



*communities where whānau are housed, connected,
valued and thriving*

Te Rahi o DCM The Breadth of DCM

We are excited to show you our new film clip – Te Rahi o DCM – as we hear from our Manahautū Stephen, other members of the DCM team, and whānau like [Hapi](#) and [Smurf](#), who share some of their story. You'll see our carving group in action, and other cultural activities such as our daily waiata. To watch, click on the image below:



Amidst the activities, you'll see DCM's Whaea Jenny, whose role as Toa is to support the development and implementation of DCM's Te Ao Māori strategic approach. Whaea Jenny supports, mentors, and role models the organisation's kaupapa Māori competency programme to strengthen our cultural capacity and capability. She is a champion of our kaupapa, and a true unsung hero of DCM. We are delighted to share her story – in her own words.

Unsung heroes of DCM Whaea Jenny

My name is Jenny Langford-James, but I was born as Jeanette Whetumarama, and grew up with this name – it is the name on my driver's licence, for example. It wasn't until I was an adult and went to get a passport in 1986 that I found out my father hadn't registered me under this chosen name, but rather had recorded my middle name as May.

Originally, I'm from Motueka. My iwi is Ngāti Kuia – that's on my nana's side. My koro is from Ngāti Apa.



I am the third of eight siblings: Laura, Michael, Jenny, Stuart, Patrick, Peter, Shaun, Jerry. My older sister was brought up by my grandmother, so as the second oldest I had a big role in looking after everyone.

Things weren't very good growing up. We were very poor. We couldn't afford to have our power on most of the time – and so we lived in the dark. For many years we had no shoes. I remember being sent around the neighbourhood with a note to ask for bread. But when we didn't have kai we walked down to the beach – about half an hour's walk from home – and lived off the sea. Mussels and cockles, cooked on a bonfire.

The last thing on my mind was education, but I did go to school. We couldn't afford books, so we cut big white drawing paper into little booklets and used that. A lot of stuff we were taught at school I learned through memory.



Front left in this photo is our very own Whaea Jenny.

I wasn't allowed to speak te reo Māori as a child – I got a whack with a ruler on my first day of school for that. Mum and my aunties used to kōrero in te reo, but behind closed doors. In the end the reo started when we did our prayers, our karakia. That's how we learned the language.

I joined a Māori culture group and performed at a young age. It was a place where you could go away and express yourself. It was non-judgemental. And whatever you put in to it, you got out of it. To this day I love kapa haka.

Our father was an alcoholic and a violent man. My mother, brothers and I all suffered beatings from him. But our mum made sure that we weren't brought up outside a pub. She was our saviour really. She supported us all, and it is thanks to her that we have gone on to have the lives we've had.

One day my parents got a visit from the government saying they were going to take us kids away. And so, I left school at 14 and a half to look after the two youngest ones while mum went to work. It is these experiences that give me empathy for our whānau – a real understanding of what they have experienced and what they are going through now.



Manaakitanga was an everyday thing for us. Mum was strict about it – we had to uphold the mana of ourselves and of the family, and we learned to respect others' beliefs too.

We need to prepare our whānau for the next generation. From a Māori perspective, it's about making sure someone else can step into your shoes. When my oldest brother died, one of the whānau from back home got up to speak and said, "Who's going to look after us now?"

My whānau – all of us – were the ones who looked after everyone in Motueka. So, when someone died, we were the ones who went in and supported the families, sat on the paepae, did the karanga – did all the work to look after everyone.

And then it dawned on me – all of this manaakitanga was taught to us. Now I understand what it means. Today, it is great to work for an organisation like DCM, where manaakitanga is one of our core values.

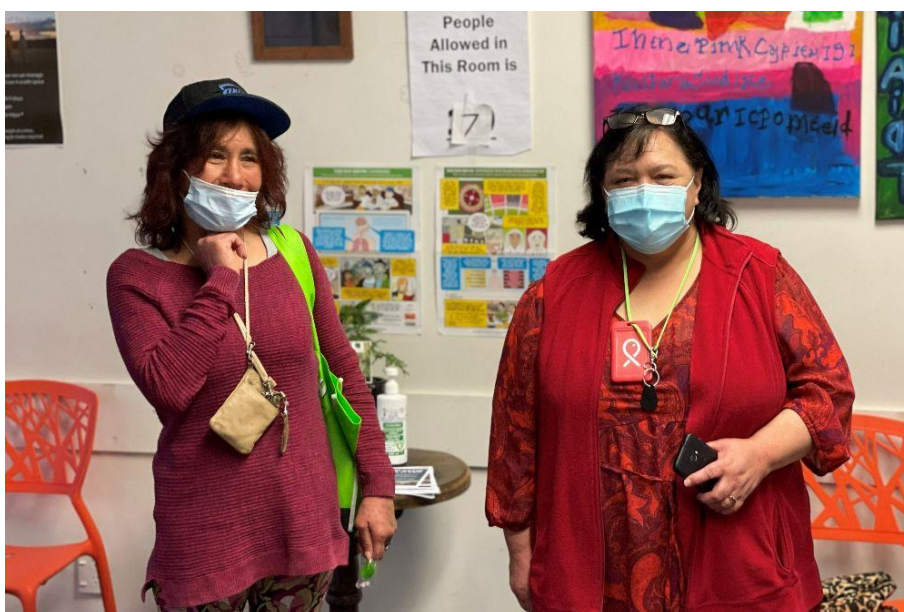


Whaea Jenny and her colleagues worked together with police to develop a new family violence kaupapa while she was employed in Taranaki.

At the age of 40 I decided to enrol at Nelson Polytechnic where I studied for a Mental Health Support Workers Certificate. I was nervous as I'd had very little education growing up; however, thanks to my kaiako (teacher) and fellow peers, I managed to graduate.

I have worked in both the North and South Islands, with kaupapa Māori services and mental health services. I was with Gateway Housing Trust in Nelson, up in Auckland working for Te Whare Tiaki Trust, then in South Taranaki for 18 years working for Ngāti Ruanui Iwi Social Services, before joining Kahungunu Whānau Services in Wellington, in the same building where I work with DCM today.

I first came to know about the mahi of DCM by beginning and ending our days alongside the team here in Lukes Lane, as we joined together for the morning waiata and karakia. I felt a calling that I just had to be with DCM. I wanted to work with the most marginalised whānau. So, after a hui with DCM Director Stephanie, and an interview with Taone and Neavin, I was employed by DCM. I began here in September 2019.



Whaea Jenny lends her support at one of DCM's COVID vaccine clinics, November 2021.

Unsung heroes of DCM - Whaea Jenny (Ngā Kōrero, 13 June 2023)
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I love the whānau who come here to DCM. If we can give a bit of ourselves to them, we get so much back. I want to see them all housed, and for DCM to show them a different way forward. We're getting them into homes, but we need more than just homes.

For me in my role as Toa, I am working alongside our Practice Leader Sia to get DCM's Tātai Aro practice framework in place. We are learning what mana-enhancing services are all about, and making sure that DCM is culturally viable, and that all of our staff have the capacity and capability to step up and make things work. Among our team, there is a wealth of knowledge, and everyone has their own tikanga, with so much to share.

I am grateful to have this opportunity to share my knowledge too. I always go back to Stephanie, who made this job happen for me. Stephanie was DCM's director for 16 years, and she made the place rock. I am excited to be part of the team with Stephen at the helm, as we map our way forward, and can't wait to see what comes next for our amazing organisation, where manaakitanga sits at the heart of everything we do.

Thank you Whaea Jenny for sharing the precious taonga that is your story with us.

This story uses elements of Whaea Jenny's Kaimahi Kōrero with Michelle Scott. (Thanks Michelle!)

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