

Episode Five of Five: Kei roto i te miru: Inside the bubble – ‘We Moved’ Podcast Series EP05 Covid-19 pandemic lockdown 2020. Produced by Ministry for Culture and Heritage Manatū Taonga, Auckland Libraries.

Kei roto i te miru: inside the bubble

Podcast series, oral histories from lockdown 2020, Covid-19 pandemic Aotearoa New Zealand. Produced by Manatū Taonga, Ministry for Culture and Heritage.

INTRO:

AUDIO PM Jacinda Ardern: 48hrs before lockdown - Non-essential businesses in New Zealand must now close. All bars, restaurants, cafes, cinemas, pools, museums, libraries, playgrounds, any other place where the public congregate must close their face to face function. All indoor and outdoor events cannot proceed. In short, we are all now preparing as a nation to go into self-isolation.

AUDIO: SFX (Sound Effects) Emergency Management Alert

AUDIO Jacinda Ardern: 48hrs before lockdown - These decisions will place the most significant restrictions on New Zealanders movements in modern history.

HOST: Tēnā koutou katoa, Ko Emma Jean taku ingoa. I'm Dr Emma-Jean Kelly -- an audio-visual historian with Manatū Taonga: The Ministry for Culture and Heritage -- and this is Kei roto i te miru: Inside the Bubble.

Theme Music upswell

HOST: As lockdown loomed and you gathered your whanau, your supplies, your nerves, we corralled a team of oral historians, grappled with technology, and (digitally) found our way into twenty five unique New Zealand bubbles to capture your Aotearoa, as you made history.

Theme Music upswell

HOST: It was a journey all 5 million of us made collectively as we prepared...

AUDIO Natalie Healy: That last day before we went in, I went to Bunnings and I went to Baby City to panic buy some more toys.

AUDIO Angelique Tuaputa: She became the panic shopper, and I became the wingman to the panic shopper.

HOST: We cared...

AUDIO Jacque: The first two weeks were very scary, because we didn't know what was going to happen within the hospital.

HOST: And we moved...particularly...

AUDIO Aliyah Winter: going on lots of government mandated walks

HOST: And ...

AUDIO Caren Wilton: I see a lot of older people, people who like to be in the 70s and 80s, who I don't think you would normally see out on bikes.

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HOST: And we learned...

AUDIO: Sebastian Nobile: I tried to learn guitar. Three songs... and we have four guitars in the hostel. So, lock down was the perfect opportunity.

AUDIO: Zemara Waru-Keelan: We kept the home school thing happening. We made marshmallow putty and we did painting, and we exploded volcanoes...

HOST: And now we remember -- In this episode we'll look back at how we connected

AUDIO PM Jacinda Ardern: LEVELS statement to the nation on Covid-19, March 21
For now I asked that New Zealand does what we do so well. We are a country that is creative, practical and community minded. We may not have experienced anything like this in our lifetimes, but we know how to rally and we know how to look after one another. And right now what could be more important than that. So thank you for all that you're about to do. Please be strong. Be kind.

HOST: Early on though, we were less connected; our fear brought out the worst in some of us. Not long before the Prime minister first called us a ‘team of 5 million’ and her speechwriters and communications people came up with the rallying catchcry ‘Unite Against Covid-19’, the fear of the invisible threat was actually dividing us.

MUSIC: Te Mate Korona Waiata, Corona Virus Song Meng Foon

AUDIO Meng Foon: My name is Meng Foon, and I am the Race Relations Commissioner. My parents came from, Guangzhou, Hong Kong Dad came from Guangzhou, they escaped the Japanese war and became refugees in Hong Kong and came to New Zealand So, this is me, so Kia Ora everyone, tena koutou.

MUSIC: Te Mate Korona Waiata, Corona Virus Song continued Meng Foon

HOST: That's Meng singing *Te Mate Korona Waiata*, -- a song he wrote and performed to urge New Zealanders to stay home -- be united -- and be kind, because he could see something ugly was unfolding...

AUDIO Meng Foon: In the beginning, before the lockdown 4, as it was progressing in China and it started to actually permeate around the world, there was actually quite a spike in our info-line complaints, to the Human Rights Commission regarding racism

HOST: Some believed the ‘team of five million’ had an imaginary opponent -- within it.

AUDIO Meng Foon: people were sort of, very obvious, that they didn't want to walk on the same side of the street, or say this is a Chinese virus bugger off home or f off home. So we had a number of these sorts of things in the beginning, as the virus came to New Zealand it sort of, it didn't only picked on Chinese people, the virus, the corona thing, affects human beings, it infected a lot of different New Zealanders. That sort of, helped abate the racism. Unfortunately, before that there was some anxiety, systemic type racism, regarding some parents and some schools, says: ‘Oh be careful with those Asians, you and your family are better staying home’. There was a report of a

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Filipino family, that an email was sent saying that this family is high risk and they were better staying home.

HOST: And then things got worse...hate, it seemed, was spreading faster than the virus.

AUDIO Meng Foon: Yeah, and as time progressed, we have had an increase of racism matters. We had meetings with Facebook and the police, we've spoken to the New Zealand Secret Service, regarding highlighting the issues of racism the police say, that unofficially, because they are still collecting data and analysing it, that about 80% of the complaints that they received during COVID is to do with race matters, and that's quite high, and NetSafe also reported around 600% increase, mainly because of lockdown more people are on the computer, do their hero cowardly racism stuff online.

HOST: And this wasn't the first time the fear surrounding a pandemic has led to a spike in racism. Similar fear and division was seen during the SARS pandemic in the early two-thousands. And while much of the racism during lockdown was limited to online abuse -- there was a worry things might turn physical when the level 4 lockdown ended.

AUDIO Meng Foon: Hmmm so, we've been sort of thinking, right, OK, so when people come out what are we going to do? So one of the things we have done, and I know that you can sort of pre-empt, because there is a high probability that if we don't say anything or mitigate anything it could actually get out of control. So, I wrote to the School Trustee Association, the Teachers Council and the Principals Association, and I said 'look it would be great if you could continue with the message of kindness and respect...and also be aware of racism in your schools and the need to call it out and halt it in your schools'.

HOST: He also got in touch with businesses to get them to push the message of unity. Now Meng's advocating for better teaching of New Zealand history, so people don't keep on repeating the same behaviour.

And he wants people to remember that our shared love of Aotearoa is actually what truly connects us. Even (and especially) when the fear and uncertainty of a pandemic lockdown is coming at us.

AUDIO Meng Foon: You know there are a lot of stories, that once we get to understand the local history of Māori themselves and the trials and tribulation of the breach of te tiriti and then you've got your refugees, your migrants that came here. Look, people that come here, they must want to come here, there is a reason why they love this place, and that's really important.

MUSIC

HOST: I'm Dr Emma-Jean Kelly and you're listening to Kei roto i te miru: Inside the Bubble, a collection of oral histories recorded during the 2020 nation-wide Covid-19 lockdown. While Covid-19 may have initially highlighted our division it also brought a new connectedness. Heaps of the people we spoke to - told us they'd made discoveries like this during lockdown...

AUDIO Pirihiira Kaio: the thing that struck me that kids' parents were spending more time with their children and the children were loving it.

AUDIO Natalie Healy: you'll see like a family of two adults and two teenage children out on bikes together. And it just makes you think, you know, and in ordinary times, I doubt these teenage children are going for weekend bike rides with their parents, which is quite nice to see.

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AUDIO Zemara Waru-Keelan: we got to be a family without any pressure of having a routine or anything. And that was really good for the kids.

HOST: It wasn't all rosy, home-schooling was fraught at times, domestic violence cases spiked and some families were in truly terrible situations, but for many there was just -- time -- time to re-discover those closest to us, without the distraction of our busy lives or needing to 'be places' all the time.

MUSIC Katchafire ‘Get Away’

AUDIO Leon & Herani: staying home with my family is my dream. Yes. It was actually heaven sent

MUSIC Katchafire ‘Get Away’ continues

HOST: Leon Davey is in the band Katchafire -- Cheers for the sounds there Katchafire! --He's also a Dad, and being part of a popular band that tours the globe means being away from his family ...a lot. He and his wife Herani were actually away in Hawaii when the borders were about to close and only just managed to slip back in. Even then, they still had to self-isolate from their kids for two weeks before being able to get home and see them again.

AUDIO Leon & Herani: because I played music for a job and I toured the world from four to six months out of the year. And I've been doing it for a long time for a while now. And I'm getting to the point in my life where I actually am sick and tired of touring. I don't like leaving my house and I don't like leaving my family. So this isolation was just heaven sent. I love staying home with my family in the house. I absolutely. It's how I thrive. I absolutely love it. That was like a blessing. Yes, absolutely. Listen, I know. I shouldn't say that because people are getting sick and dying. But for me Yeah, that's great.

HOST: If Covid hadn't struck, instead of being home in March last year, he would've been touring America.

AUDIO Leon & Herani: He's never been home for my birthday even more like it's been over 10/12 years. Yes. Around this time. So I think that quarantine we naturally you know, like connected, reconnected and serious. But reconnected with the people that really matter to us is not just ourselves, our children but our extended whanau. Oh, so our parents. We were able to as a family, you know, put in the time to our children and ourselves to really think, yes, what's really important here...and actually, I think, before that before we would think that going out to beautiful restaurant even though it was, but making a huge, fantastic day of it and events and doing this, this and that was actually spending quality time, but I think us being forced to stay inside and self-isolate, we actually played games together like games of cards, chess. We laughed, we put down our phone, social media. And we really, like old days how I remember growing up, you know, we would hang out together and laugh, and arguing and stuff. But you know, and it was just all very natural for us. And I think that's what we missed. Um, we didn't even realize it.

HOST: It's not ideal for an internationally successful band to be grounded in New Zealand, after all the band is his job -- but for Leon the enforced stay was invaluable.

AUDIO Leon & Herani: ...family and not have to travel and talk. Yes, it's been a real yes, so many times with live and all my kids at one stage have ended up bawling their eyes out on my way out the

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door for two months, you know, it's like the worst feeling ever and we've all had to go through their families, no deals. It was an absolute blessing and to have that subsidy covered the wages covered was absolutely fantastic. A band for the band itself is reconnected with our families. And it's given us time to reflect on what's really important. I've always known. I knew my job was what put my family first.

HOST: Weeks of lockdown also brought a renewed connectedness to Angelique Tuaputa's family.

AUDIO Angelique Tuaputa: being together during this time of COVID-19 has kind of strengthened our family

HOST: Angelique was in a bubble with her sister and her dad and although they're close --- they usually live together -- they're always just so busy.

AUDIO Angelique Tuaputa: ...we have different schedules, with work and church and other things that we do that ... during this time, we've been able to slow down and just be together work on each other as a family and set goals for what we want to do, as well as having space for ourselves individually. So the only people we've seen besides ourselves has just been our neighbours waving to us across the driveway, and the supermarket workers, but our bubble is very comfortable ... no children around, which is kind of how I like it. My dad doesn't like it too much because he misses my nieces and nephews, and my cousins and their kids. So I think that's a bit difficult for him. But for me and my sisters, young adults, it's good for us, because we can kind of have a good balance, but I guess it depends on your preference of who you want in your bubble, and our bubble is a really funny bubble as well ... quite a humorous family, and we like to get together at the dinner table, that's our favourite part of the day, just to talk to each other about how our days been, especially because me and my sister have been working during this time as well. So yeah, our bubble's really nice.

HOST: Angelique works as a librarian in Auckland.

AUDIO Angelique Tuaputa: I remember during that time and getting phone calls from ... my manager and other people in the organisation I work with just to check up on us and see if we're okay.

HOST: With libraries closed, she was quite worried about her job, but she says her work went out of its way to keep staff feeling joined-up and making sure they didn't feel alone. Initially -- there were of course -- the usual problems with the tech.

AUDIO Angelique Tuaputa: I remember our first meeting that I had with my team, it was a bit of a muck, because we were using Microsoft Teams to call each other we were using different ... different ways of communication.

HOST: But they got there.

AUDIO Angelique Tuaputa: ...the first couple of weeks, probably two weeks, was just getting everyone's mental health in check, and making sure that we were okay and not giving any sort of work. Council are really awesome, they actually allocated ... well libraries actually allocated different people leaders to call as buddies, to different ... to different colleagues of the organisation, so I was getting three phone calls from three different people, my manager, my managers manager, and my new people leader buddy, just to make sure that we were okay, our families were okay, we had everything we need, and just reassurance that we were still getting paid, which was something I

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heavily worried about during that time. I was having questions in my head, do I have to go for wage subsidy? I had questions like for my dad's benefit, and stuff like that. And I was a bit worried the first week, but I was a bit calm at the same time because I could ... I came to the realization of the new reality I was living in...

HOST: With the library closed, her team was re-deployed for the lockdown. She was now the one making the calls to check in on people and make sure they were doing ok.

AUDIO Angelique Tuaputa: When I got the email about the redeployment I was like, oh no [laughs]. I thought I would have to go, you know, go to the city where a lot of other people have to go as well. But when they said that it was at home, I was a bit anxious because this was work that we were doing on behalf of and ... helping out the Ministry of Social Development, and as a lot of people may know, it's not the easiest job in the world, especially with the verbal abuse, and so I was a bit worried about how the whole process was going to go. I was a bit curious to see who else from my team was redeployed as well, and also the amount of hours that would go into the work. So the redeployment work ... there was 70 plus Auckland library staff that were redeployed from different library branches around Auckland, and we had to make phone calls, from a spreadsheet, of 50 names per day, to elderly people, that are in rest homes, that live by themselves, just to check on them, see if they have all the essentials that they need, and if they don't, there was a process of who we can refer them to CDEM, or if they need the Police ... if they need financial assistance. The first two days my ... I think there was eight of us from my team, we all kind of formed our own little team chat just to keep each other going.

SFX (Sound Effects): Outdoor atmosphere, birds, trees

HOST: For some the disconnection they often feel from society, was exacerbated by lockdown.

SFX: Outdoor atmosphere birds, trees, bike

HOST: And those autumnal

AUDIO Aliyah Winter: government mandated walks

HOST: ...with a wave or hello to people in your community -- were not always something to look forward to.

AUDIO Aliyah Winter: A very young person on a bike biking past just like yelled a transphobic slurs at me,

SFX Bike boy calling out

AUDIO Aliyah Winter: which was really just such a strange experience. And I can't like it's been a very long time since something like that happened to me. And yeah, and it was just it was so bizarre, because it was so quick. And he was on a bike biking path quite fast. And just, yes, it in passing. And no one else was really around to hear it.

SFX Outdoor atmos birds, trees

AUDIO Aliyah Winter: I've also had, like, had a couple, like, weird experiences of harassment, which has been quite strange. And I am not sure exactly why that's been the case. But I think maybe people

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are around there at home that have much to do or it's just like, there's lots of like, compressed emotions.

HOST: Aliyah Winter is an artist from Wellington. She was living in a queer flat during lockdown and observed that being there she felt truly relaxed and comfortable in her skin. For many of us letting go of our appearance was one of the pleasures of lockdown -- and quite freeing in a way. But for Aliyah not staying on top of her appearance -- can have more serious consequences. Both for her state of mind and her physical safety.

AUDIO Aliyah Winter: Because I guess there's an element of like, femininity for me that sort of like it's like body, body armor going outside. But staying inside and not having the armor necessarily like not putting on the makeup or not wearing like a certain kind of outfit and maybe not having shaved or something like that as like, can create a bit of tension, but I'm very grateful that I live with people that I just feel very comfortable around with that stuff, because I've definitely been in situations where that hasn't been the case. And then you have this constant sort of like, worry and wanting to maintain. You just you just kind of have to. And you're always negotiating your boundaries and figuring things out. So I'm glad that I can just like, yeah, break and not have to worry about that. So it has been good.

HOST: At times she relished disconnecting from wider society.

AUDIO Aliyah Winter: it's been nice to just have a rest and have a break. Cause I think especially for me sometimes that there's like, that added extra layer of like being in the world, particularly as like a trans feminine person, and not having that like hovering sort of anxiety about how you're being perceived or the hyper vigilance. So like always looking around to see how people are responding and whether you're in danger and things like that. So it's kind of been nice to have to opt out of them for a while, and, and get back in touch with my body a little bit, I guess, as well, because I haven't really had a regular routine of any physical exercise. So doing a lot of it. And even though it's been partially to rid myself of this nervous energy as well, paradoxically. It's been good. Yeah. Feel but more grounded, and a bit more embodied than I have before.

SFX Outdoor garden digging, trees, wind

HOST: Being a cis-gender woman, I don't get hassled much if I want to wear my trackies, a t-shirt and no make up (actually I hardly ever wear make-up). It's easy to forget how lucky I am sometimes. So for me lockdown was actually a time when I really sought out connection with other people in my community -- albeit at a distance of two metres.

SFX - Outdoor comm garden atmosphere

HOST: I didn't realise it at the time, but back in January - when I started getting involved in my local community garden, I was quite literally laying the groundwork of something that would really help get me through.

I put a few plants in, and then someone built a fence around it for me, and left me a few herbs as well. When lockdown came, I could chuck some old clothes on and go into the garden each day and do some weeding, while keeping two metres from anyone else who was around. That's when I met Herewini, a fellow gardener. I wasn't feeling very well (not Covid, I was tested) and he told me how to gather kawakawa from the bank near the garden and turn it into tea. It helped, as did the chats with Herewini and others who wandered past. It was so nice to be able to connect with someone new at a time when we were so starved of community.

Those connections have remained and expanded through my gardening whanau after lockdown. The garden also helped me to connect with people who I never actually met. We had some people in our

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apartment block stranded in New Zealand for lockdown, and so I put a sign on my garden saying ‘Help Yourself’. People did, and I felt good that during a difficult time, people could get some fresh spinach or herbs for their dinner. The community garden made life in a small apartment two storeys up much easier. My husband Jay and I found that even in our tiny apartment with our fat cat Ruby-Tuesday, we got along better than ever - and Jay’s dry sense of humour somehow emerged with the lockdown. He’s pretty quiet my Jay, but every so often he’d come out with a comment to crack me up and surprise me. Not bad after 14 years together! But now, one year on. As we look back, how are those connections travelling? Were our promises of big change; going easy on the environment, a big life or society reset just like a New Year’s resolution? waiting to be broken?... or something simply forgotten, as daily life picks up its unrelenting pace again? I hope not. I’ll leave you with these words of hope from Northland community advocate Carol Peters.

AUDIO Carol Peters: I am encouraged by the goodness of humans. I think the challenge for the community going forward is to maintain the care for each other that we’ve found during this time, and also the care for the planet. Because we’ve observed how birds have come back into the centre of the city..... animals..... and the atmosphere has cleared. I think the challenge is to hold onto some of the gains. To not go back to practices that we had before of ... hurrying and using the planet without caring for it. Hurrying day by day to work and back, and not thinking about our neighbours and our relatives. To actually maintaining some of the loving connections that we’ve had. I think there are the silver linings of connection, and us seeing how the best that we can be in caring for ourselves and our neighbours.

HOST: I’m Dr Emma Jean Kelly and that was ‘We connected’ our final episode in the series. The series was written and executive produced by Teresa Cowie -- sound was designed and woven by Anaru Dalziel -- our production co-ordinator was Georgie Keyse -- and the music was by Stefan Patton. The lockdown oral histories you heard in this episode were recorded by Alex Mason, Lynda Chanwai-Earle, Tuaratini, Jacqui Keelan and Will Hansen.

Our thanks to The Ministry for Culture and Heritage -- Auckland Libraries, especially Sue Berman -- RNZ for the news archive and of course to those who shared their bubble with us -- Angelique Tuapata, Albert Traill, Aliyah Winter, Leon and Herani Davey, Carol Peters and Meng Foon, nga mihi nui ki a koutou.

If you want to hear their full interviews head to the Auckland Libraries website. And thanks to Katchafire for the use of their song -- ‘Get Away’. If you enjoyed the series please subscribe, rate and review so it’s easier for others to find it too.

Special thanks to Pirihiā Kaio, Tainui kaumātua. Thanks so much for coming Inside the Bubble with us.

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