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|  | Speak Up - KōrerotiaDiversity in governance21 July 2021 |
| Female | This programme was first broadcast on Canterbury’s access media station Plains FM 96.9 and was made with the assistance of New Zealand on Air. |
| Female | Coming up next conversations on human rights with “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”, here on Plains FM. |
| Sally | E ngā mana, E ngā reo, E ngā hau e whāTēnā koutou katoaNau mai ki tēnei hōtaka: “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”. Tune in as our guests “Speak Up”, sharing their unique and powerful experiences and opinions and may you also be inspired to “Speak Up” when the moment is right.Ko “Speak Up - Kōrerotia” tēnei, ko Sally Carlton ahau. Today we’re talking about “Diversity in governance” with three panellists, Rosanne Hawarden, Josiah Tualamali’i and Kate Reid. First up we’re going to ask you to introduce yourselves tell us a little bit about why you are involved in this panel, what’s your experience in governance and in this space generally speaking. Rosanne, perhaps we’ll start with you.  |
| Rosanne | Apart from being an early feminist, I did my doctoral thesis on women on boards of directors and got very interested in director networks and have been working in this space for over probably 15 years now. And apart from that, I do historical research around historic trade networks particularly in the Pacific Islands and in Africa.  |
| Josiah | Mālō lava to those who are listening and the wonderful team in the room. Interestingly enough I also study history, I do postgrad history at University of Canterbury. O lou igoa o Josiah, Josiah is my name and I’m looking at Christchurch’s Pacific history, what Pacific people have got up to here since we arrived, since that we’re not journeying via sea anymore but the different streets and communities here in Ōtautahi. And outside of that I am a board director of six companies and so that’s… some are in Pacific wellbeing and some are in…one’s in foreign affairs and then a couple of others are in community governance and a few areas, community funding and things. So yes, it’s been quite neat to often be the younger governor around the table and often to bring my cultural experience and often in the northern boards is to be the South Island person. So that’s we were already talking about all the different perspectives and insights we can bring from where we’re born and what we know. |
| Sally | That’s a really good point you’ve raised around the geography as well, just a different perspective there. And finally: Kate.  |
| Kate | Well I don’t have a history background but I’ve been involved in governance for quite a wee while now, falling into it by default - I didn’t know it was called governance, really. I arrived back in New Zealand after a time of being overseas to the start of the hospice movement here in New Zealand. So my background is in nursing and when hospices were first evolving and we needed a national office in Wellington, I was part of the early days of setting that up and running our own hospice here in Christchurch. And I knew that the way that some of the services were running then weren’t quite right but I couldn’t name it or identify it, I just knew that there was a big knowledge gap in my understanding of how these organisations should help. So I went on a steep learning curve really to look at governance over management of organisations and have then developed that over the years. But my background in the boards that I’m on now have got health or an education perspective.  |
| Sally | Fantastic, so again a different perspective to the group.  |
| Rosanne | Kate and I are both very involved with an organisation called Governance New Zealand. I’m a past president. It’s a by-examination organisation so it’s inclusive in that anyone can become a member provided you meet the education standards.  |
| Sally | Fantastic and does that have a role across New Zealand in terms of encouraging others into governance? |
| Rosanne | Absolutely, it’s part of a big international organisation. So we’re one of nine international divisions and because it has this educational qualification, it offers worldwide a standard education around governance now at a tertiary level so here in New Zealand you need a degree to do the exams of the Governance Institute. But they also not only deal with the director side but with the running of a company to meet statutory requirements - and this traditionally was called the company secretary, nowadays it’s renamed as governance professional within an organisation, largely corporate, who will manage and run the day-to-day requirements for the chair of the organisation in terms of their governance commitments.  |
| Sally | Fantastic. OK so I guess if we’re thinking about ‘diversity in governance’ - there are two key words in that title. Firstly, diversity - I imagine often when people think about diversity and governance, the automatic thought is women and then potentially also ethnicity. But I imagine we’re talking much broader than that, aren’t we?  |
| Rosanne | I think ultimately we are but in terms of improving diversity at a board level, working on improving the representation of women is probably much easier than just generally trying to improve diversity. I think increasingly we’re seeing an emphasis on ethnicity. Some countries, for example Canada, has now broadened their legal requirements to include disability. If we can make progress in those areas, the rest will follow.  |
| Josiah | One of the other areas, I suppose, is also lived experience. So in some of my mental health and wellbeing boards, we see people who have deepened the courage to speak about their lived experience of mental distress or depression, anxiety, other challenges, and then use that insight to help, not necessarily giving suggestions to how the operations, how the day-to-day running of the organisation or service or support is, but that overarching strategy that governance is about and how that helps ground what’s offered because that’s the ultimate opportunity is for it to really meet the needs of people. The other part of governance is often it’s quite expensive to be trained and to be connected - to even *be* in the relationships that can help you get on boards and things. Maybe you didn’t go to the right school, it’s just not something in your world. Like for me, I didn’t know similarly that governance was an option and I certainly didn’t know the name of it. But it was more just that our community here in Christchurch had focused on… for Pacific young people around building leadership and so… and building leadership and then us starting a Pacific youth trust and then after that we started to realise oh, this is actually how people run the country and how people run communities and so it ended up being oh, well there’s actually a skill in this and it’s a profession, even if people might not necessarily think of it like the doctor, lawyer, nurse, teacher, those clear ones. But provided you’ve got the right relationships and resources - and our community helped us build those - you can be there. But it is a hard door to get into and it’s really helpful with what we’ve seen with women increasing their presence and communities shifting how we see governance because actually women’s leadership techniques and styles are much more inclusive generally and I see on my boards which are led by women, are generally much more comfortable for me as an indigenous person and we’ve got that openness to explore and challenge and sometimes too much masculinity in the room is not good for decision making and governance is one of those places where we want critical thinking and good risk management and so shooting from the hip is often really inappropriate.  |
| Rosanne | I’ve had the experience of being on an all-women board as well as being the only woman on a board and I’ve also had the pleasure of being on being balanced boards where you’ve roughly got 50/50 gender. The women-only board was a lot of fun - we talked a lot of fashion! - but at the end of the day the balanced board is the one I think that was the most productive. That you had a sufficient number of women that to avoid the token and were very defensive and felt you were there to represent the minority which may or may not have been the case or you were just wrapped up in the issues and interests of your gender which again led to a very skewed view of the world.  |
| Kate | Yes I agree, the balanced board is the key for me. But I think when we looked at diversity to begin with, if you look back historically most boards were governed by men because they were in the business world and there was nothing sort of wrong with that; it was the time. But thankfully society changes over time and I was on a board with one other woman - quite a large board - and I felt utterly inadequate. I felt I couldn’t be heard, I was thinking left of centre from the rest of them, but I thought I had something valuable to offer and it was in that experience that I went looking for more education. I had the pleasure of meeting Rosanne and understanding that she had spent her time with her PhD on this subject and was involved with addressing the needs of women on boards which we have as an organisation in New Zealand and I signed up to that simply as an opportunity to have some kindred spirits really and learn had others had those same awkward moments that I had trying to have my voice heard.I’ve grown in confidence thankfully since then and see that diversity across all the issues that you’ve been speaking at and having that balanced board is the key. And I guess most of my governance roles have been in the not-for-profit sector and it is a way of giving back to the community once you’ve got some experience to offer that community and the board is only as good as the representation of the community, of the board for the organisation that you’re working for. |
| Sally | I think that’s a critical point. The other key word in that title was ‘governance’. What exactly is governance? Is it just sitting on a board or is it kind of much broader than that? Josiah is shaking his head I can see.  |
| Josiah | I think governance is the opportunity to set the strategy to help make sure that you’ve got the money to do the work and to have the right kind of testing, like just verbally testing and looking at the papers that you might get to check, to be a critical friend of the team who are doing the day-to-day work. Some might dispute the word ‘friend’ and fair enough because the relationships between the board and the leaders of organisations sometimes isn’t that good, but I tend to think that you can be friendly and have close relationships with them because that’s ultimately what pulls the whole organisation… because you’re not there day to day. So you come in for a little bit and then help set the strategy, help check things are on and disappear away until your next board meeting which maybe a few months away or later in the year.  |
| Rosanne | For me governance is about oversight over management, largely. Good CEOs tend to be very strong characters and they very quickly can start working the system to suit themselves and so one of the critical roles of a board is accountability by management for what they are doing. And I think just knowing that you’ve got a spotlight on you, even if it’s once a quarter, and you’re having to produce certain reports, it does increase the possibility that things will stay on track. But getting into that level without working in the business, working on the business and looking in on it, I think, is extremely difficult and you need, as a director, to be very perceptive and do your homework. There’s no slouching on a board, you need to contribute, bringing your expertise, being professional, maintaining a distance because often you’re judging people’s performance so you can’t be too friendly. It’s quite a balancing act in itself particularly if you’re the chair because most of the action goes through the chair. Balancing that relationship with the CEO.  |
| Kate | Yes for me I think governance is that strategic direction, not the management of the organisation. But having the ability to think strategically and doing a bit of an environmental scan from the organisation’s perspective: whose needs are we meeting, who are we serving? - having that vision and being outcomes focused, I guess, that the mission and vision for the organisation is meeting the needs of the people it’s supposed to serve. Not getting involved with the management side but supporting the CEO. Sometimes there’s a balance because in the not-for-profit sector there can be that overlap - if you think of your community sports groups or school communities where you’re trying to have that strategic direction but then everybody rolls their sleeves up as well in those organisations so there can be blurred boundaries which can be helpful but you have got to be mindful of them before you cause a problem. Then the board has the idea after the strategic vision to make sure the organisation is resourced to carry out that mission. So resourcing in terms of finance or personnel or facilities, whatever resourcing might mean.  |
| Sally | Fantastic. So one last question before we have our first song. What’s the situation like in New Zealand in terms of statistics? Do we know how diverse our boards are?  |
| Rosanne | Oh yes in great detail and we’ve been monitoring this for 15 to 20 years now. The first study was done by Zonta in about 1987 and there was probably 2% women on boards as the very first census. The Human Rights Commission under Judy McGregor actively conducted censuses extensively and now that push has fallen away but we do know internationally it is well monitored as well. It’s patchy across the world. Here in New Zealand we’re doing really well, we’re one of the leaders particularly in the states sector where we’re reaching parity in a number of areas. But in terms of our corporate sector, we are probably around 20%. The bigger the company, the bigger corporates have more women on boards and usually the top 100 companies is your benchmark against which everybody else is measured.  |
| Sally | How about in terms of other types of diversity? Do we know about that as well? |
| Rosanne | We’re starting to measure that and again internationally it depends on the issues in your country. So for example in South African which has black empowerment legislation, ethnicity is critical there. Canada is ahead in terms of minorities but in many situations because it’s not legislated, it doesn’t happen.  |
| Sally | So you’re very much in favour of legislation.  |
| Rosanne | I’m very much in favour of counting. I’m not in favour of too much legislation - I’d say targets rather than legal quotas - but I’m certainly in favour of counting because what gets counted or measured gets changed. I think this is one of the important roles that groups of activists, men and women in board diversity can play ensuring that we have regular censuses.  |
| Sally | We might have our first song then. Josiah, you’ve chosen ‘Albertine’ by Brooke Fraser. Was there a reason for this?  |
| Josiah | I guess there’s a little bit of a governance connection is that the lyrics: “Now that I’ve seen I’m responsible, faith without deeds is dead” and so that’s kind of, I think, governance in a song.  |
|  | **MUSIC BY BROOKE FRASER – ALBERTINE** |
| Sally  | This is “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia” and today we’re talking about diversity in governance. Well another big question for our three panellists: Why do we want to have diverse boards? What are the benefits that they bring?  |
| Rosanne | Obviously at the end of the day more productive, better run, more focused organisations providing what the community needs and obviously in a capitalist economy - making money, making profits - and good governance will achieve this.  |
| Josiah | Maybe one of the ones that comes to mind is trust. Often community will look at who is on the board and get a sense of whether they are able to raise what’s important to them and it’s similar with people in politics. I was appointed to a board of the Mental Health and Addictions Inquiry - there were six of us who were put there to review what was happening in our mental health and wellbeing in 2018 and I was 22 and our oldest panel member was close to 80 and so it was important for New Zealand that they could sort of see and speaking into what was going on that actually there was a younger person who actually has grown up in the digital age unlike some of our other panel members who that’s not their lived experience and so it’s quite important when we’re thinking about what the solutions we could recommend and also for us to have the capability to understand what we’re being told, it wasn’t good enough just to have staff who understand that, you need the directors to as well. And so in some of the big challenges like for those who follow what’s happening in governance across New Zealand, you’ll sort of see in Waikato District Health Board which got hacked recently, significantly hacked and patient data is being taken and shared online breaching huge principles of protecting people’s privacy and it’s important that the board, that board and all boards who are in this digital world, get a sense of what it means to be online. So those technical skills alongside the trust of actually being able to see someone who you think might be able to understand your lived experience helps in the perspective that’s brought and then the accountability and connection with community.  |
| Kate | I think it’s really important the diversity is around also skills and knowledge base; that lived experience that Josiah mentions is hugely important. I recall in one of the boards in my early days, it was all male and they were discussing women’s health issues and I just looked and I thought how can you do that, that was just abhorrent to me. They were making decisions on women’s screening for certain health issues without any knowledge base - bless them. They may well have had partners or wives but they had no lived experience and I thought this cannot be… it’s not authentic, it’s not real and so that diversity is really key from that point of view about the knowledge and skill space truly being representative.  |
| Sally | We’ve spoken about the benefits to an organisation but how about the benefits from the other end in terms of engaging people who otherwise might not have these kind of opportunities and bringing them into governance? Have you in your experiences seen flow-on from bringing people into governance in terms of confidence building, voice, equality, these sorts of things?  |
| Rosanne | I feel very strongly that people suddenly realise what governance is about too late in life and then are too late in starting to get experience. So doing what Josiah has been able to achieve at a young age is absolutely important and critical and so I encourage many of the young women that I meet: get any governance experience you can, any little committee. It doesn’t matter what size, what kind of organisation - church, school, boards, PTAs - all that starts building up confidence and knowledge of how good governance works. One of the rules, particularly around director networks, is that success breeds success. So the more experience you get, the more valuable you become, the more people will want you and so you will get more opportunities. In other words, the rich get richer - but that’s the name of the game and you’ve got to start when you’re in your 40s I would say is probably the most productive time when you’ve got some life experience and you’ve got some qualifications, to start looking for board and committee appointments and learning the ropes.  |
| Kate | Yes I agree. I guess I was young when I went into it, not that I could name it back then - I was probably 25/26 - and I was stroppy, I guess, sort of seeing these men making decisions on women’s health issues and I was indignant. So I said well how do you get onto this organisation, this has got to stop, they’re back in the dim dark ages, I’m not having it. And I guess at that point, age and inexperience and naivety can get you places. The more questions you have and possibly the less confidence that goes with it, through my own experiences I’ve been able to now support much younger gorgeous dynamic people behind me to come in almost on an intern basis. I think that’s quite a nice thing for boards to consider: somebody that you recognise some potential and they have a skillset that would be really helpful and Josiah’s comment of course about the digital age is really classic. To bring somebody in who is savvy in that line, for them to be mentored, coached, observed, they don’t get voting rights around the table necessarily and they sign up to confidentiality around what’s happening at the board table but it’s a lovely way of bringing people in because it’s not always easy. You might have a passion for it but if you’ve got no experience or qualifications, the question is how do you get involved. |
| Rosanne | This is the Catch 22 of directing. You will only get the board appointment if you’ve got experience but you won’t get the experience until you’ve got the board appointment and I’m afraid always the supply exceeds demand and if you were to say to me why is that the case then my answer is the three Ps - power, prestige and payment - that make being a director a desirable occupation. So those who are selecting boards usually are spoilt for choice and can easily perpetuate their view of the way they want that board to look - which is usually to have people around the table that they’re comfortable with. “Birds of a feather flock together” is the other rule. And again, diversity is a conscious decision to try and avoid that situation. You want people around you who make you feel edgy, a little bit uncomfortable, coming out of leftfield. One other point I wanted to mention: I, some years ago, did an analysis of accredited and provisional directors that were category membership that currently at the time was offered by the Institute of Directors and I hopped on the Companies Register, downloaded all the directorships of each accredited member, very senior board directors largely on quoted companies and there were 10% women amongst them and I discovered that the men directors, in their lifetime had some of them up to 100 directorship. Now that is a huge amount of governance experience. Similarly the senior women had been 25 to 35 directorships, so much less experience and this was just a function of having your name out there, getting known. So one of the reasons for getting going early is to start developing that name recognition. Unless you have some sort of celebrity status - famous rugby players, if they want to get board appointments, much easier.  |
| Josiah | And whether they’ve got the capability is a different question entirely, yes.  |
| Rosanne | Celebrity status - however that is expressed - can open doors for you. |
| Josiah | Totally and maybe that goes into the other point. So once you have become a director or a board member or one of the team, you are legally responsible and that’s the other part I think that’s quite a hard piece for some people to struggle with at any age. Is the ship goes down, you go down with the ship. Not that that’s the reality of how most companies operate because the rigour of how you work protects that from happening but that is the buck. So if you’re watching some of the big news stories and when a company has made a bad decision and then the CEO has gone out maybe on the first day of that story and they haven’t done a good job or maybe they’ve done some wad of a job and the public is still not happy with it, then the board chair goes out and maybe there’s a statement from the whole board.I was on a board a few years ago where we had a trustee who was married to a senior member of the government at the time and we received a grant from the government for some work we were doing in a different area and the story was that there had been collusion between this member of parliament and their spouse who was on our board and the photo was of all like seven or eight of us and they talked through what we were all doing to get this to happen.So I guess not just the legal responsibility but then there’s the political context in having your name and having your family’s name and having your community be alongside you as you being on these boards. It has some big consequences when you’re the one who the buck stops with. And then on the other side I guess, one other little thing just based on what we’re talking about is I personally struggle with the sense that we’ve got some good internship programmes in other areas and I think we really do need an Aotearoa state boards internship, I think that is missing. We’ve got to give more people the opportunity to test it. Personally though I was uncomfortable that you’d be there in the room participating in everything but then not have a vote and so I tend more towards the, if you’re in the room, if you’re signing the clause, if you’re doing everything else and you personally are comfortable taking the legal and political risk, I think that the board should just open the door because you’re already there and doing all the rest of the work. There’s an opportunity to value you the same as other members. |
| Rosanne | I’m not sure we’d agree with you. |
| Josiah | No and hopefully we’re showing, this is what a boardroom is like. You put out what you believe in and see how it goes and in this case I’m voted down and we go with the majority. |
| Rosanne | I think one of the other aspects is if you are offered a board position, is not to be shy to do due diligence. To ask to see financial statements, minutes of the last board meeting.  |
| Josiah | Talk with someone.  |
| Rosanne | Talk with somebody, go do a site visit, you learn a lot walking around and I think people are so often… because they know these are hard to come by, are so thrilled to even be nominated that they really don’t often do their homework. But then I think you see the other side where people walk away because they’re too afraid of the responsibility and a good board will have checks and balances in place to mitigate that, including board insurance and there are other ways in which you can protect yourself.You also have issues if you’re a professional. So if you’re a lawyer or an accountant you have professional constraints over what you can and can’t do on a board and that needs to be taken into account as well.  |
| Sally | We might have our second song. Rosanne, you’ve chosen ‘Africa’ by Toto and I believe this is song that means quite a lot to you. |
| Rosanne | You probably can hear from my accent, I’m an Afro-Kiwi although I’ve been here 25 years. So I originally come from Johannesburg and right now South Africa has, as I’m sure you’ve all seen on the TV, is experiencing significant unrest. So it’s very top of mind, we know a lot of family and friends in places that are experiencing civil disquiet and destruction and this is a very poignant song. There seems to be a lot of unity in terms of one of the things that will come out of this unrest and community wellbeing and spirit, particularly the interethnic spirit seems to be rising.  |
|  | **MUSIC BY TOTO – AFRICA** |
| Sally | This is “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia” and we’re talking about diversity in governance with Rosanne Hawarden, Josiah Tualamali’i and Kate Reid. I’d like to think now about how do we look to encourage diversity in governance. What are some techniques, some tactics, that help that kind of practical engagement of diverse members onto a board? |
| Rosanne | Well the old difficulty thorny issue is quotas and targets. I’m in the pro-quota camp with a time limit.  |
| Sally | Sorry, what do you mean by the time limit? |
| Rosanne | By quota I would mean a legislated balance on a board. 60/40 balance seems to be legislated requirement, it makes it practical and we see very swift responses. For example, Norway has a quota and a lot of the EU countries have quotas and they very quickly have achieved board equity. But if you took away that legislated requirement what would happen? |
| Josiah | I think it’s a good point that we want organisations and decision makers to want to have women and diversity because it’s better for the outcomes of the organisation and for what community benefit from because more and deeper increasing thoughtfulness is exactly what governance needs. In terms of quota, I support a quota partly because I look at what happens in things like water and you see how very quickly, when we take our eyes off things, we allow it to get further and further from the outcome that we need.I’m interested to hear more about the time limits, I can’t say I know much about that but it would be good to see this thoroughly debated. The government now could do it by themselves, they don’t need any other set of votes because they’ve got the numbers so I hope they do take the opportunities to debate this in parliament.  |
| Rosanne | So a target would be what we would call a soft goal and we certainly, just from the research I’ve done, we certainly see changes happening where you have targets and where boards report on it regularly as our current stock exchange requires. Whereas quotas are what I would call a hard target. What we see with both soft and hard targets is the term ‘golden skirts and golden suits’. Essentially what they are, are the directors through the glass ceiling. They’re the top group in any country or stock exchange of senior board directors and what happens is where you have quotas, the golden skirts, the women win out and the men, the golden suits lose out, you have fewer of them. One of the consequence of quotas and targets is that a few women get more board appointments whereas I think essentially the goal at the end of the day is to have more women with maybe one or two board appointments. But this golden suits, golden skirts phenomenon does seem to level itself out and one of the things that stops directors getting too many board appointments - I think there’s great consciousness about having too many appointments and not able to perform adequately - is limits on numbers of board appointments per person.We want more people with not much experience getting through that glass ceiling and getting that first board appointment. Once you are through the glass ceiling and you’re good, you will without difficulty gather more board appointments. It’s getting that first critical board appointment but you need the experience to even be in the running to get it.  |
| Kate | And how long you stay on the board is also an interesting point. It’s not just jobs for the boys or the girls really but I think boards need to be encouraged to really look at the skillset that is sitting around there and play to the strengths of those and identifying the gaps and looking, actively looking rather than just sort of shoulder tapping. And how long do you stay? There’s a lot of boards will have a term, an office so to speak and that’s fixed and you go. Others will have a fixed term with a right of renewal over so many years so it’s all quite flexible I guess.But then there’s also a balance because the fresh ideas and keeping up to date is absolutely critical but you also have to balance it depending on the board itself with losing too much historical knowledge and that can be incredibly threatening. You repeat mistakes that have been done before if there’s nobody in there putting their hand up going excuse me, been there, done that, this is what happened. That’s not to say you shouldn’t repeat it but you do so knowingly and I’ve seen or heard the stories of a number of organisations who have sadly dipped out because everybody has spun over at the same time and that knowledge base, that historical knowledge base has been lost.  |
| Josiah | That probably makes me think of the other job of the board which I’ve always found probably the most confronting in that you are, most of the time, an employer. You’re an employer of one person, the CEO or the manager or whatever, and as somebody who is 26, co-owns a van with my flatmate and lives in a flat, my life is pretty student life almost compared to other directors let alone the CEO is quite accomplished and earn lots of dollars or maybe not lots but they earn more than I do and so those things are quite interesting to actually have to focus and think about that and how we balance that.  |
| Rosanne | So succession planning is what we’re talking about here and this is one very important role of governance is to ensure succession in the organisation and at the board table and within management itself. In terms of statutory law in New Zealand, if you’re on a government board, your three terms of three years is pretty much the strict rule. No matter how good you are, after nine years you’re gone and I’m very pro that, I think that works really well because if you haven’t contributed pretty much everything you can in nine years, should you actually still be on that board and what are you going to offer if you stay on that you aren’t offering already. The benefit of fresh leadership probably outweighs to some extent that historical knowledge - provided, as Kate says, the whole board doesn’t depart at once. And that certainly does happen, doesn’t it, particularly if it’s a sinking ship and the rats start jumping.  |
| Sally | How about from the other point of view, if we’re thinking about encouraging community into boards? Josiah, I know you’ve been involved in a recent fono about encouraging Pasifika to come and learn about what would be required to be on a board. What kind of programmes or techniques have we got in terms of encouraging people to take that first step we’ve been talking about, or supporting them to take that first step? |
| Josiah | If you’re listening and you are a Pacific person in Aotearoa or maybe you live in the Cook Islands, Niue or Tokelau which have special relationships with New Zealand, Mele Wendt and Caren Rangi are two very senior Pacific governors and they run a national training programme for Pacific governors or Pacific people in community leadership or just interested in being involved in making decisions. So that’s one path that we have and then the other path that we’ve already sort of been talking about is in our churches when you have the church councils or you might have the Pacific community organisation like a health service or our local performing arts group - those are good places that often our communities start off on.There is an opportunity for the professional governance organisations to help connect people who are in those pathways, who are in those places who have those skills to those other organisations and that’s something Caren and Mele are trying to help with and I try to do this too, is when you are in that space and that’s your life, trying to help people just know about who you know. And I think that’s one of the biggest opportunities we have is just to share our networks and keep talking about others and often people say if we can just practice just more decision making. So that’s the other part too, whether in school or at home, just to help people test what it’s like to be part of making decisions. |
| Rosanne | It certainly is a form of leadership. I think if people start thinking well I can be a leader in my group or in my community and have a strong conviction that this is something they can do and if they start looking, there are a wealth of resources out there. I think motivation is critical, I think it needs to be part of your vision of yourself in your future in a leadership role and if you belong to an ethnic minority or are a woman, I think this is something you really should feel morally obliged to do. I feel quite strongly about this, that you’ve got to “lean in”, as Sheryl Sandberg says. It’s a two-way street, you’ve got to show willing and you’ve got to do the work. Often the opportunities will open up if you start putting your hand up. I mean, you might get knocked down - there’s quite a good chance you will - so some of getting onto boards is learning to take the no’s. I think a lot of people will have had the experience of applying for multiple boards and never even making the cut and getting an interview to the extent that you start thinking well why am I even trying, this is just a total waste of effort. But my argument there is you have to have the line in the water to catch the fish and that’s why I believe you can’t be too picky when you start out. Take the opportunity when it presents itself to you. |
| Sally | Have we seen any setbacks in the last couple of years - and I’m thinking with things like Covid, the changes that we’ve all had to go through and I guess all the unrest we’re seeing all around the world, as well - have we seen this sort of context pushing things backwards at all? |
| Rosanne | I think everything is on pause and I think a lot of change and progress is on hold and so perhaps opportunities that would have opened up aren’t there just yet. But on the other side, I think Zoom has totally transformed access to governance that boards don’t need to physically meet. I think Zoom is a great leveller. I recently participated in a webinar in Zimbabwe, we did a Zoom conference and there were these amazing dynamic women with exactly the same aspirations women in New Zealand have. So in some respects Covid has opened a few doors that might never have been opened.  |
| Kate | I totally agree, I’ve been on a couple too of international ones which I wouldn’t have had the opportunity to but because of Covid and the Zoom links and that’s been my biggest learning in the last year which has just been neat. So yeah, there’s always an upside or creative ways that we get thrown into when you’ve got a pandemic, in this situation. But the creativity that’s come out in how we connect and learn from each other in different countries, I’ve just found that fascinating, it’s been a godsend really. |
| Josiah | I agree with everything that’s been said. I’ve quite enjoyed not having to have to go to some of the board meetings in person and I’ve found that really helpful because practically, if you’ve got board meetings in the North Island they only want you to go for the day and maybe you’re on the 6am flight and then home on the 7am flight, it looks a bit more glorious than it is.  |
| Sally | What are some of the barriers or the challenges to trying to encourage people into boards? You’ve talked about political will, and how maybe we haven’t seen enough of that perhaps, if we’re talking about wanting quotas or targets - but what else are some of these barriers? |
| Josiah | I think there’s quite a distinct and growing political barrier at the moment around the place of Te Tiriti, the place of The Treaty of Waitangi and where directors are getting more encouragement and more direction from what the country is trying to do around this space of equity for Māori and other communities but leading for Māori and we’re seeing increasing voice that that’s not important. That’s not to say we haven’t had that in the past but I think there’s a challenge for directors to hold firm to whether there is a Treaty principle or not, that there is a responsibility for every organisation to help try and make it easier and better outcomes for Māori and that can be quite difficult for directors who don’t have that lived experience or maybe feel uncomfortable with basic te reo or understanding of tikanga or protocols. So that’s probably one of the biggest opportunities I think for board directors and then for organisations or boards to notice in people. Because that’s one of the big skills gaps that we often have in our boards and as a Pacific person I often find on some of my boards, I’m ending up… the best cultural advice I can possibly give in terms of what works for Māori but then that in itself is a problem and a barrier because it’s not my lived experience. And then I guess the other part of that - and you both would probably have lots to say about this and I’d be interested to hear - is the potential double burden. The burden of just being there as a director and that’s not any different from everyone else but then board directors considering you a ‘representative of something’ when actually everyone on the board is supposed to carry responsibility of engagement and responsibility of connection to everyone. And that’s not a new one but I think it’s one we have to really unpick going forward for governance to be truly accessible. Because we don’t want people to just join the board pigeonholed to only do one thing.  |
| Rosanne | I think this is a real issue and it’s never really going to be resolved because it’s a dynamic tension between your first role as a director is to be responsible for the wellbeing of company organisation of which you are a director, it’s very clear. But if you are there as a representative of something, you do have this group to whom you are accountable and you have to balance their views with what you perceive to be the best interests of the organisation. But I think at the end of the day, if it’s managed well by a good chair you can get synergy and creativity and new ideas, whereas I think many of us will have had experiences of where a representative board can be very disruptive and conflictful and if the chair is weak, you can stall and it can be very unpleasant.  |
| Josiah | There’s the other part too I guess, I’m wondering about is the side where you’re not a formal representative but you are perceived by the rest of the directors to be the representative and that’s an unspoken thing that’s kind of… no one else has to wear maybe.  |
| Rosanne | Women wear that.  |
| Josiah | Yeah, yeah.  |
| Kate | That’s so true and it’s great you brought that up, Josiah, because if we’re paying true respect to the Treaty - which we must do here - then there is a lot of critique poked at boards about Māori representation but it has to be more than tokenism. And certainly colleagues on boards that I’ve sat on who also happen to be Māori - once, you know, there’s a skillset there, they’re the same people that are shoulder-tapped everywhere. So there’s that balance of not burning them out and how do they foster those coming behind them as well. And also I sat on a board with actually a colleague of mine from the university who was appointed to the board because she’s got a fabulous brain for research and that was her skillset. She happens to be Māori but that was not the first identifier, the skillset that was missing around the board was that research mind and then as you just pointed out, because of what she physically looks like - which is utterly gorgeous with her lovely olive skin - said well you’re there for Māori and well yes, she is but that’s a wonderful sideline asset that she brings. But being clear about what her role is and not burdening her with taking on all that responsibility. So we need in that situation perhaps someone else who is bringing the strong Māori influence in there which she can also support. But the clarity of the roles, I think, is needed.  |
| Rosanne | There is a perception that successful women directors don’t help younger women get board appointments and I imagine it’s also true in ethnic communities as well, that there’s this sense of entitlement and preciousness and cutting out the competition. Making no mistake, this is a competitive process getting these board appointments. And as women you do run across other women, in fact I think you go and ask people, “Will you be my mentor?” And this is quite a difficult situation, I’d quite like to discuss the role of mentors and mentees here. From the mentor’s point of view, finding people that are worth promoting. So if you are looking for a mentor, I think you need as an individual to start acquiring talents, skills, abilities to assist and enhance your mentor, your perspective mentor because I think that at the end of the day is what will spark that initial rapport and once you’ve got that rapport going and a friendship going, if people like you and see you as adding something to their lives, they will be more inclined to mentor you. And I think there’s no doubt some of the very successful directors in this country have all been lucky and found an older, more experienced person who has guided them along the way but they’ve earned it, it hasn’t been a one-way street. |
| Kate | Yes I am absolutely pro the mentor idea and for me I have a number of them for different reasons. Some of them don’t actually even know that they are my mentor because they’re people who just kind of ooze some mana that I respect - the way they engage, the way they connect, just the way they look. I really like them for a variety of reasons and you learn from them and you can have that formal relationship as well, there’s absolutely a place for that but you can also do it by observing others and actually also learning how not to be - I don’t want to be like you. |
| Rosanne | This is part of leadership, being a role model to others, isn’t it, and certainly it’s part of governance as well. I think as a profession we rely on our senior members to be role models and to - it almost goes with the territory - develop the next generation.  |
| Josiah | Hopefully by becoming good and deep in these relationships with the newer directors too, it’s promoting and maintaining their career because it builds those new relationships that people recommend those trusted people who spoke into their lives and gave them that time as well and it becomes an echo chamber of feedback and support.  |
| Sally | OK well we’re unfortunately running out of time. So I’d just like to finish up by asking you a final question, which is: What would you like to see as we move forward? |
| Rosanne | I want to see regular census of women on boards happening and that requires an interested and committed research community, probably at university level with international links.  |
| Josiah | I support that completely and I also think we should have an Aotearoa state boards internship programme that’s distinct from being a full board member and then there’s options to have the legal risk and not have the risk.  |
| Kate | I concur with my two colleagues here, I think that’s absolutely sensible and don’t be afraid to take somebody by the hand and walk them along behind us, to scoop people up and give them a go; open the doors, really. Don’t be afraid to do that.  |
| Josiah | Tautoko.  |
| Sally | As I was preparing for this show I looked at a document that was kind of around how do you recruit and then maintain a board. And lots of the points you’ve raised are what they had suggested as well, so things like look beyond your own social circles, your own business circles, try and recruit people who are not your copycats. Things like what exactly does diversity mean to your organisation, proactively reflect on those sorts of questions, look beyond those single identifiers - so as we’ve been talking about skillsets, not just how do you identify but what can you bring, what’s your lived experience, these sorts of things. And also a really critical one that you’ve touched on is around don’t just have that tick box person who is going to represent diversity, you need to be able to look beyond that tick box exercise. So I want to say thank you so much because I think this has been incredibly thought-provoking and you’ve brought so much experience and a wealth of knowledge to this kōrero. So tēnā koutou. |