

When Walls Speak: Teaching in the Wharenui

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This presentation will explore teaching the Masters of Social Practice course Spirituality and Social Practice in the wharenui, the essential part of the marae which is a communal and sacred space serving spiritual and social purposes. Unitec is privileged to have one of the most beautiful wharenui called Te Noho Kotahitanga designed and carved by a master carver Lionel Grant. The building itself has been built on sustainable principles and as such epitomises ideas presented during the course. Lynda Toki had a dual role in this course as Kuia and Kai Awhina for the Marae and as a student in the course. Ksenija Napan facilitated a course as an Academic Co-creative Inquiry, a novel method of teaching and learning where students and teachers co-create the content and the process of the course. The method balances 'negotiables' and 'non-negotiables' through a dialogical process. Learning outcomes, approved by NZQA were non-negotiable, but ways of covering them, deadlines and learning processes were negotiated with students. This presentation will explore how the physical space of wharenui contributed to the course to the point of almost being a class member and student reflections on their learning at this unique venue will be presented and reflected upon.