

LearningSCAPES

Creating Belonging: Integrating Culture in Transformative Architecture



WEL
A4

01

Title

Creating Belonging:

Integrating Culture in Transformative Architecture

- Werner Naude
- DCA Architects of Transformation
- LearningSCAPES 2025
- New Horizons in Learning Environments

02

Roadmap & Learning Objectives

Roadmap:

- Me, Myself and I
- Why belonging matters Dunn & Dunn + belonging
- Culture | People | Place (with case studies)
- Storytelling in design
- Toolkit & process
- Call to action

Learning Objectives:

- Understand why belonging enhances learning & project success
- Identify strategies to integrate First Nations & local cultures
- Analyse real-world case studies
- See how belonging underpins Dunn & Dunn factors

03

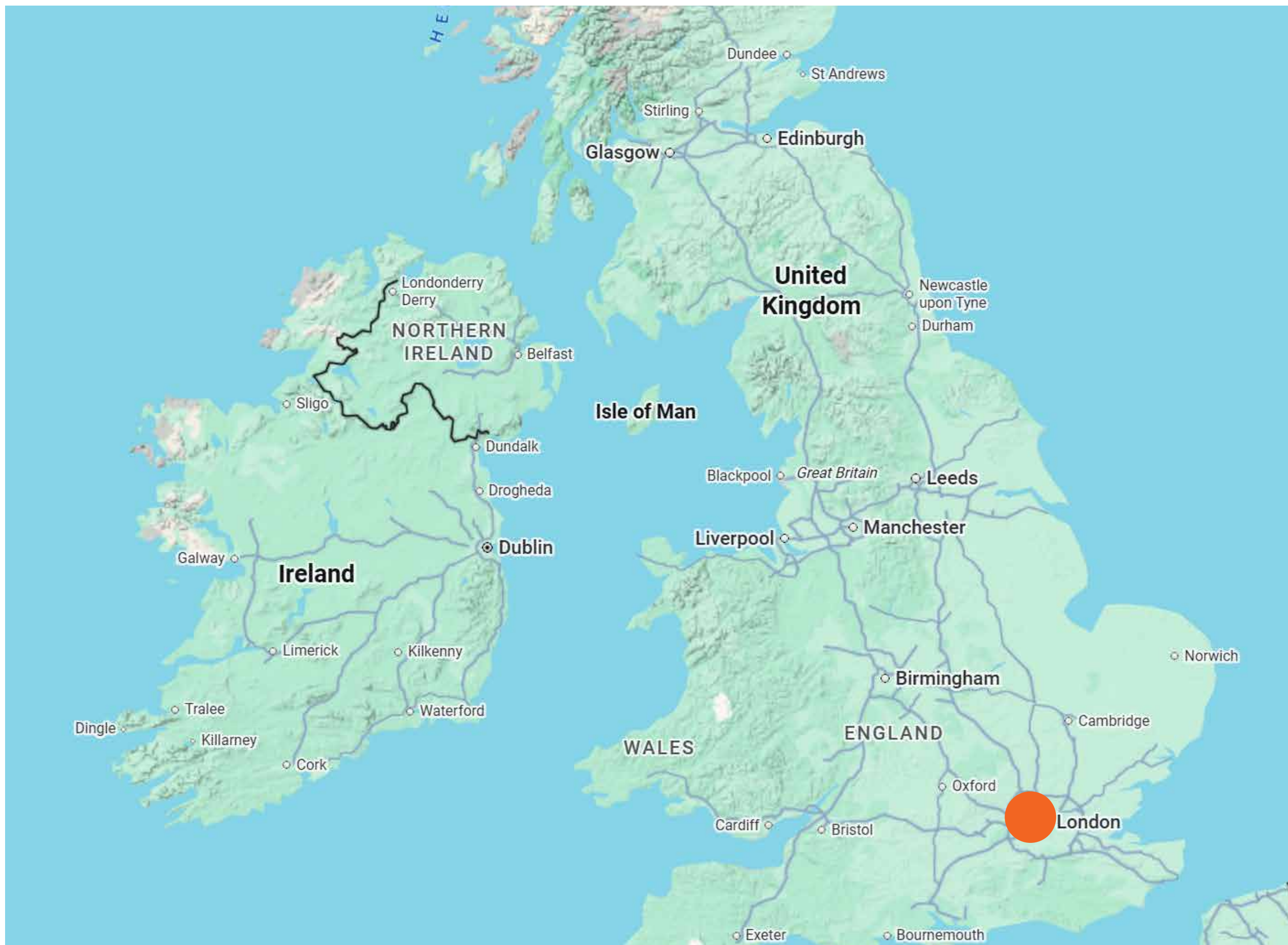
Me Myself and I

A bit about me:

- The early years
- Education
- Starting again
- Family
- Fun







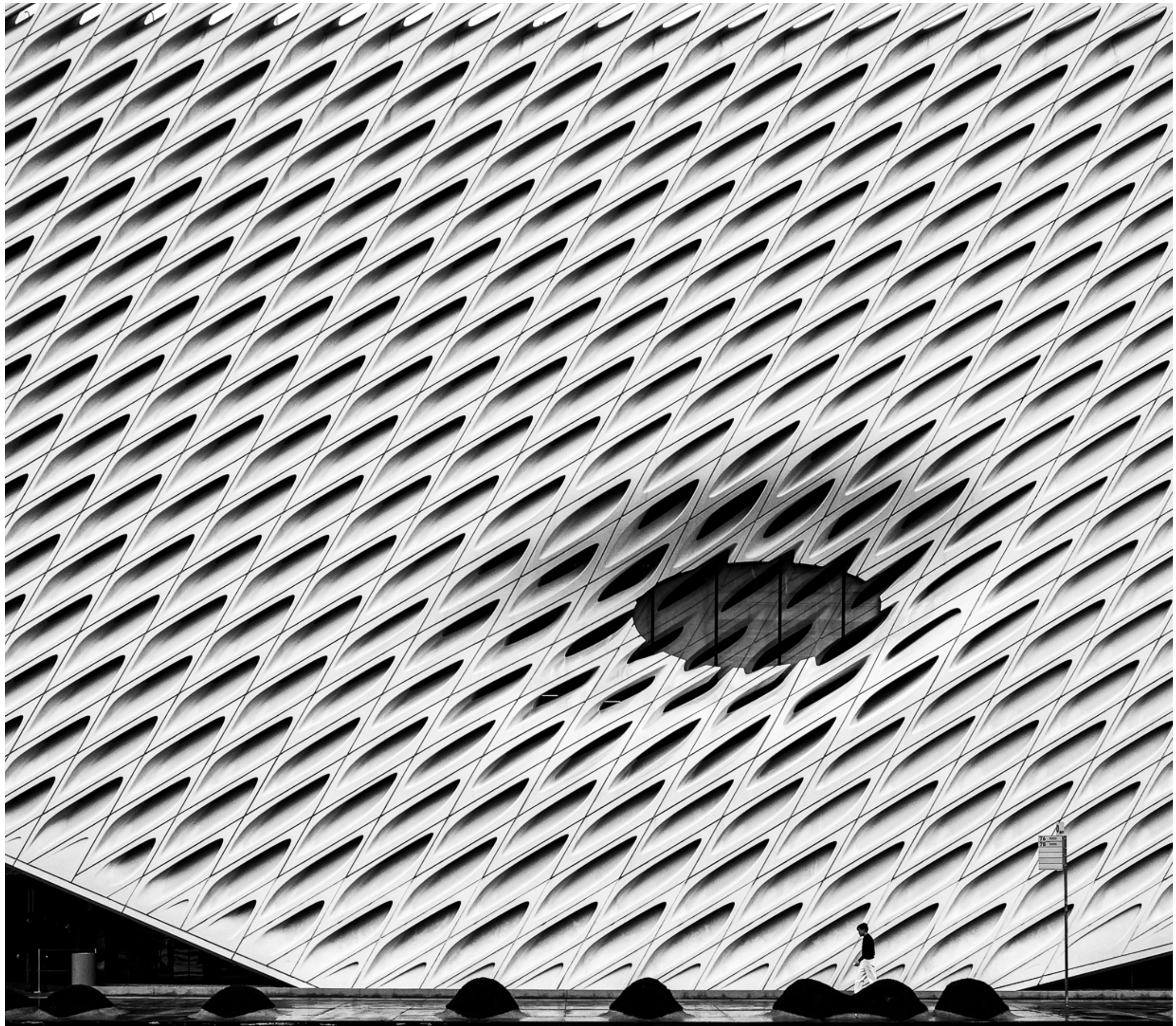






















04

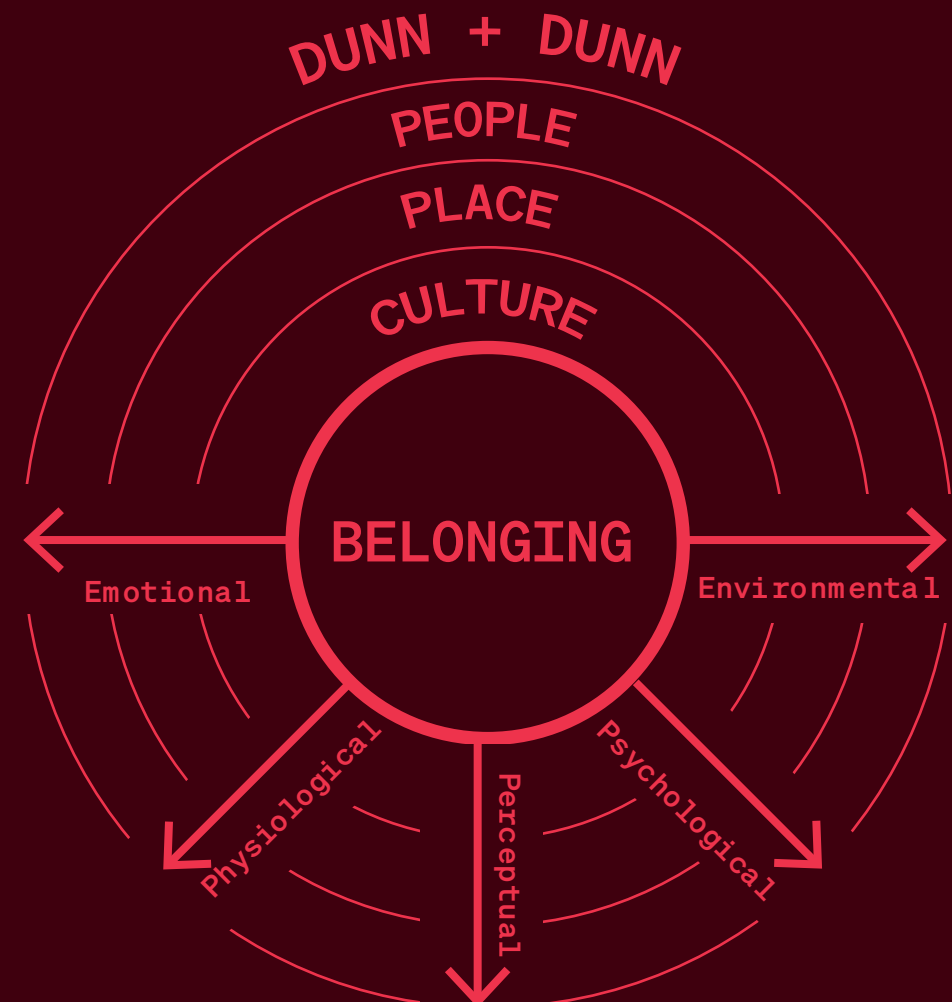
Why Belonging Matters in Learning Environments

- Belonging drives engagement, persistence, and motivation
- In buildings, belonging emerges from culture, people, and place
- When present, projects achieve higher acceptance and sustained use
- Sets the foundation for Dunn & Dunn success

05

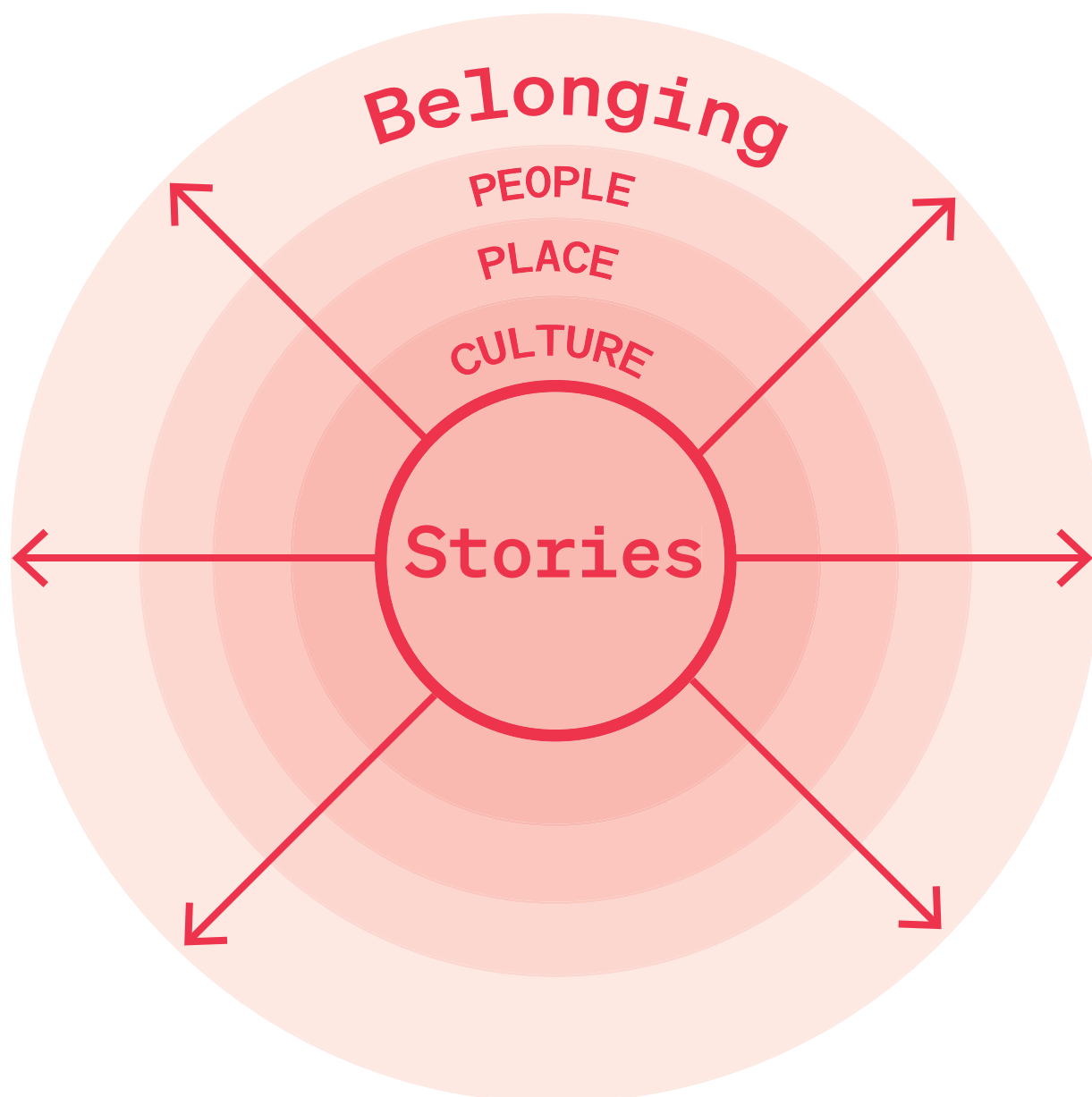
Dunn & Dunn Recap + Belonging Link

- Dunn & Dunn model: Physiological, Emotional, Sociological, Psychological, Perceptual, Environmental
- Evidence base: 850+ studies across 135+ institutions (Meta analysis)
- Matching instruction/design to learning preferences improves outcomes
- Belonging strengthens each strand's effect



06

Stories and Belonging



- People feel and think through stories
- Stories enhance emotional resonance, comprehension, recall
- They transmit culture, build trust, and mobilise vision
- In co-design, storytelling creates ownership
- Case study 1: Te Whānau-ā-Apanui + Story telling through patterns and integrating art in to the architecture
- Case study 2: Te Arawa Media + Story telling through patterns lighting and colour

Te Whānau-ā-Apanui







Te Arawa Media





07

Culture: Designing With, Not Just For

- Integrate visible, local cultural elements in architecture, interior and color
- Align early with cultural principles
- Case study 3: Pukekohe High School + integration of Cultural symbolism in to contemporary form

Pukekohe High School



Pukekohe High School



Pukekohe High School





08

People: Stories, Rituals, and Daily Life

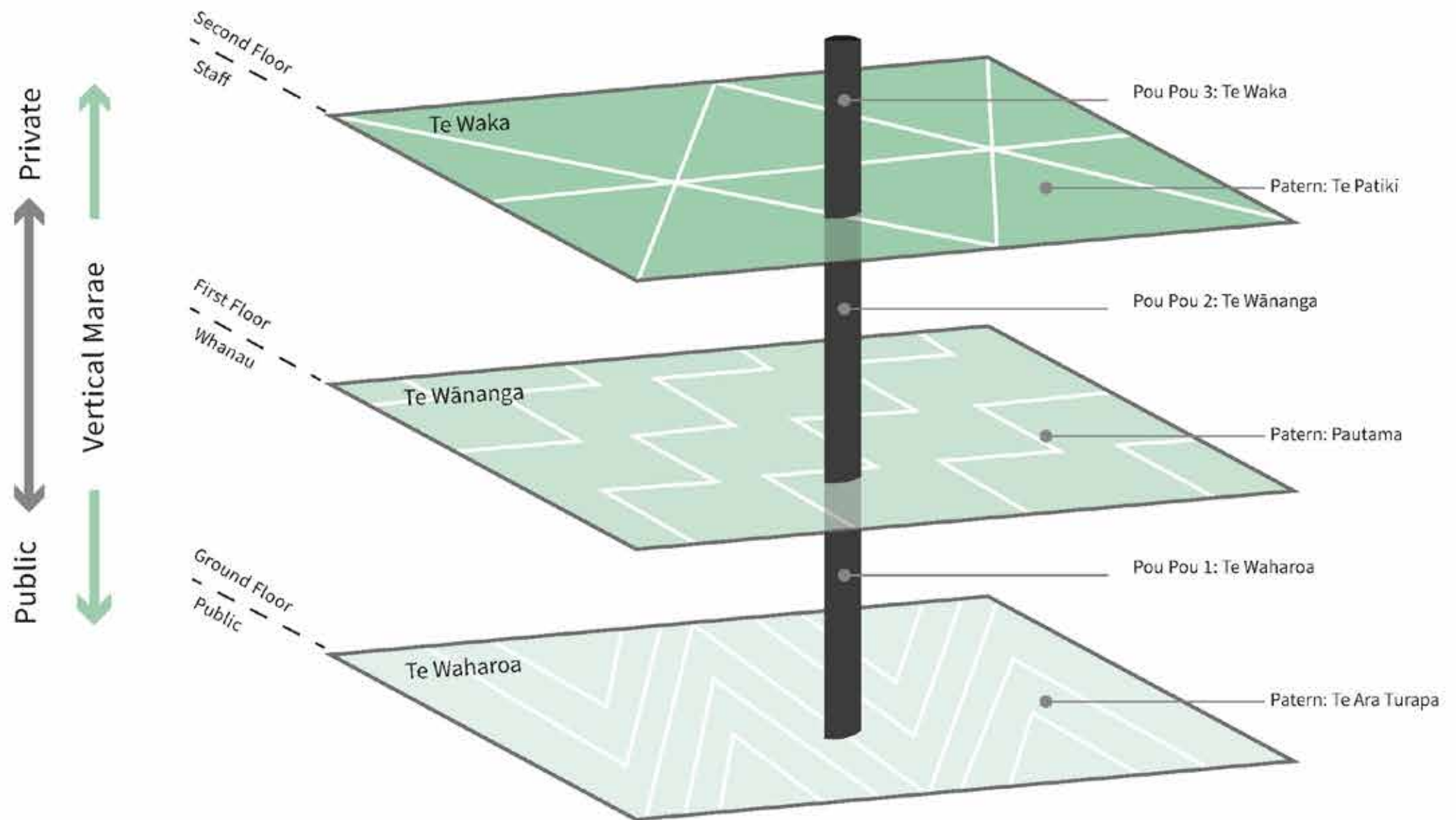
- Design that reflects rituals, traditions, and social organisation
- Participatory methods: co-design, community engagement, all voices heard
- Vernacular research: form follows culture-in-use
- Case study 4: Te Rito o Manaaki ora + cultural principles drive plan from and vertical planning
- Case Study 5: Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Te Wānanga Whare Tapere o Takitimu

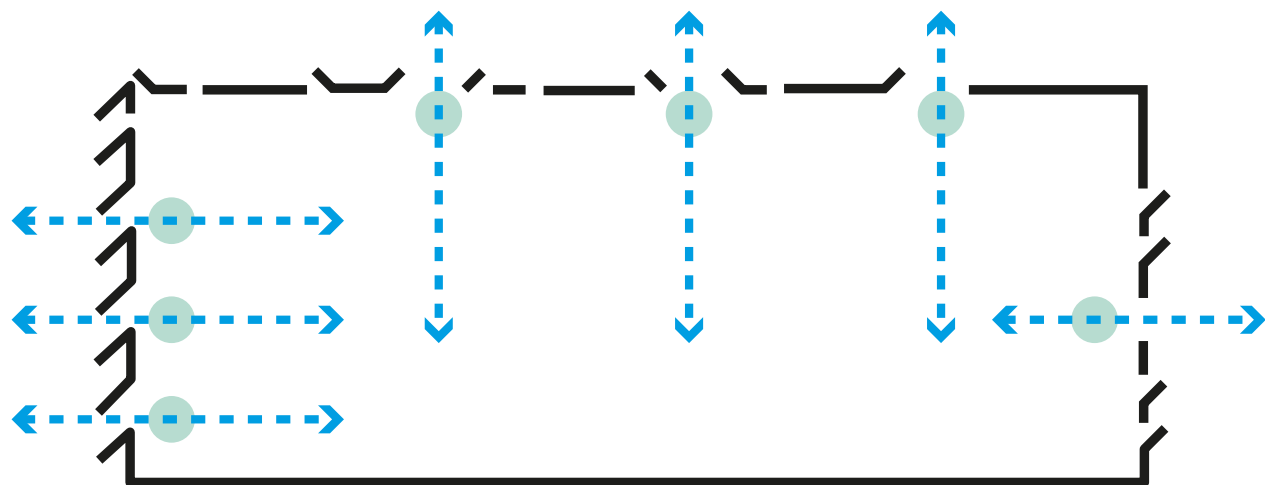
Māori Marae
Ōrākei Marae, Ngāti Whātua (Auckland)






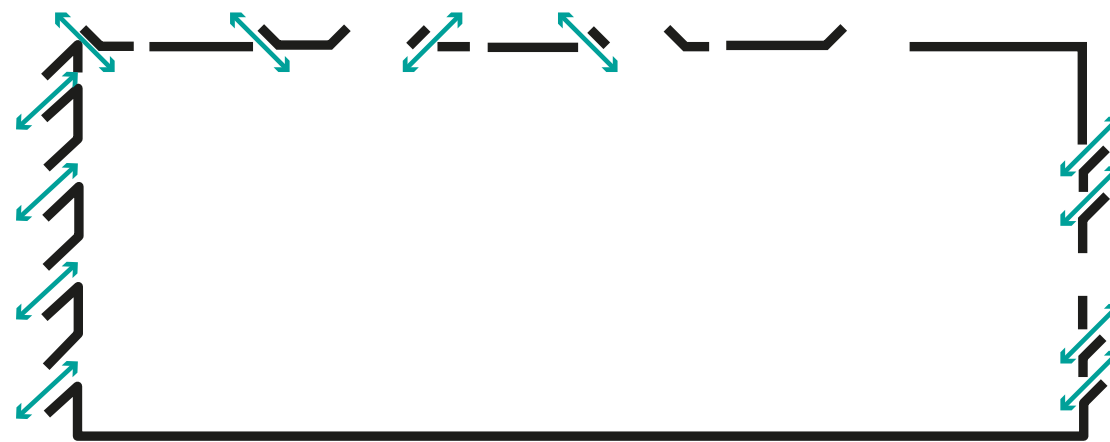
Te Rito o Manaaki ora





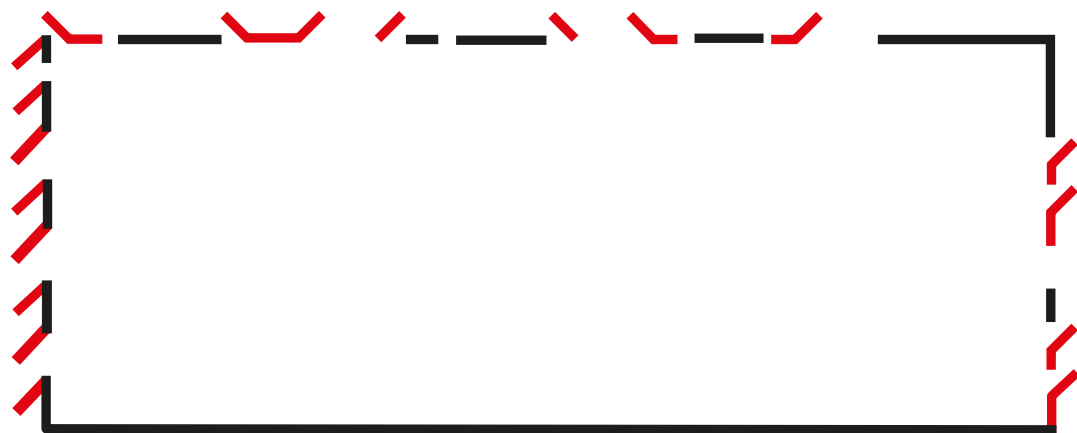






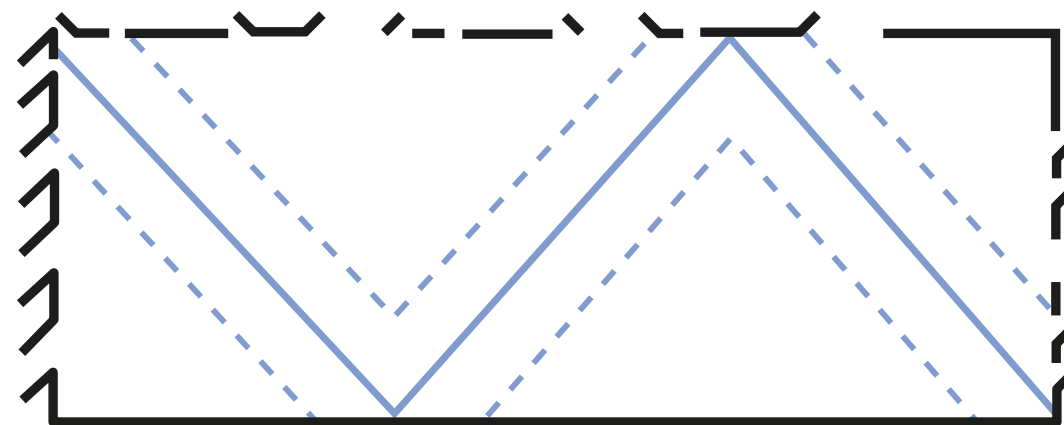
-  Large openings aligned with public/social spaces and circulation zones to bring natural light deep in to building footprint. Generous views to the exterior.
-  Planting to filter natural light & enhance biophilic environment
-  Building outline





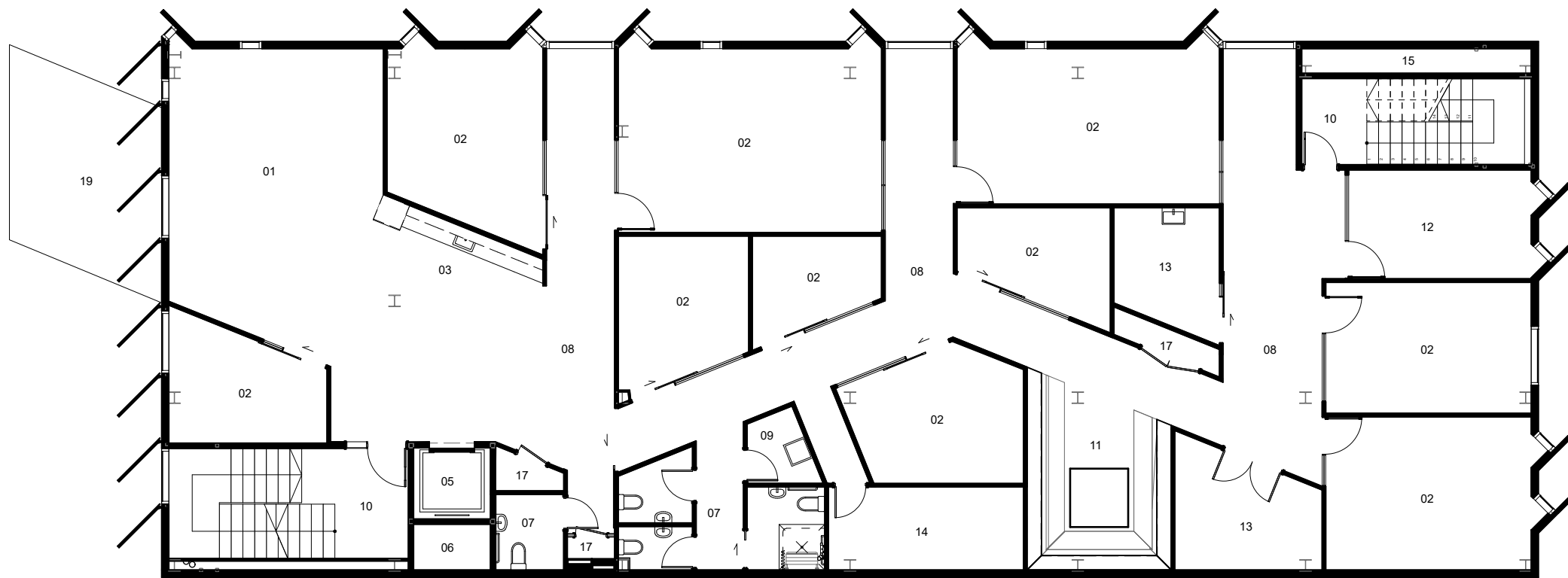
-  Framed views to the Rotorua town square and lake while maintaining privacy to interior spaces from neighbours..
-  Building outline



-  Undulating facade controls solar gain & glare, embodies cultural narrative, while providing diffuse natural light and privacy to counselling and work spaces.
-  Building outline

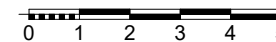


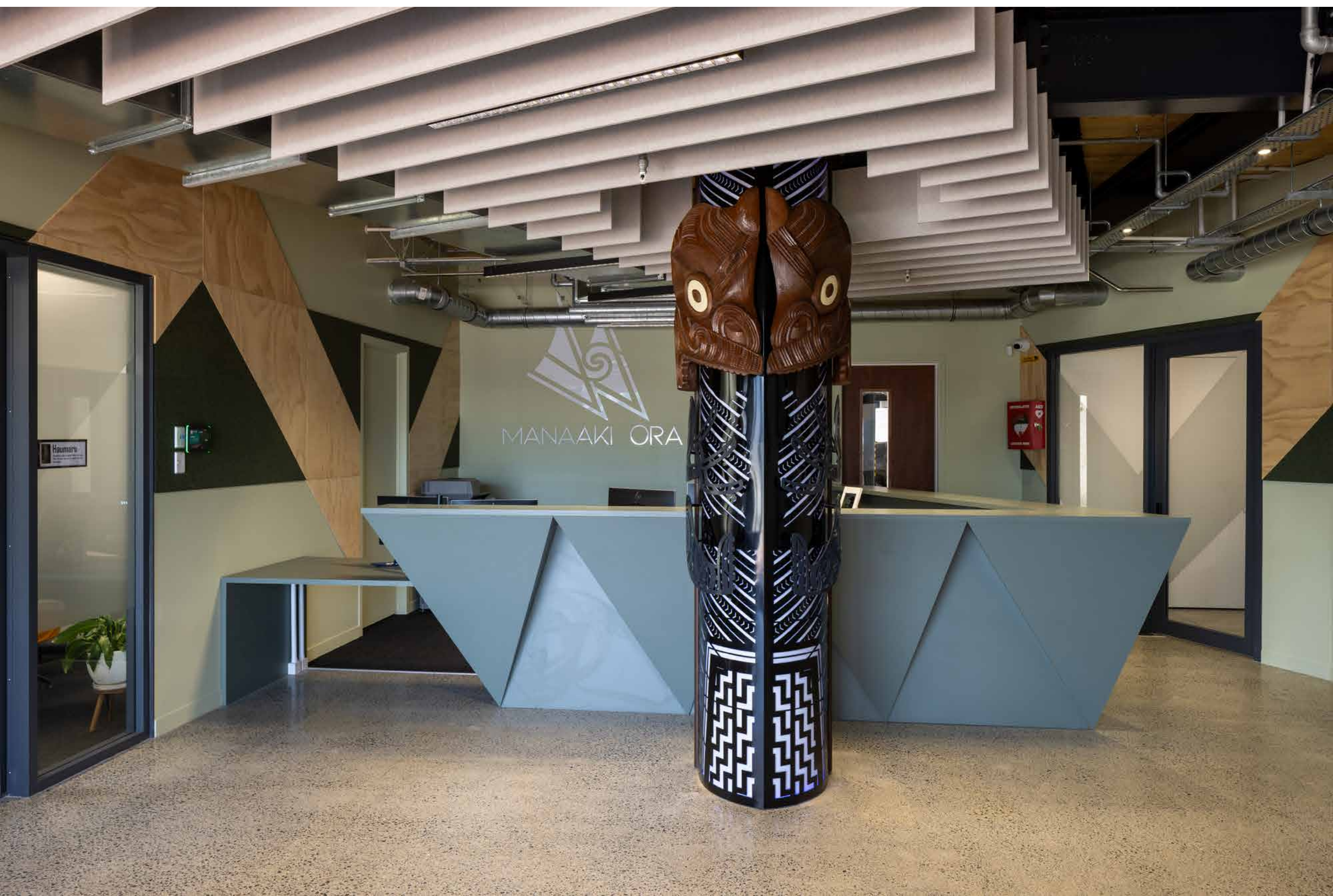
-  Kaokao/Niho Taniwha pattern use as main organising principle for interior spaces. Pattern signifies a connection to the past but also a place of safety and protection.
-  Building outline



Key - Floor Plan

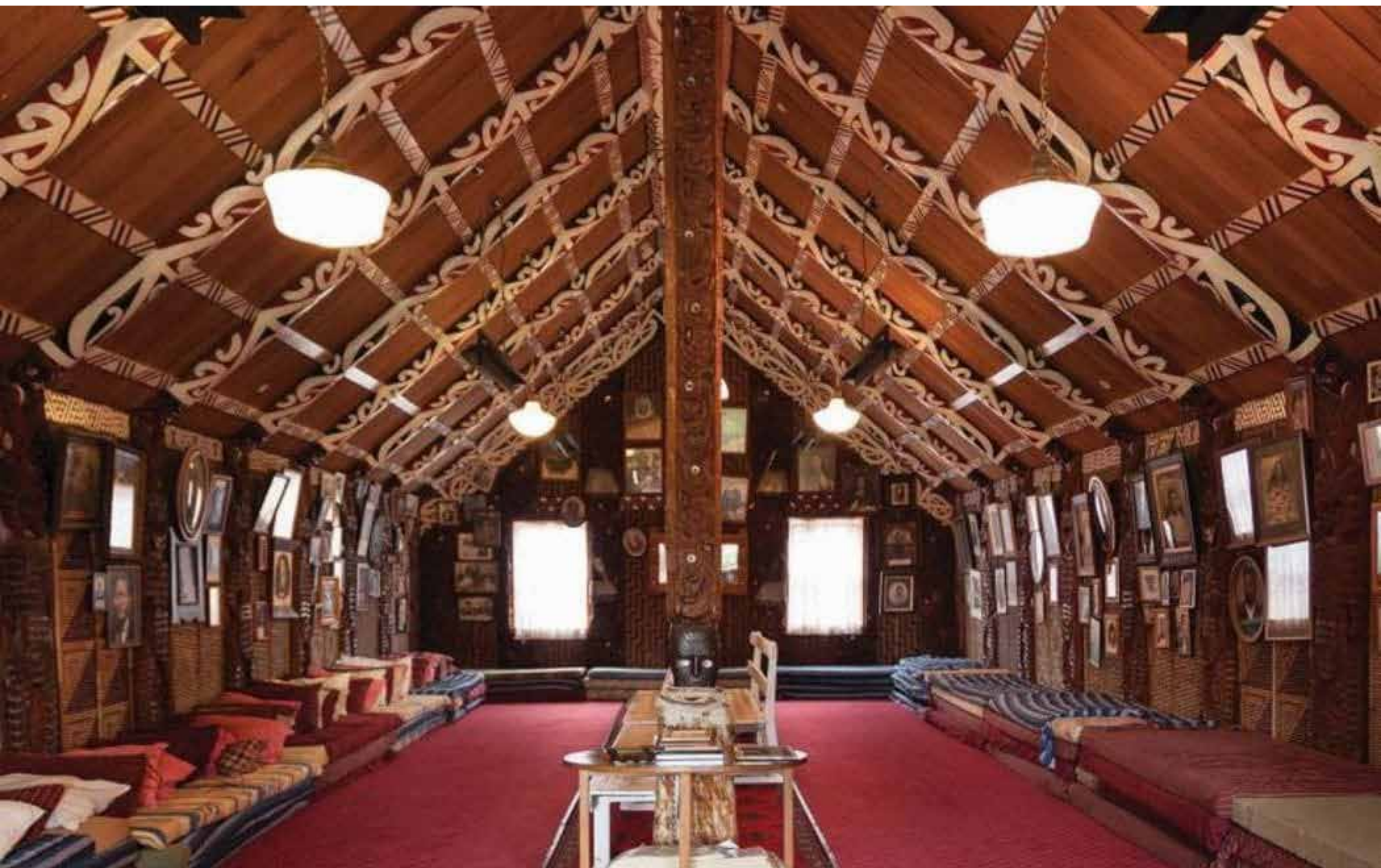
- 01 Whanau Space
- 02 Counseling Room
- 03 Kitchen
- 04 Lobby 1
- 05 Lift
- 06 Service Riser 1
- 07 Toilets
- 08 Corridor
- 09 Cleaners
- 10 Stairs
- 11 Booth
- 12 Consultation 1
- 13 Consultation 2
- 14 Storage
- 15 Service Riser 2
- 16 Lobby 2
- 17 Services
- 18 Veranda





Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Te
Wānanga Whare Tapere o Takitimu









09

Place: Climate, Landscape, Identity

- Respond to climate, geography, and material ecology, lay lines
- Critical Regionalism: energy + identity through local response
- Sense of place → attachment, satisfaction, engagement
- Case Study 5: ACG Sunderland
- Case Study 6: St.Johns Church

ACG Sunderland Senior College Learning Centre

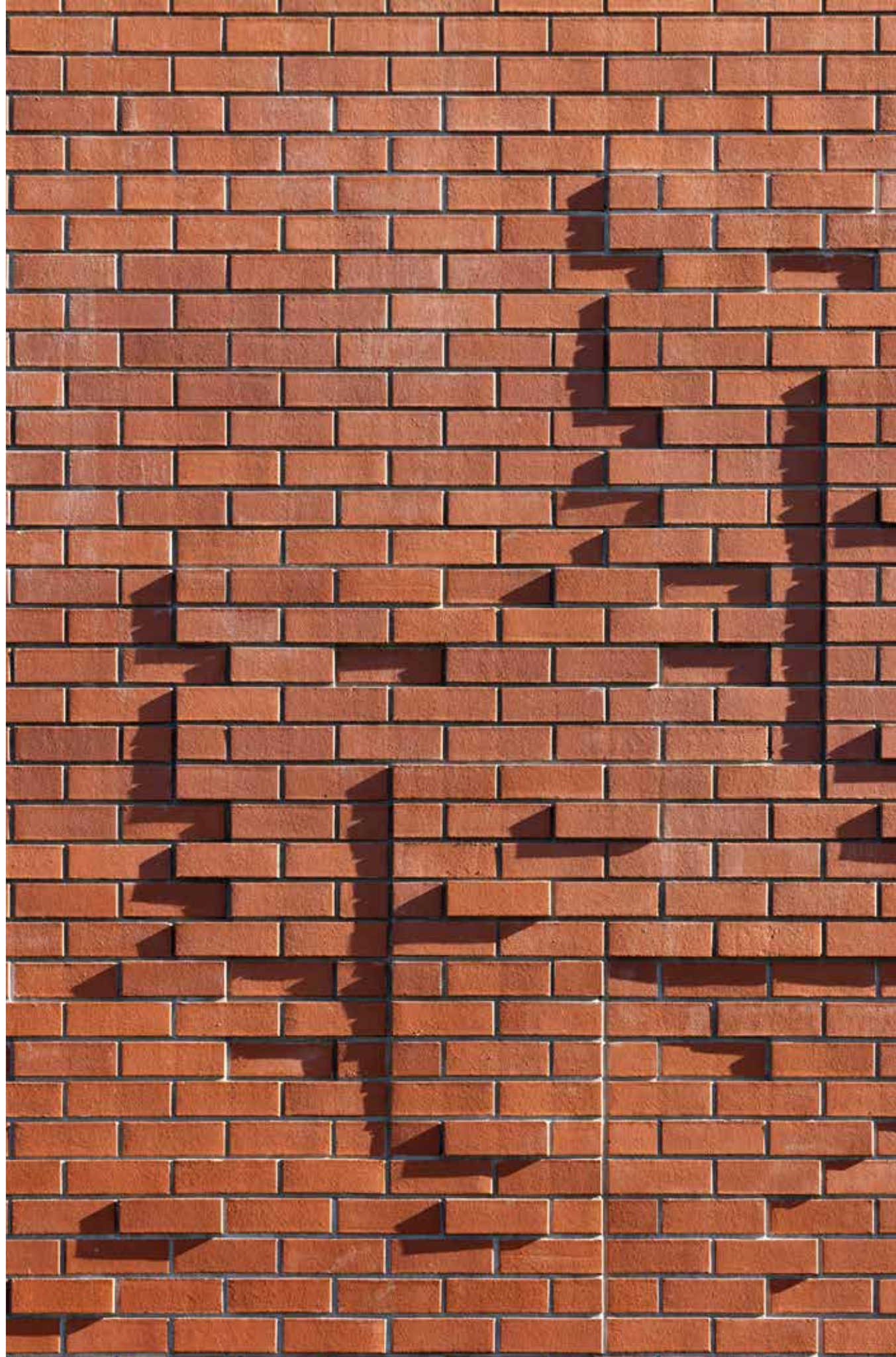




St.Johns Church



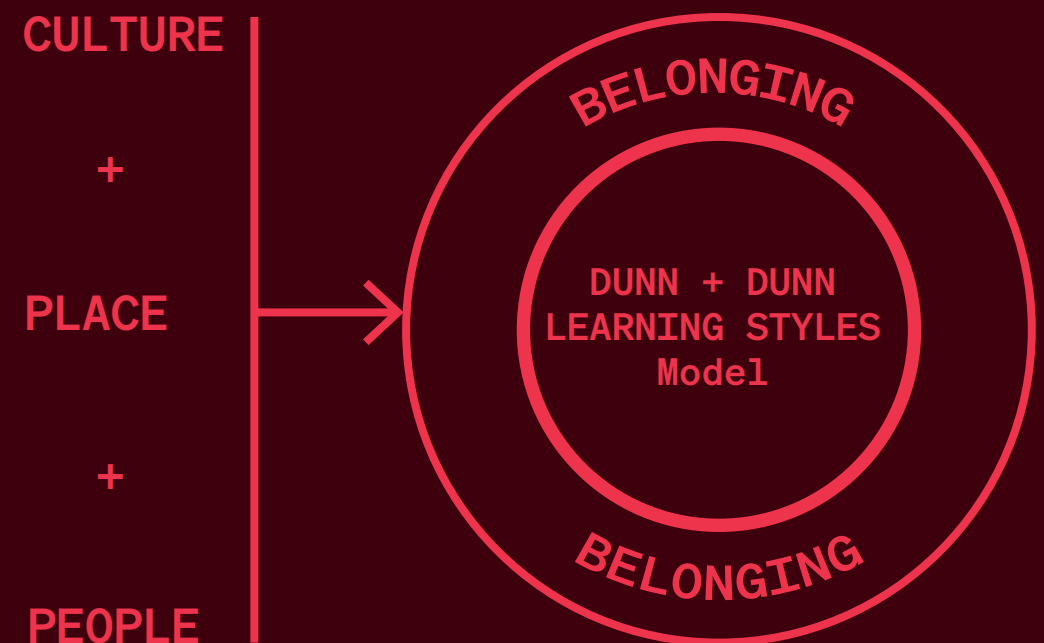




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Bringing It Together: Belonging × Dunn & Dunn

- Physiological/Perceptual: multisensory, culturally familiar cues
- Emotional: identity-affirming spaces
→ motivation, persistence
- Sociological: communal & ritual spaces
→ inclusive participation
- Psychological: narrative clarity helps global/analytic thinkers
- Environmental: context-tuned conditions
→ comfort & focus

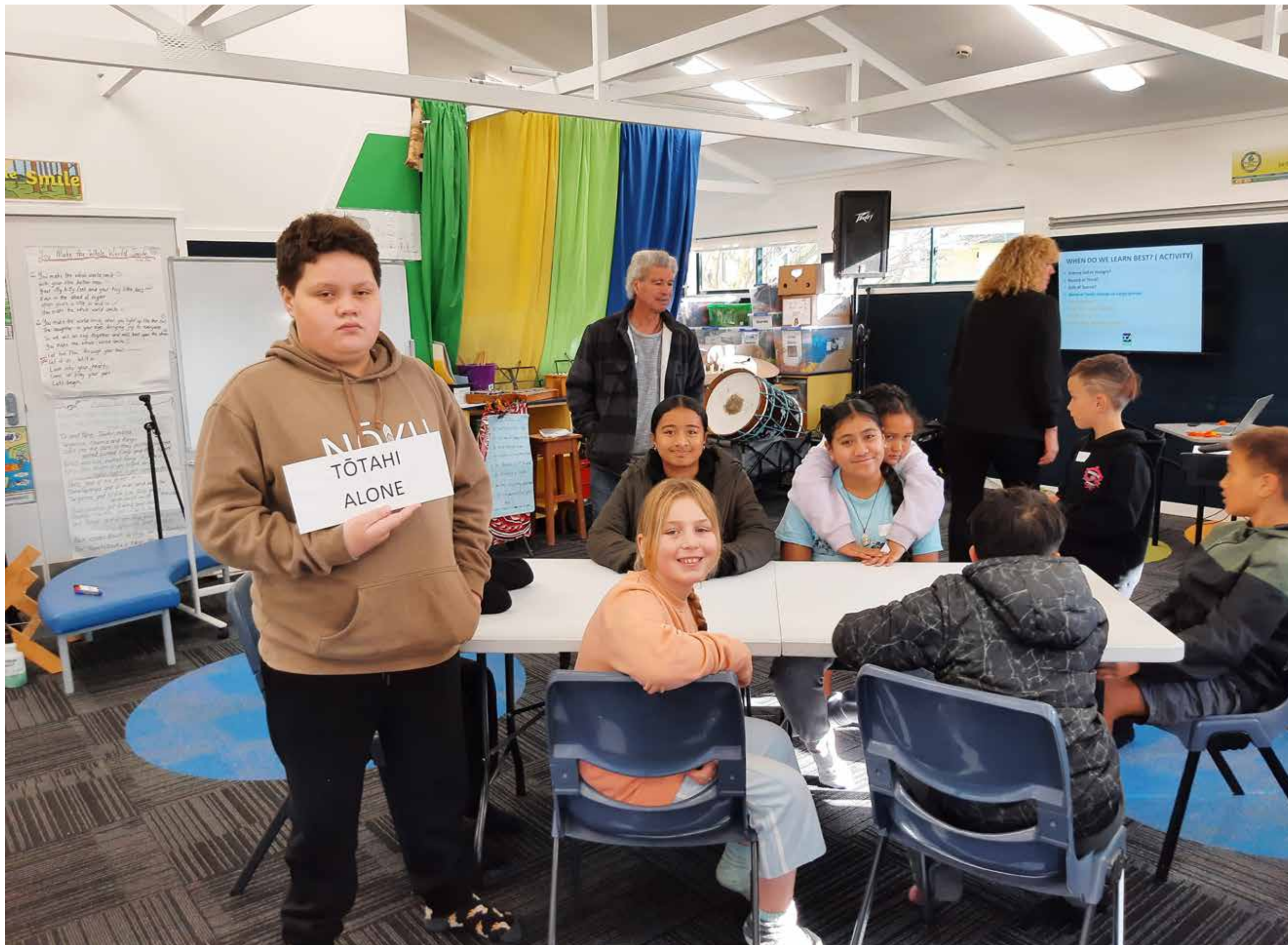


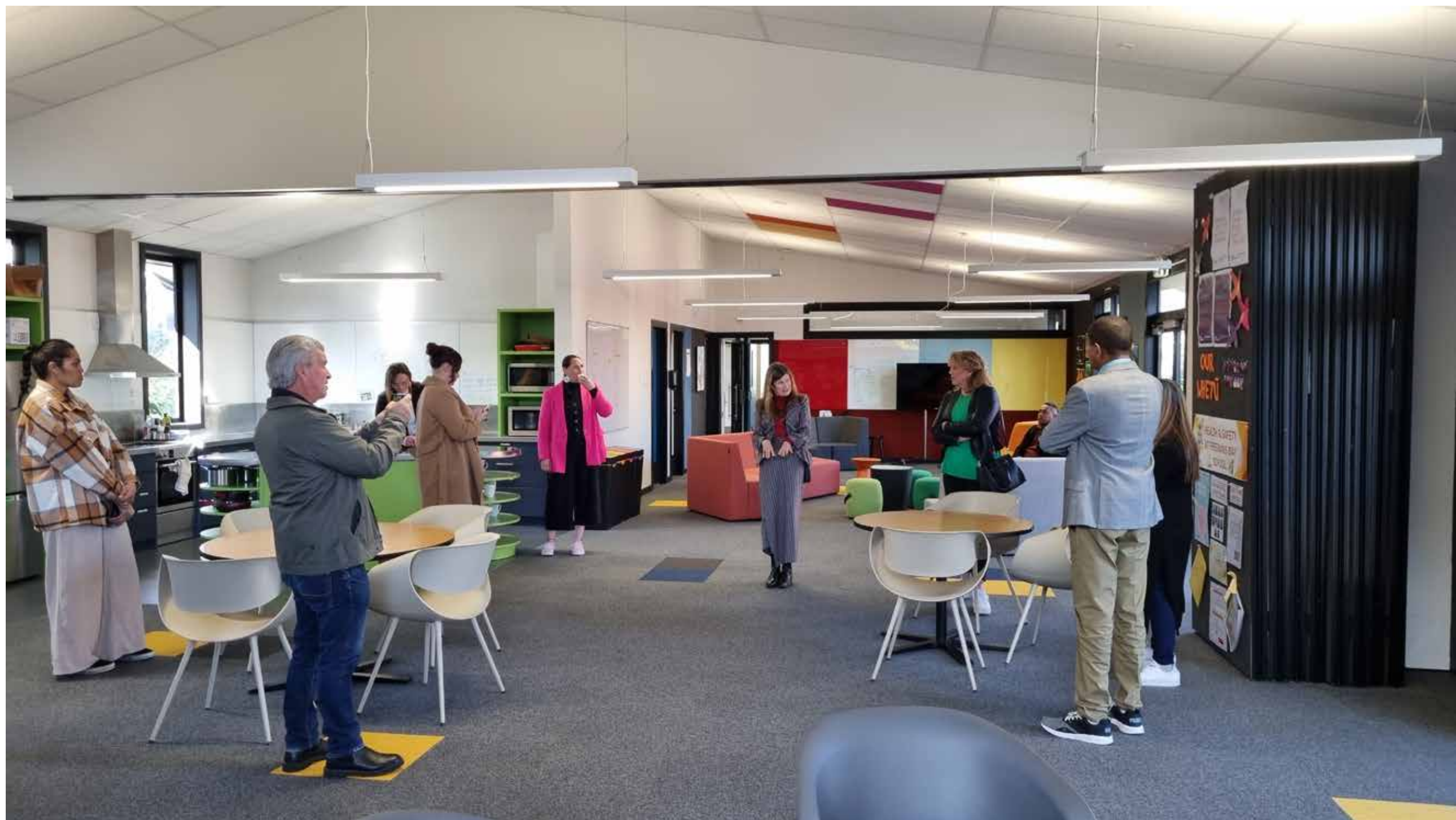
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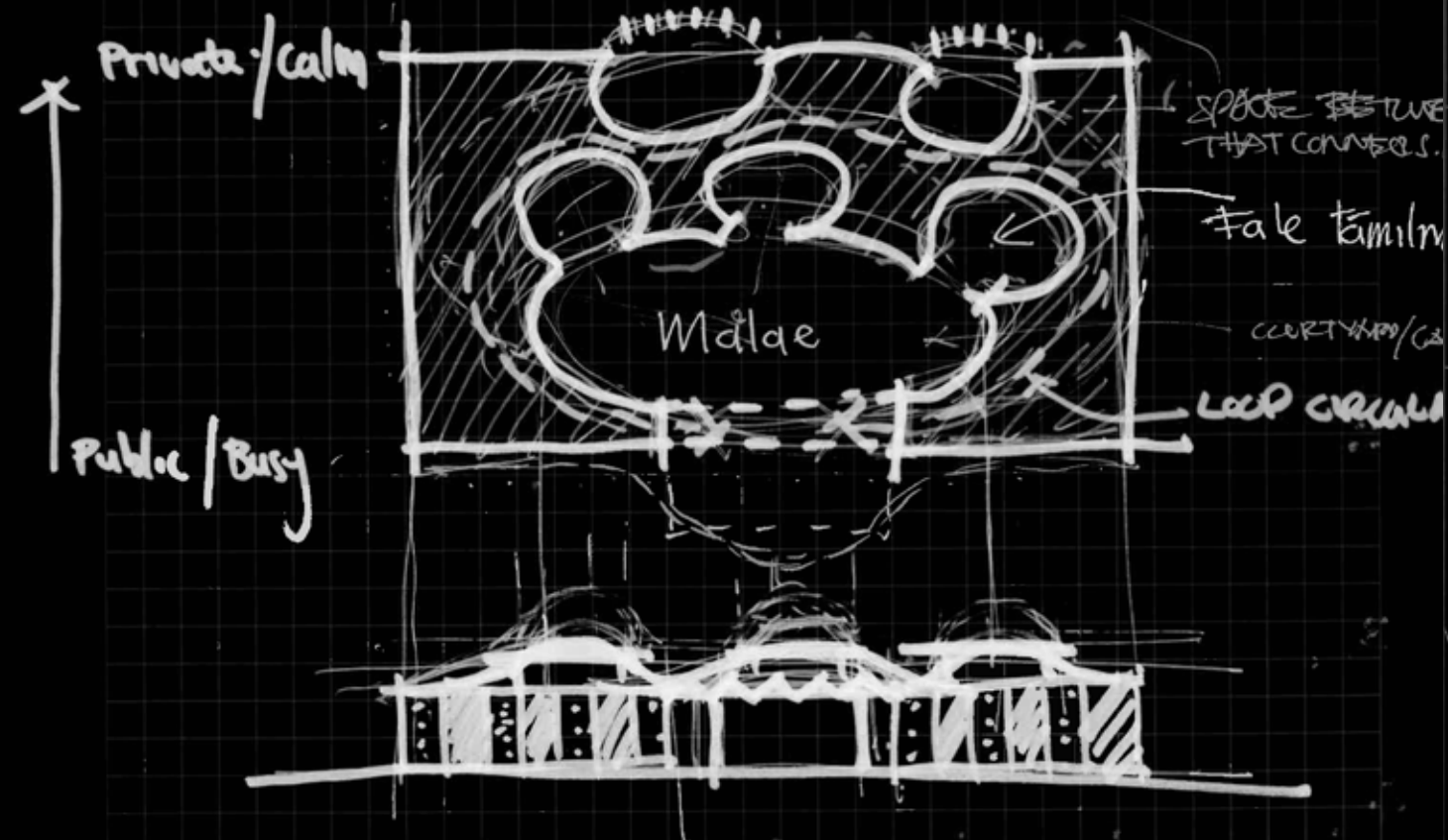
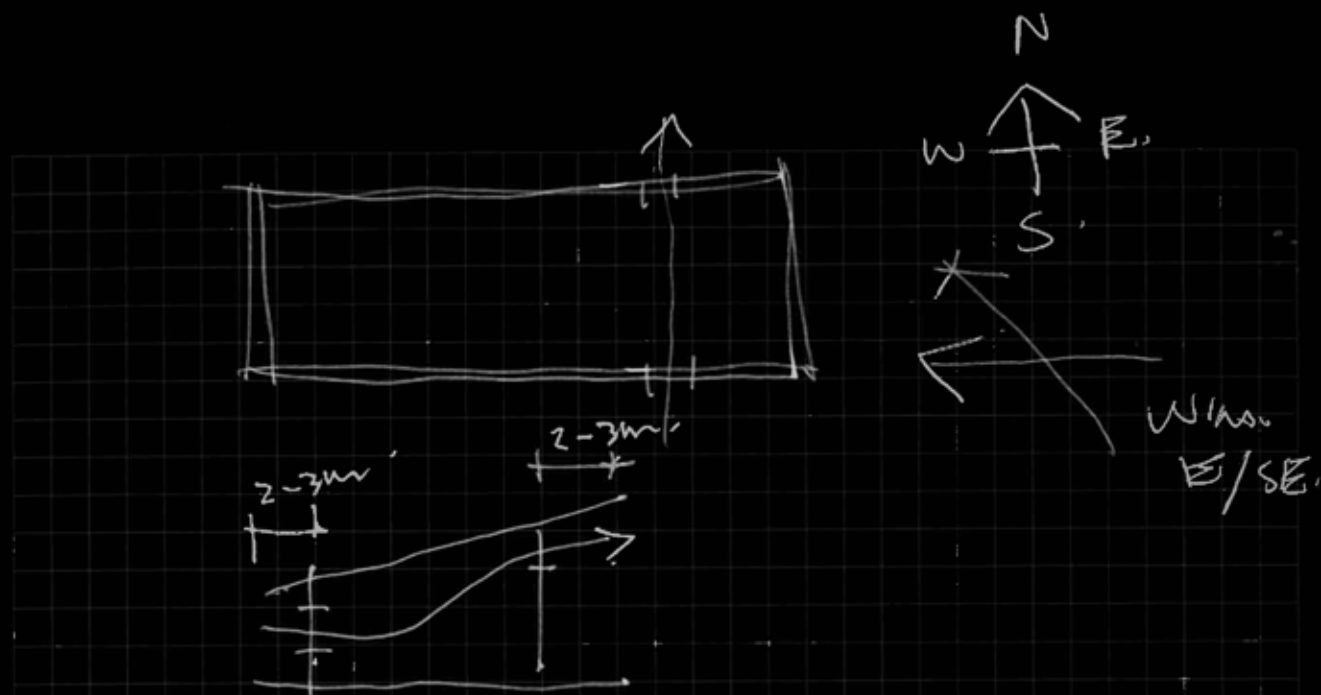
Process: Co-Design & Trust

- Engage ALEP + First Nations + Community early
- Use community workshops, small group meetings, one to one conversations,
- Engage local/community artists
- Ensure all voices heard
- Field Trips
- Ensure custodianship, authorship, and benefits remain with community
- Governance: feedback loops, to participants.
- Avoid tokenism, make it authentic and real
- Start small, test ideas, get feedback and prepare to fail and try again.

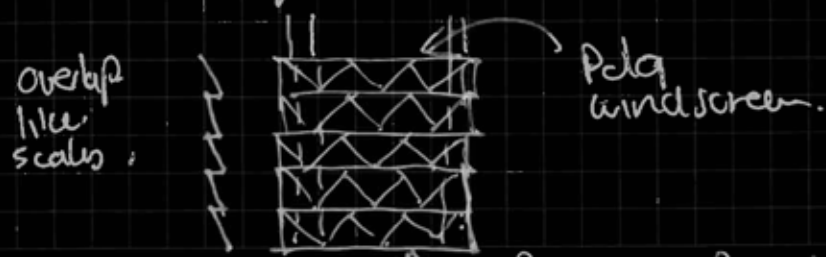




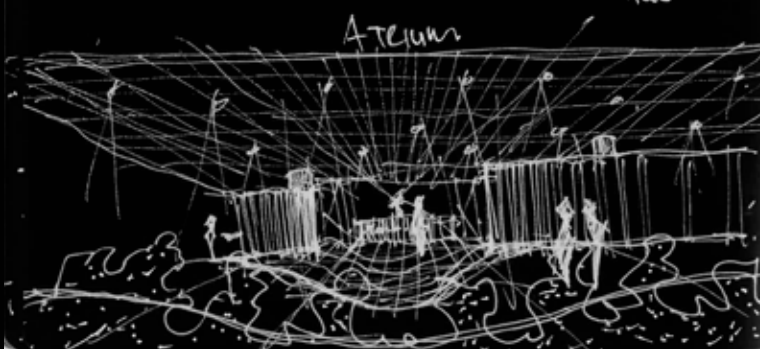
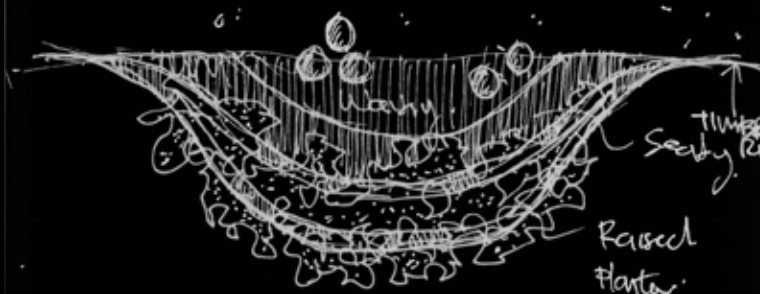
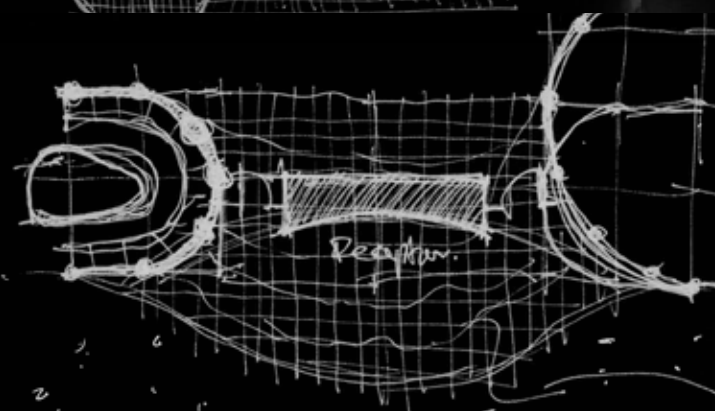
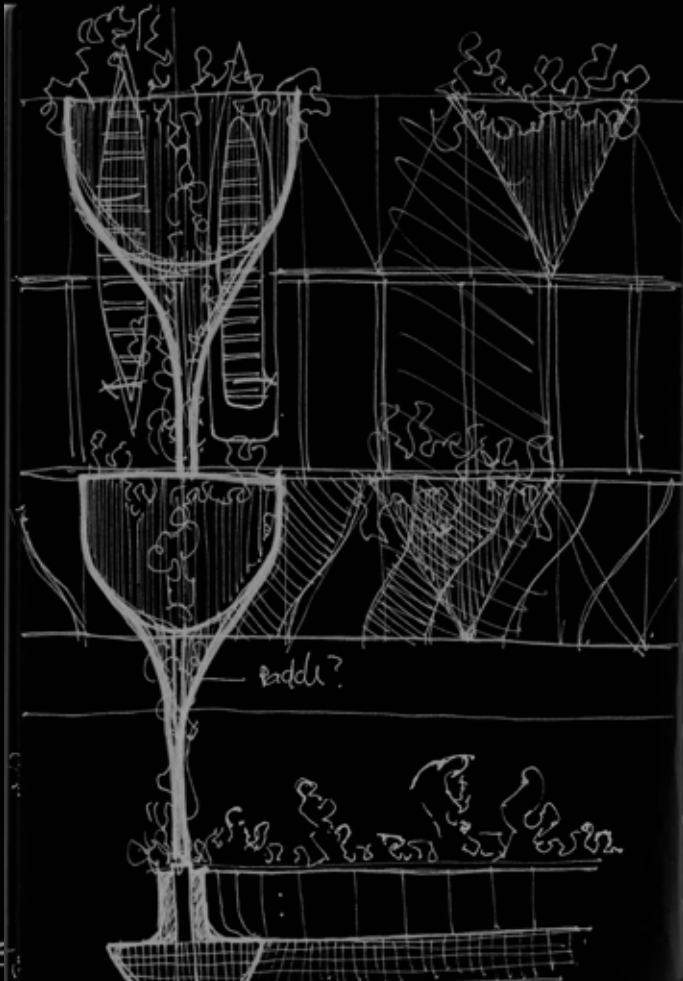




Tall roof = high social status.



Tapa Cloth - siapo
→ Pacific Bole cloth.



- RISK REDUCTION?
LO WTF PRESTON / PITCA.
→ deeper relationships
→ less risk.



Take Tele / Board RM
Another space for
Agency?

Recreating cedar palatibey.
→ cedars / textures like tide lines
lines, across to beach ①

beach to forest ②
forest to narrow ③
narrow to sky ④

TIDE LINES



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Lets Go !

-
- Start today !
 - Engage: ALEP + First Nations/native/ local cultural experts + community
 - Visit exemplars: observe what good / bad looks, feels, sounds like
 - Design for multisensory learning: VAKT + culturally resonant cues
 - Be Brave, it is worth it

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Q&A

-
- Questions, reflections, local parallels
 - What would success look like in your context?

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THANK YOU !

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Spotify -
https://open.spotify.com/episode/2b-bWgw9fSSZ1RFAqKIZzgH?si=FgvjJ0scS-juI_1-1mdRgHQ

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