversity and specificity in the design of youth development programmes aimed at promoting PYD. If culturally informed PYD is to be promoted, then specificity at both the individual and programme levels is critical. Specificity refers to the idea that specific needs, strengths and contexts of the individual or group being targeted must be considered. In other words, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to PYD. When the specificity of ethnicity and culture are part of youth development programmes and practices, then engagement and contribution will be enhanced (Loyd & Williams, 2017).

Macfarlane's He Awa Whiria Braided Rivers approach describes the complex and dynamic relationship between Kaupapa Māori and Western science approaches (Macfarlane et al., 2015). The model depicts knowledge systems as streams that are distinct but can combine in the river braiding process, and the researchers argue these knowledge streams become more effective and strengthened when they are interwoven together (e.g. Durie, 2004). This model is useful as Aotearoa New Zealand becomes more ethnically diverse (Macfarlane & Macfarlane, 2018).

Significant similarities have been found between Mātauranga Māori models and the most cited international models of PYD (Anae et al., 2002; Farrugia & Bullen, 2020). An example by Arahanga-Doyle and colleagues (2018) considered Māori views on wellbeing in the context of the 5 Cs model, comparing it with Durie's widely used Te Whare Tapa Whā model (Durie, 1994). They found significant 'braiding' of the models but also diverging streams, for example, in the 5 Cs model, identity is situated within the construct of Confidence, whereas a Māori worldview would situate it within the construct of Connection (Arahanga-Doyle et al., 2018).

Macfarlane et al. note:

In New Zealand, and in many other western societies, the self is largely constructed within the context of individualism, and individual achievement ... in a Māori worldview, qualities such as personal autonomy, independence, leadership, and prestige are all learned and exercised within a social context in which people share a powerful collective identity. Personal autonomy, strength and leadership are always exercised within the context of whanaungatanga, of nurturing and caring relationships. The self is therefore conceptualised within the context of the collective or community, and not as a totally autonomous and separate entity. (pp. 118–119)

The strong alignment with Mātauranga Māori suggests that the principles of PYD for rangatahi Māori can be shared for all young people. These examples show the importance of needing to consider international PYD models thoughtfully and critically in the Aotearoa New Zealand context.

## Dissemination

An integral responsibility of completing this Fellowship is ensuring my learnings and experiences are shared. I believe the most important and impactful ways I will communicate and apply my learnings is through my work, voluntary and governance roles, now and into the future. Currently, these circles of influence include:

### **Genesis Energy, Pou Hapori Community Liaison Manager**

Genesis is one of the largest companies in Aotearoa New Zealand. My role is focussed on community investment with and for communities closest to Genesis' power schemes across the country. My Fellowship learnings will be applied to Genesis' community investment to increase its impact on rangatahi, communities, the energy sector and Aotearoa New Zealand.

For example, an important part of my role involves leading Ngā Ara Creating Pathways. Ngā Ara is a PYD programme and marquee initiative of Genesis, and my research will be directly applied to the programme's growth and development. The programme focusses on attracting, nurturing and engaging rangatahi in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) education, study and career pathways. Ngā Ara partners with secondary schools closest to Genesis power schemes, and the most impactful initiatives include apprenticeships, internships, work experience, scholarships and partnership programmes with not-for-profit PYD organisations. Underpinned by best-practice research and evidence for developing a pipeline of talent, Ngā Ara has involved close collaboration and co-design with the multifaceted stakeholder communities, including students, kura and secondary schools; local iwi and hapū; youth development organisations and our Genesis team.

More broadly, my role includes cross-industry collaboration and practice sharing, where there are further opportunities to communicate my Fellowship learnings, for example, my ongoing

contribution as a member of the Curriculum Voices Group to the Ministry of Education's programme to refresh The New Zealand Curriculum.

#### **Graeme Dingle Foundation, Volunteer**

I continue to support the kaupapa of my previous employer, the Graeme Dingle Foundation. In February I presented my Fellowship learnings at the 2023 Research Symposium on Youth Engagement, hosted annually by the Graeme Dingle Foundation, Ara Taiohi and the University of Auckland. I will also facilitate professional development workshops on PYD for the Foundation's national team of programme coordinators who work alongside young people in every region of Aotearoa New Zealand. These workshops will focus on building capability and capacity within the programme delivery teams, sharing ideas and examples they can apply through their programmes with their students to strengthen their practice, and therefore the outcomes of positive youth development.

#### **Burn Bright, Director**

I have recently accepted a board position with the charitable company Burn Bright New Zealand as they launch in Aotearoa New Zealand, offering experiential programmes proven to increase student leadership and wellbeing. I am currently the youngest director, and my intention is to genuinely involve young people at all levels of our organisation, including in our governance structure.

#### **Philanthropy New Zealand, Youth Advisory Group Member**

I sit on the Youth Advisory Group of Philanthropy New Zealand, the peak body representing and supporting philanthropy and grant making in Aotearoa New Zealand. The group supports a network for young people working in philanthropy to create cohesion, peer support and forums to progress youth-led sector change. Through this visionary group I have the opportunity to share my learnings and work alongside PNZ on projects and initiatives engaging young people in philanthropy.

#### **University of Canterbury Students' Association (UCSA), Mentor**

I am volunteering in the UCSA's new Executive mentoring programme, as an alumnus of the UCSA Executive. My hope is to support these young people in their governance careers and encourage them to pursue further youth leadership opportunities.

#### **Wider Dissemination**

Additionally, an article on my Fellowship was featured in my local newspaper, The Raglan Chronicle in March 2023 (Latimer, 2023) and I recorded a podcast in October 2022 with Next Generation Politics about the strengths and limitations of the not-for-profit and philanthropic sectors and how thinking intergenerationally changes the decisions we make (Flanigan et al., 2022).

Furthermore, when this report is published by the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, I will distribute it to stakeholders in the Aotearoa New Zealand PYD ecosystem, as well as

disseminating it globally, to everyone I met and engaged with through my Fellowship, building on the connections I made and spotlighting PYD in Aotearoa New Zealand.

My journey through this Fellowship has been one of immense learning, challenge and change. This opportunity has helped me define my purpose and strengthened my commitment to the youth development sector. As I move forward in my different roles as a mother, community builder, advocate, ally of rangatahi, and influencer of change, I am resolute on the importance of investing in young people.

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# Appendix - Fellowship Itinerary

This section details where, when and who I visited and key engagements in this journey.

## Fellowship Travel Dates

- + UK - Monday 8 August - Thursday 25 August 2022
- + US - Friday 1 October - Monday 22 October 2022

## UK

### London, England

#### Monday 8 August - Wednesday 10 August 2022

- + Met with **Young People's Foundation Trust - Suzy Yassin**, Head of Partnerships (Justin Watson, CEO, was unable to make it at the last minute)
- + Met with **New Philanthropy Capital (NPC) - Charlotte Lamb**, Principal: Involvement and Decision Making (Charlotte was unwell on this date, so we held our meeting online a few weeks later)

#### Young People's Foundation Trust

I arrived in London during the melting hot August heatwave. My first meeting was with Suzy Yassin, Head of Partnerships at the Young People's Foundation Trust. A Young People's Foundation (YPF) is a member-led charity composed of organisations that work with children and young people in a local area, including local councils, businesses, funders and with large and small charities. The first YPF foundations were set up in 2015 and the umbrella organisation of YPF Trust was set up more recently.

Significant similarities in the way YPFs work include:

1. Raising funds - from a wide spectrum of sources (the public sector, independent grant-makers, companies and high net-worth individuals).
2. Distributing the funds - to small frontline agencies, mining their local knowledge.
3. Encouraging collaboration - among local children and youth organisations, as well as with the local authority, other public sector and other agencies.
4. Building capacity and capability - among local organisations, enabling them to raise and sustain the quality of their work (Barnard et al. 2021).

The YPF Trust hopes to improve coordination across the network, build a quality assurance system, and increase engagement with and for YPFs. Their intention is to grow across the UK - they currently have 10 active YPFs and hold ambitious plans to expand by another 10 by the end of 2023.

During the pandemic, YPFs proved they were fast and responsive, quickly becoming a go-to source of information, exercising leadership within the sector and ramping up fundraising and

grant distribution. Noting they are small organisations, the two most impactful areas of their work are acting as honest relationship brokers and attracting funding for the sector.

In my research for the Fellowship, the YPF model attracted me as a powerful and effective model which is highly adaptive to local circumstances, while replicable at scale. They place emphasis on understanding a local community's needs and priorities and involving young people in the research and co-design processes. A similar structure could be replicated in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Each YPF has its own local board, and this led Suzy and I into a conversation on the importance of a strong chair, board structure, defined roles and a focus on learning. Some already have young people on their boards and others are considering how to involve young people in their governance structure.

### **New Philanthropy Capital**

I had been looking forward to meeting with Charlotte Lamb, Principal for Involvement and Decision Making at New Philanthropy Capital (NPC) ever since discovering their work during research for my Fellowship application. NPC is a think tank and consultancy for the social sector, whose mission is to help charities, foundations, philanthropists, impact investors, social enterprises, corporates and the public sector to maximise social impact in the lives of the people they serve. I was excited to connect with NPC because of the inspiring, high quality and practical research they share - mostly open source.

Charlotte tells me her current focus is on truly embedding lived experience across all levels of organisations. "If you're working in the space of young people, you should have young people in your space. And a caveat to that: with lived experience," she says. Charlotte noted her biggest challenge is that organisations underestimate the importance of this work as well as the resource and time that it takes.

Our conversation together focussed on how young people are often the beneficiaries of philanthropy, with a growing number of charities existing to serve them. However, although young people are central to the purpose of these organisations, they're usually not at the decision-making table. There are inherent challenges with trying to shift mindsets and get organisations questioning where their decision-making power sits. Charlotte pointed me to the Young Trustees Movement, which is tackling the issue that in the UK, less than 3% of people on boards are under 30. While their focus is on age, young people are not just part of one demographic, therefore their campaign is part of a wider call for board diversity.

Charlotte shared an example of an organisation she's worked alongside, Leap Confronting Conflict, who have implemented a scheme for their board that includes 3 - 4 young trustees. Leap is a charity giving young people the skills to navigate conflict in their lives and help lead society. Importantly, they have made one of their strategic priorities building a culture of co-production, and this includes their governance structure. Their young trustees (who have all been part of Leap's programmes) are paired with a more experienced older trustee as their

mentor. Charlotte gave a specific example of their mentoring scheme, where each pair would meet ahead of the formal board meeting to discuss the agenda item. Unsurprisingly they found all trustees reflected on the reciprocal learning within their dyad, at the board table everyone benefited from increased quality of conversations, and overall better decision-making was made (also because everyone had thoroughly read their board papers ahead of the meeting!). This board shake-up changed things for the better - for everyone.

Charlotte has written a number of excellent publications through NPC on the impact of user involvement and the decision-making spectrum. Her blog on 'The spectrum of user involvement approaches' is a must-read (Lamb, 2022). One of my favourite quotes: "If you are genuinely getting young people involved in decisions about young people, it should lead you to do something differently."

## **Derby, England**

### **Thursday 11 August - Friday 12 August 2022**

- + Met with **National Youth Agency (NYA) - Leigh Middleton**, CEO
- + Invited by NYA to attend 'Turning Points for Youth' one-day event, co-hosted by the Erasmus+ Program of the European Union (EU). The conference was hosted at, and supported by, Derby University

### **National Youth Agency**

A rail strike across the UK meant hiring a car and navigating the M6 from London to Derbyshire. At the University of Derby, I met with Leigh Middleton from the NYA and was invited to attend one of their events, 'Turning Points for Youth'.

The National Youth Agency is one of the UK's peak bodies for youth, alongside UK Youth. Leigh joined the NYA in 2017, having worked with young people for over 20 years. Our wide-ranging conversation together included Leigh covering a brief history of the youth sector in the UK, some of the political decisions that have shaped and influenced the sector, the big players and our shared disdain of 'tea and cake' (disengaged) boards.

### **Turning Points for Youth**

I spent Friday at the 'Turning Points for Youth' one-day forum. The young people taking part in the Erasmus+ programme had designed the forum for young people and youth workers alike, with a focus on exploring the voice of young people mainstreamed in policy development. The day included keynotes, workshops and breakout sessions.

My highlight was hearing from keynote speaker Nizam Uddin, who talked about his lived experience overcoming societal and economic challenges that prevent disenfranchised and minority communities from fulfilling their potential. Nizam emphasised that creating exposure to higher places of learning is an important lever for young people's life trajectories. While also valuing the many different vocational pathways, universities create social mobility, and you gain

more than just the qualification. Nizam was awarded an OBE in her majesty Queen Elizabeth II's 2020 Birthday Honours list for services to social mobility and community integration.

One workshop I attended, alongside a diverse group of young people from countries across the EU, focussed on amplifying youth voices. I listened as the participants discussed how they were often invited to give their input 'as young people' and shared their disappointment when they didn't hear back as to how their input was used or frustration when their ideas weren't actioned. They cited their input as feeling tokenistic, that there was a mismatch in their expectations, and that this damaged their trust and wasted their time. Reporting back on the 'next steps' or the difference a young person's involvement has made is crucial.

It was at this event that I met and connected with Pritpal Surj from the Prince's Trust and Katie Jackson from Scouts, who I later met with online - my notes from our meetings are below.

## **Aberdeen & Dunblane, Scotland**

### **Monday 15 - Thursday 18 August 2022**

- + Hosted by **The Wood Foundation** for the week, in Aberdeen and Dunblane
- + Meetings with **Alison MacLachlan**, UK Director; **Georgea Hughes**, Programmes Director; **Gayle Duffus**, Education Director; **Melanie Liddell**, Learning and Evaluation Manager; **Alex Reid**, YPI National Coordinator; **Lynsey Brosnan**, YPI Development Lead and **Lucia Giuntoli**, YPI Partnerships Lead
- + Attended the two-day **YPI Scotland** national team planning days held annually in Dunblane

Meeting with The Wood Foundation Scotland team was a highlight of my Fellowship - although this write-up is comparatively short, my four days with them were the richest, not least because they included me like a member of their team during a busy week of programme planning. The Youth and Philanthropy Initiative (YPI) programme had been what originally intrigued me, as the largest independent education programme being delivered in Scottish schools.

I spent four days with the Foundation learning the different facets of their commitment to developing young people in Scotland and working at systems change level. My first two days were based in their Aberdeen HQ learning about each of the Foundation's youth development programmes, including YPI, Excelerate and RAiSE. The second half of the week was staying with the Foundation's national YPI team in Dunblane and taking part in their annual planning days. This included opportunities for me to learn about the programme's design, delivery model, research, evaluation and how the team work to build impact through the programme.

YPI is an active citizenship programme designed to empower young people to make a difference in their local communities while developing a host of skills. The vision is a generation of young people empowered to be active citizens, connected with their communities and realising their potential to contribute, campaign and influence change.

Each participating secondary school, each year is responsible for directing a £3,000 YPI grant to a local charity through a unique programme of teamwork, research and competition. The programme involves students researching social issues in their local community and identifying charities that address these issues. Working in groups, they then present their findings to their classmates and a panel of judges, who determine which group will receive the funding to pass onto their chosen charity.

YPI gives students a greater understanding of social issues and the role that charities and philanthropy play in addressing these issues. Since its launch in 2008, YPI has engaged over 210,000 young people across Scotland, and has awarded over £4.5 million to local charities. YPI is an exceptional example of meaningful and embedded active citizenship education.

## **Edinburgh, Scotland**

### **Tuesday 23 August 2022**

- + Met with **The Wood Foundation - Alex Reid**, YPI National Coordinator

Alex and I met for a morning coffee in Edinburgh and she answered more questions I had after spending time with The Wood Foundation the previous week.

### **Wednesday 24 August 2022**

- + Met with **YWCA – The Young Women’s Movement - Jenni Snell**, CEO

Jenni and I met online one afternoon as I travelled back to London from Scotland after being connected by Alison MacLachlan at The Wood Foundation.

YWCA Scotland is an intersectional feminist charity that supports young women’s leadership, research and campaigning, and collective action for system change. Jenni was about a month into her new role as CEO of YWCA Scotland when I spoke to her - particularly exciting as Jenni is a young CEO, only just into her thirties, with 10 years’ experience in youth work, community development and project management. In response to my question about the opportunities she saw in our field, her response was the chance to promote career pathways in the youth development sector, especially for young people. Youth work and the third (charity) sector are also playing an important role in our transition to a lower-carbon future. We covered the potential of following a career in youth work as a viable green employability pathway.

Jenni described PYD in Scotland as in a strong position. As a country, Scotland recently celebrated the ‘Year of Young People’ in 2018. She cited that youth participation is particularly good in the youth and third sector, however although the Scotland Government understand, value and genuinely want to be engaging with young people, there’s still a disconnect in this happening.

YouthLink Scotland (where Jenni previously worked) is the national agency for youth work and a collective voice for the youth work sector. Jenni described their membership and support for the sector as really strong, and their position embedded within local authorities and government.

Jenni noted that funders are usually excited to fund new initiatives or the first-year launch of a programme, but often won't go on to fund multi-year which limits the strategic space to grow programmes or for charities to simply continue long-term with their usual programmes. She'd like to see a move to funding unrestricted core costs and longer-term multi-year funding.

I was especially heartened to hear that part of Jenni's leadership focus is on young people seeing her organisation's authenticity. That included prioritising mental health and wellbeing by implementing a four-day working week for her team.

## Leeds, England

### Thursday 25 August 2022

- + Met with **Association of Charitable Foundations - Jim Cooke**, Head of the Funders Collaborative Hub (Jim needed to postpone so this meeting was held later online)

It seemed fate was for Jim and I to hold our meeting online, after many emails back and forth, we finally landed a date in-person, only to be thwarted when Jim had an accident while out running in the days beforehand.

The Funders Collaborative Hub is hosted by the Association of Charitable Foundations (ACF) and is available free to all funders. Originally launched as a pilot during the pandemic, the Hub is continuing to support funders collaborating in the longer term. Collaboration is a current buzzword and I sought a meeting with Jim because of the practical, supportive and open-source nature of the Hub.

Some of the benefits funders achieve through collaboration include:

- Avoiding duplication and identifying gaps
- Joining forces to tackle big, complex issues
- Finding ways to work more efficiently
- Creating spaces to engage equitably and inclusively with charities and others working on similar goals.

With transparency, the website also shares at a glance what the purpose of each collaboration is, what they're working on and who's involved.

The Hub offers an excellent 'Tool Kit' filled with helpful resources that support collaborations from the foundation stage, through the building stage and into the stewarding stage (and Jim notes there's also one on stewarding loss or "endings" to come). These have been developed with UK-based funders from their experiences working in funder collaborations, informed by research and learning about what makes for strong collaborations. The tools range from guides

to developing a bespoke collaboration charter, through to an engagement pack on how to reach out beyond a funder's existing networks and relationships.

During my research ahead of my meeting with Jim, I discovered the 'top tips' resource, and found tip number one is to have a dedicated 'collaboration steward'. "Most types of funder collaborations will need someone who is responsible for stewarding, cultivating, facilitating and organising the collaboration. Agree what kind of commitment is appropriate for your collaboration, but don't underestimate the time this role will take." Jim notes in our conversation that this is a common mistake for new collaborations to underestimate the time involved in fostering a group, and I've heard this echoed in other Fellowship meetings as well as learned this in my own experience.

Jim explained one of the main design decisions of the Hub was for it all to be completely in the open. Jim cited although many funders are "collaboration-curious" one of their biggest fears was unsolicited approaches from fundseekers. Traditionally, funders have avoided this through private, "password protected", funders-only spaces, but this limited collaborations to only those in the know. The Hub has thoughtfully mitigated this by defining what the Hub is for, who it's for and what it isn't.

The Hub's website includes case studies, and one particularly caught my attention, where a trust funder and a local council collaborated on a Strategic Work Partnership that involved the development of a 'barter economy' for youth development organisations to share and borrow staff. This was only made possible by the funders joining forces, instead of creating competition for funding.

I asked Jim what the magic of this work was for him. He thinks it was helping funders find their way to each other so much more easily. Even though a lot of collaboration was already underway, the Hub has enabled more collaborations, with easier access and better support.

## UK Online Meetings

Meetings with people who I was unable to see in-person for various reasons (either they were unavailable when I was in their city or people who I've met through my travels and am having a follow-up meeting with).

### + **The Prince's Trust - Pritpal (Prit) Surj**, Commonwealth Lead

Prit is the Commonwealth Lead at The Prince's Trust. The Trust is a global network of charities founded by HM The King. Their mission is to transform lives and build sustainable communities worldwide, with a particular focus on supporting young people aged 11 - 30 into education, employment and enterprise.

I met Prit just a couple of days after the Birmingham Commonwealth Games had closed and it was evident the high he was on after a whirlwind few weeks. I learned that a key focus of the Prince's Trust involvement was enabling young people to capitalise on and access a wide range

of volunteering, training and employment opportunities generated by the Games. Prit was part of a working group who published the Youth Voice Plan with the aim that this will continue to put young people at the centre of engagement and legacy planning for future Games. Strategically, they made the senior leadership team accountable for embedding this long-term plan, ensuring the young people who contributed to the plan's development would see action.

In his role Prit needed to facilitate a large cohort of young volunteers. We discussed some of the realities of wrangling volunteers, how he creates fun incentives for them to stay engaged (for example, vouchers and competitions) and why in the end it's all worth it for the experience young people gain through volunteering and the opportunity to create something collectively.

Like most of my conversations, funding came up as a challenge. Prit shared his frustration that "numbers and percentages" often lead to funding, but that's not always where the meaningful youth engagement is found.

+ **The Scouts - Katie Jackson**, Policy and Public Affairs Manager

Katie and I met at the 'Turning Points for Youth' forum. Katie has a strong background working in policy and strategy across a number of different government departments. This led us into a discussion of the current UK government's youth portfolio being quite hidden and we highlighted New Zealand's strength with a Ministry for Youth Development and how this centres young people.

We discussed the Scouts programme - arguably one of the most well-reputed uniformed positive youth development organisations globally. Katie cited that their UK membership is growing, with more than a third of their members identifying as female.

+ **Duke of Edinburgh's Award - Oliver (Oli) Rice**, Senior Operations Manager (London)

When I was at secondary school, I earned the Gold Award of Aotearoa New Zealand's Duke of Edinburgh's (DofE) Hillary Award. This was an important PYD programme I participated in as a young person, so I was excited to catch up with Oli online and hear about their impact in the UK.

The Award programme offers young people aged 14 to 24 the opportunity to participate in a range of activities and challenges to enhance their personal and social development. Delivered internationally, the programme consists of four main sections: volunteering, physical, skills, and expedition (or adventurous journey), with an additional residential section for the Gold Award. Leadership and community contribution are woven into the programme.

DofE have actively worked to change the perception that the programme is only for a specific demographic and is striving to be inclusive and representative of the population it serves. Oli explained the organisation's efforts in collecting real-time data to track progress and demonstrate the programme's effectiveness through an impact measurement framework. More than 40,000 young people take part annually in London alone. The statistics demonstrate that

the programme has made significant progress in diversifying its participant base, with over half of the young people accessing the Award coming from minority backgrounds.

It was impressive to learn from Oli how the programme has evolved to cater to the diverse needs of participants, regardless of their background or circumstances. One of the DofE's strengths lies in its flexibility, allowing organisations to tailor activities and create personalised experiences for individual participants. By offering a wide range of options and allowing young people to choose from different combinations of activities, the programme ensures that it remains relevant and accessible to a diverse range of individuals. The DofE's commitment to inclusivity is evident in its efforts to reach marginalised and under-represented groups. Oli shared an example of participating young people living in secure facilities who couldn't leave the grounds, who instead participated in a modified version of the program with a 'restrictive spaces expedition.'

We discussed their Young Ambassadors programme, which gives young people a voice and role in representing the organisation. Although Oli cited the need for greater youth involvement in their decision-making processes, he acknowledged they're working toward it, including using young ambassadors to inform programme changes and involving them in trustee recruitment. He mentioned the challenges of youth involvement and the importance of creating the right conditions for their impactful participation.

- + **UK Youth - Kayleigh Wainwright**, Director of Youth Action

UK Youth is considered a sector-supporting infrastructure body, a direct delivery partner and a campaigner for social change. Unfortunately, our meeting was unable to go ahead as Kayleigh went on extended sick leave.

## US

### New York City

**Sunday 2 October - Wednesday 5 October**

#### **Sunday 2 October**

- + Attended **Next Generation Politics (Next Gen)** Summer Civics 22/23 Orientation 10am - 4pm

#### **Monday 3 October**

- + Attended **Center for an Urban Future's event** 'City of Aspiration: Ideas for Making Progress Towards a More Equitable NYC.'
- + Hosted by **Next Generation Politics - Sanda Balaban**, Co-founder & Director; **Katie Hetlage**, Communications, Development, and Operations Director; and **Latroya Lovell**, Program Manager and Research Director

## **Tuesday 4 October**

- + Hosted by **Next Generation Politics**
- + Attended **Student Success Network** Meeting with Next Gen team
- + Attended **YVote** ChangeMakers monthly workshop online, 5 - 7pm

### **Next Generation Politics (Next Gen) & YVote**

Sanda Balaban directs Next Generation Politics and YVote, organisations she co-founded in response to the complex times we're living in. The missions of Next Gen and YVote are to provide information and tools to enable America's youth to fulfil their obligations as citizens and develop into an empowered, politically informed, and socially aware generation.

Next Gen are only a small core team and they have expertly scaffolded opportunities for young people to lead and contribute throughout their operations and programmes. This paragraph from their website sums up how young people are genuinely involved throughout every level of their organisation: "we strive to include youth voice and perspectives in ALL of our decision making, from our peer-led programming, youth-run blog, and youth-hosted podcast to youth participation in our strategic planning process, to youth leadership in our city-wide coalition work. We don't just provide programs to inspire and equip youth to make a difference in their communities, we create active opportunities for this generation of youth leaders to influence local decision making and make their voices heard."

I attended a number of events and opportunities at the generous invitation of Sanda, including the Summer Civics Orientation, the YVote monthly workshop and a meeting with the Student Success Network.

### **Next Gen Summer Civics Orientation**

At the Summer Civics Orientation, it was exciting to see young people engaging politically years before they can even vote (the rising generation). The Orientation included a number of different sessions, for example exploring the themes and underlying political tensions that emerge from America's founding documents and how they play out today, as well as a session on deliberation and civil discourse. Of course, there was also an interlude for delicious cheesy, foldable New York pizza.

The young people I spoke with, and listened to, talked about their local and national politics with understanding, fluency, and importantly deep care for themselves, their family, communities, and country. Many shared their lived experiences as children of immigrants confronted by a confusing political system to get the Green Card (Permanent Resident Card), others shared how grateful they were to have civic conversations with peers from different places (noting that many feel their schools are not representative of their city's diversity). One of the senior fellows, in her last year at secondary school, started the facilitation of her workshop with the declaration that joining Next Gen was the "best thing that's ever happened" to her, how it's defined what she wants to do in her career and how grateful she is to have found belonging within the Next Gen team.

## **Student Success Network (SSN)**

I joined the online call Sanda and her team were having to discuss a new initiative they were working on with the Student Success Network, a community of practitioners, youth, and researchers leveraging their collective power to transform programming, practice, and policy.

When it comes to user involvement, the Student Success Network shared a handful of their tips:

- Sometimes it's helpful if the facilitators' identity matches the participants in the programme.
- Participants reflected that when the space had been curated for them, they felt safer, more comfortable and more likely to share.
- Central to the human-centred approach is creating space for contribution.
- Icebreakers helps participants make connections and open up creativity (whakawhanaungatanga - the process of establishing relationships).
- Close-outs help safely close the sessions, foster reflection, ensure clarity, confirm understanding and decide next steps.

In programme design or governance, SSN highlighted youth can't just be invited into the same events and tables as adults - it's not necessarily the right space for them. This also spirals into things like accessibility and logistical things (e.g. like meetings during school time). They suggested a stipend for youth involvement which reinforces, reimburses, recognises and compensates participation and helps make their involvement sustainable.

SSN added they're wanting to partner more with youth in their work. They're trying to partner with existing youth advisory groups, instead of creating new ones.

Through their experience in creating the network they shared that it's important to give permission to not necessarily bring young people in at the beginning (e.g., of a project, initiative or board structure) so that it can be timed and planned for when they do contribute. They emphasised the importance of partnering better with youth in their space. Through their experience in building the SSN, they found folks who participated in student success collaborations most fruitfully were 'middle managers' - like programme coordinators and managers, and they used their input to 'share-up' the learnings to heads and CEOs. For them, this balances the people who are strategic versus those who are responsive.

## **City of Aspiration Event**

City of Aspiration was a half-day event held at the Morgan Library on Madison Avenue, a fun commute for me from our Airbnb in Brooklyn, on the subway to Grand Central Station and walking a few NYC blocks. The curated event included 5 minutes idea pitches, fireside chats and panels, with inspiring guest speakers.

My highlight speaker was Linda Gibbs, principal for Social Services, Bloomberg Associates and former NYC Deputy Mayor (during the Bloomberg administration) for Health and Human Services. Linda expressed the challenges politicians face in implementing successful initiatives -

the need to balance careful spending with the necessary risks when innovating. She estimated anecdotally around 20% of their implemented initiatives in NYC had 'worked' - and that was success.

### **Wednesday 5 October**

- + Hosted by **The Brotherhood Sister Sol (BroSis) - Jason Warwin**, Associate Executive Director for Programming & Training, Co-Founder
- + Met with **IntegrateNYC - Yotam Pe'er**, Executive Director, **Alpha Jalloh**, Executive Director & **Wéma Ragophala**, (Adult) Executive Director

### **The Brotherhood Sister Sol**

Jason Warwin co-founded BroSis, in 1994 with his childhood friend Khary Lazarre-White when they were seniors at Brown University, and they are both still leading the organisation together in 2022. Jason has an extensive list of awards to his name, has served on many boards and is an expert in PYD and a specialist in the design of transformative programming, curriculum and experiences.

BroSis has been at the forefront of social justice, educating, organising and training to challenge inequity and champion opportunity for all. Together with their members, alumni and partners, they're building on a legacy of youth-led activism to realise a more just and equitable future.

BroSis run a number of different programmes including an environmental programme, an afterschool programme and their Rites of Passage programme focussed on political education. One facet of their theory of change is helping their young people gain a greater understanding of and appreciation for their cultural and historical legacy as Black and Latinx people.

After we've talked for an hour, Jason takes me on a tour of their incredible BroSis headquarters building, which only opened a few months ago. Located in West Harlem, the building is the first of its kind to be built here in half a century and is a major asset for the community. They've been on the site for more than 20 years and Jason notes they're part of their community's fabric, with second and third generations now coming through BroSis programmes. The building includes a space for dance and movement (a yoga class is underway as we walk by); a digital room for spoken word, hip hop and filmmaking; classrooms filled with natural light; walls boasting art by Black and Latinx people and there's even a rooftop basketball court. Outside there's a 650sqm productive urban farm, complete with fish in their aquaponic system and an Indigenous medicinal garden. The space is a green oasis from the brownstone buildings that line every other street and becomes the classroom for their environmental programmes. A few hundred metres along the block they also occupy a corner called 'The Plaza' which includes more space for their programmes and a colourful park-like street corner. Their weekly youth-run farmers market is on when we visit, selling fresh produce to local residents, while also equipping their young people with business skills and work experience.

BroSis was one of few youth development organisations I met with during my Fellowship who had their own dedicated physical space, and Jason highlights this is a fundamental part of their youth development programming.

### **IntegrateNYC**

On my last afternoon in New York, I met with Yotam, Alpha and Wéma on the rooftop of the beautiful Public Library with a backdrop of tall buildings around us and honking cabs in the streets below.

IntegrateNYC are a student-led organisation who call out New York City as having some of the most segregated schools in the nation, despite being one of the most diverse cities in the world (I heard this echoed in conversations with Next Gen and the Student Success Network).

For too long, decisions that affect youth have been made without youth. IntegrateNYC knows that youth are the experts when it comes to addressing their needs and articulating their visions for the future.

They have developed a policy platform to achieve integration and campaign on the interconnected '5 Rs of Real Integration' in NYC public high schools:

- Race - NYC public schools perpetuate school segregation due to a complex, inefficient and hyper-competitive school admission process. Every school should reflect the diversity of the city.
- Restorative justice - rid schools of metal detectors and police presence, practice restorative justice instead.
- Resources - calling on the Department of Education to provide equitable distribution of resources across all NYC high schools to meet the constitutional requirements of a "sound, basic education."
- Representation - "show us our communities at the front of the classroom" - ensuring school leadership and teaching reflects student identities and experiences.
- Relationships - focus on building relationships between students across group identities. They stand for a curriculum that teaches students about their history and strengthens their identity.

Alongside coalition partners, IntegrateNYC campaign and advocate for these 5 Rs - pushing legislators and politicians to implement these changes, as well as advocating and increasing awareness. Yotam became involved after seeing a presentation from Integrate and describes how it took re-educating himself to see and understand the extent of segregation. One recent example of their campaigning was 'Retired segregation' - leading rallies and conversations in communities about how more than 60 years on from the Brown v Board decision NYC schools are still segregated.

Their unique intergenerational leadership model ensures collaboration between youth leaders and adult coaches and is key to their success in elevating youth power in decision making. Wéma emphasises that their intergenerational model exists in every part of their organisation. Their board and organisational roles are a mix of paid and unpaid. Each youth role for young people

between 18 - 24 years old is designed with skill development opportunities and domains of decision making. They build on each other forming a youth leadership pipeline and as youth grow their skills, they take on increasing responsibility. They also pair a youth and adult together to act as a support system for each other. Yotam himself has progressed through this pipeline to becoming a board member, and Alpha is on the same path.

One clever feature I loved on their website was each person's bio featured a voice recording of them saying their own name - a simple, yet highly effective tool for inclusion and belonging simply through sharing the correct pronunciation of your name.

## **Boston**

### **Monday 10 October**

- + Met with **Charity Defence Council - Dan Pallotta**, Founder

Dan Pallotta is a well-known American entrepreneur, author and humanitarian activist. His 2013 TED Talk 'The way we think about charity is dead wrong' is one of the most-watched TED talks of all time with more than 5 million views. I first learned of Dan after watching this talk - it happened to be in my first month as a new graduate working for the Cancer Society of Aotearoa New Zealand, and it opened my eyes to the fact that the valuable work I was doing in health promotion was beleaguered by a broken system. Dan's work has been some of the most influential on my thinking, my career direction and my intention to make a difference in this world.

In our fast-paced half hour together I posed Dan a number of questions. The first was how do we engage young people in the charitable sector - to which he quipped, "Stop boring them to death!" Dan elaborated on how the not-for-profit sector is at a huge disadvantage in attracting young people into this sector because they can earn a better salary in the for-profit sector and still fulfil their sense of contribution and civic duty by working on innovative solutions in those places.

I also asked for his thoughts on young people becoming board members, and he said he thinks this is important but it's the same thing - board tables are too boring. They're usually voluntary evening meetings spent on the minutiae of compliance, not on the inspiring changes an organisation is trying to make in the world.

In terms of positioning the sector for solving social problems Dan suggested two things: we need to fix the broken system that non-profits operate within, and we need to aggregate better around common goals. Dan talked about an organisation he's working with called Collaboratory in Southwest Florida, that has committed to solving all of the social problems in their region on an 18-year deadline in a very interconnected way. He talks about how for years we've tried to solve social problems in silos, as if they're disconnected from one another. Instead, Collaboratory are recognising that solving all of them together is the only way we'll ever solve any one of them.

I talked to Dan about a theme - and tension - that had come up for me about scaling in size, while also being locally responsive and specific in that context. Dan says that he sees all kinds of examples of non-profit organisations doing programmes in an innovative way yet doing growth and scaling in a very old-fashioned traditional way. Dan eloquently puts that some things will suit a local scale, a town or a region, and other things will work on a national or even global scale. If there's a great idea that's working and the data shows it actually solving problems, then those are the ideas you want to scale.

This leads us to a discussion about government. Dan describes governments as followers, whereas the non-profit sector are the R&D arm for solving social problems - trying new things, failing, learning and succeeding. He sees government as an instrument in scaling solutions once they're proven. He stresses government play a big role in creating change - but only if they're led by the non-profit sector and not the other way around.

Dan is about to release his movie: Uncharitable and we briefly speak about his hopes for it - that it be looked at as the thing that changed the conversation forever. He gave me early access to watch it, and I believe it has the potential to do just that.

## **Tuesday 11 October**

- + Met with **Codman Academy Charter Public School - Thabiti Brown**, Head of School, and members of the teaching team

Thabiti welcomed me to Codman Academy on a bright, warm Tuesday. We spent a few hours together, first sitting outside in the school's sunny cafeteria courtyard before Thabiti took me on a tour of his lower, middle and upper schools.

Codman was founded in 2001 as an urban charter public school, growing from a high school into a full K1-12 school (NZ equivalent of Years 0 - 13). Codman's mission is to provide an outstanding, transformative education to prepare students for success in university, further education and beyond. With the city and world as their classroom, they build a school community rich in rigorous academics and daily experiences of discovery. They continue to support their alumni in realising their potential after graduation.

Thabiti was part of the school's founding team, beginning as the founding teacher of humanities and he is now the head of school (equivalent to school principal). Notably, the calibre of Codman's teaching team is evident - in recent years one of their teachers was named national teacher of the year and selected as a School Ambassador Fellow with the US Department of Education.

Codman's curriculum is built on the principles of Expeditionary Learning (EL) Education. Their EL Education-inspired program continues to prepare students for our changing world, including a focus on mastery of knowledge and skills, becoming effective learners and creating high-quality work that is meaningful to our world beyond school. It's this focus on the application of academic learning to real-world experience that last year saw the school purchase a vacant section adjacent to the school and begin transforming this into a healing micro-forest - my

highlight on the tour. Environmental and greening initiatives are one of the ways Codman educates and involves students in climate justice.

As part of EL, students meet in 'crews' four times a week for 30 minutes. Each crew is a mixed-gender unit with members from all grades. During Crew, students develop relationships, dedicate time to service, and engage in conversations and check-ins related to their academic progress and other school related issues. Educator Kurt Hahn, founder of Outward Bound, coined the term 'crew' from his statement, "We are crew, not passengers, strengthened by acts of consequential service to others." This could be likened to the Māori whakataukī, 'He waka eke noa' - we're all in the same boat. Thabiti shared an example of a Crew leading a campaign to "reclaim the hoodie" and include it in their school uniform - an example of young people's difference in definition of excellence (from adults').

Walking through the school's corridors is supposed to feel like "a walk in the woods", with calm neutrals and wooden features. The school's architectural design includes a dance studio, library, art studio and a dining room and a front room near the entrance of the school for meetings with a fireplace to help it feel cosy and welcoming.

Thabiti tells me the school's founders wanted to create a space to closely link health and education. The school is co-located in Codman Square (a large urban block) with a community health centre where students and their families have direct access to primary health care, as well as access to mental health clinicians. Their school-health centre partnership model has influenced others across the country. As we stood on the intersection between his junior and senior schools, and Thabiti pointed out the features of Codman Square, including the very affordable social enterprise grocery store (which was a welcome relief to buy an affordable lunch from, given the exchange rate of the NZ dollar against the US dollar). They also have an extended school day, from 9am - 5pm, all students receive fresh, healthy lunches from their cafeteria every day and 100% of their high school students are required to complete four years of physical education.

Their partnerships extend to include numerous other local organisations for their Summer Internship Programme, where students can explore passions and professions, such as STEM-based opportunities at the Codman Square Health Centre or the Huntington Theatre Company - all of their students need to complete an internship before graduation.

### **Wednesday 12 October**

- + Hosted by **Nativity Preparatory School - Brian Maher**, President, and leaders and educators at Nativity Preparatory School

I met with Brian Maher on a beautiful autumn morning at Nativity Preparatory School in the leafy suburb of Jamaica Plain, Boston. Brian was standing at the school's front door warmly greeting his students as they arrived - something he does at the beginning of each school day. I joined him for the whole-school morning assembly, before most of their students excitedly jumped on buses to head upstate for 'farm school' - an experiential learning camp.

Nativity Preparatory School is an accredited, tuition-free, middle school serving boys of all faiths from low-income families residing in Boston. As a Catholic, Jesuit institution, the school is committed to forming 'men for others' committed to serving their families, communities and the common good. It's this PYD model of forming graduates who contribute, serving the community and often going into careers of service, that differentiates the school.

Nativity Prep first opened in 1990, their first class graduated in 1993. Some interesting statistics on their alumni:

- 100% of their young people are students of colour
- 70% come from multilingual households – an example of their assets
- They have a 100% high school graduation rate
- 80% of their graduates go to college, with 60% of them graduating - ten times higher than the national average for the same demographic.

Brian has been president of the school for five years, before that he'd worked at Boston College High School for more than 30 years.

They have four lead teachers, and eight (usually young) teaching fellows who work through a two-year programme, through which they gain a monthly stipend, are supported with accommodation and gain a master's degree at Boston College.

Brian acknowledged the COVID pandemic had a huge impact on his school. The school received several hundred thousand dollars of Federal emergency relief specifically set aside to address student learning loss. They've taken up an opportunity to partner with Boston College over the next few years gaining instructional coaching for their teaching team, alongside executive coaching for the leadership team. Brian hopes this will create closer bonds within his faculty, and help to support the academic success of his students.

Brian describes the school as a high-relationship model and Nativity Prep has a commitment to walking lifelong with their alumni. This includes a team dedicated to Graduate Support (including one member who is an alumnus themselves). There continues to be significant systemic barriers to university completion for first-generation, low-income students of colour. Nativity Prep continues to build partnerships to provide internships, make networking connections and expose students to career opportunities and fields where men of colour are traditionally under-represented.

My final question to Brian was asking what the most magical part of this work is for him. He replied with a proverb he lives by - "grace is entering into the chaos of another". Brian's love for his team, school and students was evident. Brian gave me a Nativity Prep cap (which I still wear all the time) and I left their campus feeling inspired by the depth of the whole-student approach they take to developing their young people.

#### **Thursday 13 October**

- + Met with **Boston College - Dr Jacqueline Lerner**, Professor of Applied Developmental Psychology, Lynch School of Education and Human Development

One of the people I first connected with for this Fellowship was Dr Richard Lerner. One night, while completing my Fellowship application, I sent him a hopeful email on the off-chance I would hear back from him. To my surprise the next morning, Dr Richard Lerner had already come back to me with an offer to support in any way he could. We met online a few weeks later and he suggested a lengthy list of contacts in the US for me to reach out to. Unfortunately, Dr Richard Lerner was unavailable and out of town while I visited Boston, however one of the people he connected me with was his wife and research collaborator, Dr Jacqueline Lerner. It was a huge privilege to connect with both Richard and Jackie Lerner, as they are widely regarded as the founders of PYD and continue to publish leading research and work in this field.

Dr Jacqueline Lerner welcomed me at Boston College, where she studies the positive development of adolescents and young adults in the contexts of family, school and community, and the embedded relationships in these contexts that contribute to overall development. We picked up a coffee on-campus and then settled into her office for our conversation, and also followed up online again a few weeks later.

Dr Lerner shared with me the fascinating story of the very beginnings of PYD. She cited that through the 1980s she would have been characterised as a typical developmental scientist looking at the journey through childhood into and out of adolescence, and always studies youth from a systems perspective, focussing on their strengths. Dr Lerner says it wasn't until the mid-1990s when youth practitioners started to interface with academics, and she credits Rick Little and Peter Benson with asking them to develop the vision, vocabulary, measures and framework of PYD. At the time, Dr Lerner was part of a group of developmental researchers who had been studying "positive things" (like youth strengths, motivation and purpose), refuting the dominant storm and stress narrative. Together, they proposed a model for PYD based on the Relational Developmental Systems meta-theory of Willis Overton (2015) – proposing that when you line up individual strengths with a supportive context, Positive Youth Development should emerge. "We just sort of packaged it all up," she laughs, making it sound that simple.

Dr Lerner noted the way forward for those aligning with the PYD movement includes designing and delivering youth development programmes that incorporate the 'Big 3' quality indicators: positive and sustained adult-youth relationships, skill-building activities, and youth leadership opportunities. Jackie cited that positive and sustained adult-youth relationships are supported by research to be the most essential component of this recipe. She highlights that there's no cookie cutter approach to PYD - strengths change between contexts and specificity is key. Jackie noted PYD in youth is found everywhere – all youth have the potential to develop positively, and it doesn't discriminate based on gender, sexuality, single parent families, ethnicity etc. In this way, PYD is a powerful and inclusive movement.

We covered how sometimes this work feels like a Sisyphean task - and yet, PYD has evolved into a domain of developmental science embedded in the goal of promoting social justice for young people. We found this is what continues to motivate us both.

## San Francisco

### Monday 17 October

- + Met with **Stanford University - Dr Heather Malin**, Director of Research at the Centre on Adolescence; unfortunately, Professor Bill Damon was away in Washington DC

Heather and I only had a couple of hours to meet over lunch, which was interrupted by a lost salad order and my unhappy baby. Luckily, Heather recently published an excellent book - 'Teaching for Purpose: Preparing Students for Lives of Meaning' - so reading this felt like I spent many more hours learning from her.

Armed with twenty years of experience in education and youth development research, Heather wrote this book to explore the question of "What if purpose were the purpose of school?" Heather is part of leading youth development researcher Dr Bill Damon's team, who define purpose as a "future-directed goal that is personally meaningful and aimed at contributing to something larger than the self". This goal is stable, projected into the future and motivated by a desire to be of consequence in the world. The book highlights the important role that purpose plays in optimal youth development.

In her book, Heather explores the idea of purpose as the purpose of education and shows how educators can prepare youth to live intentional, fulfilling lives. Heather posits that schools should be places that teach students how to create lives of purpose - by developing their personal strengths and values, reflecting on what it means to become a good person, engaging deeply with challenging questions and problems in the world, and helping them act on their aspirational future goals.

Heather eloquently summarises students become more engaged in their learning, because it's relevant and active, they develop social awareness, autonomy and agency that they can apply in both the classroom and life and they can connect what they are learning to broader and more meaningful future aspirations. Though this is an emerging area of study, the research suggests that teaching for purpose may contribute to better academic motivation, engagement and performance.

Teachers can support purpose when they themselves are purposeful, so that they can focus classroom activities on what matters, convey a sense of purpose in learning activities and be role models of purpose for students. Using curriculum to make connections between school and the world beyond is one of the most powerful ways teachers can support student purpose development.

Heather cited some of her recent research and how the experience of the COVID pandemic has actually helped some young people in college develop their purpose. I drew a parallel with my own time at the University of Canterbury, when the Canterbury earthquakes shook the last two years of my degrees, but my learning - and the development of my purpose - was cemented by being part of the collective efforts of students leading a significant response to this event.

## US Online Meetings

- + **Columbia University - Dr Sonali Rajan**, Associate Professor of Health Education at Department of Health and Behaviour Studies, Teachers College, Columbia University

Dr Sonali Rajan was unfortunately travelling away from New York while I was there, so instead we met online. Dr Rajan is a faculty member at the Teachers College of Columbia University. She is a school violence prevention expert, who studies gun violence and adverse childhood experiences. Her work is inherently connected with PYD as she translates her research into advocating for investment in community and school-based programs that not only reduce gun violence but promote thriving in young people.

Speaking frankly, Dr Rajan notes that she doesn't want to be doing this work in ten years - i.e. still writing about over 100,000 people being shot every year in America - and that it's not enough for her to just 'reduce' gun violence. She shared a lot of her day "feels like it sits at the intersection of both hope and hopelessness" in working out how to actually solve these problems.

Dr Rajan stresses the shift in thinking needed to address systemic issues and stop simply band-aiding the solutions to gun violence in America. She describes the tendency to respond to something aggressive is to respond with something equally aggressive - for example, involving police at schools or arming teachers, even though these are less effective measures. Instead, she promotes the value of investing in whole-community solutions for prevention, for example, building parks or investing in public libraries and how this would not only see reductions in gun violence but positive outcomes in other measures too. We connected on our shared thinking about the plurality of layers that enable or limit PYD. We are continuing to meet as we plan to write an opinion piece together.

- + **Dr Pamela Cantor**

Pamela Cantor, MD is a physician, author and thought leader on human potential, educational equity and the science of learning and development. Dr Cantor is the Founder and Senior Science Advisor of Turnaround for Children. Turnaround for Children is a non-profit working to embed an equitable whole-child purpose into the US education system. Dr Cantor is now working independently, and she tells me she's excited to reach a point where she can do this and wants to work on the most powerful platforms for change that she can. In my hour online with Dr Cantor she shared so many gems of wisdom, including her thoughts that the best way for me to share this knowledge I've had the privilege of acquiring through my Fellowship - these seeds I'm now holding - is to work out the best place to plant them.

Dr Cantor is particularly dedicated to translating scientific knowledge about how children develop and learn into integrated tools and services for educators to establish the conditions for all students to thrive. She cites one of the biggest problems she sees in education is that many teachers don't have a knowledge base around development that would help them in their teaching. Some of the latest science, tells an optimistic story of what each of us is capable of - no

matter the starting point or how many obstacles get in the way, all of us can develop to our fullest potential and contribute to the world.

We talked through some of the frustrating limitations or expectations that non-profit organisations are constrained by. Dr Cantor describes how a lot of philanthropy's trading is transactional and she wants to see a move to value investing, where philanthropists coordinate their funding around a shared set of goals with 10-year investments that stay "long enough to build the solution, prove the solution and scale the solution." We also shared our sense of tension with scale and the ability to solve problems at scale, citing the need for alignment between philanthropy, education and government to reimagine the education system.

Dr Cantor generously invited me to watch a presentation she was giving the following week in Washington DC as the US Department of Education launched a new initiative to enhance STEM education for all students. Unfortunately, her speaking slot was in the early hours of the night in Aotearoa New Zealand and although I set an alarm, I was already up several times with my teething baby!