
LearningSCAPES

2025

Creating Belonging:
Integrating Culture in
Transformative Architecture



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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
-
- 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

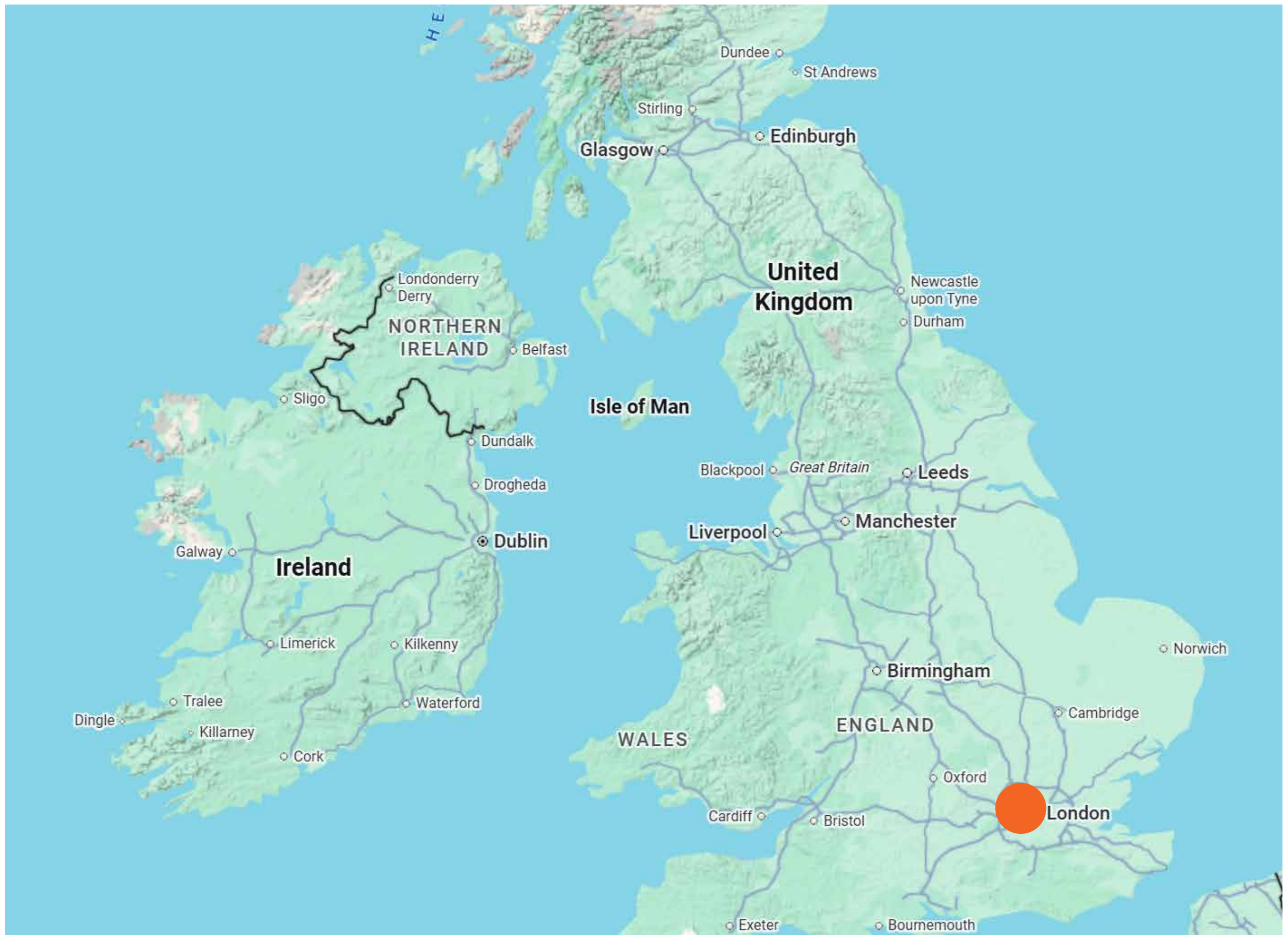
Me Myself and I

A bit about me:

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







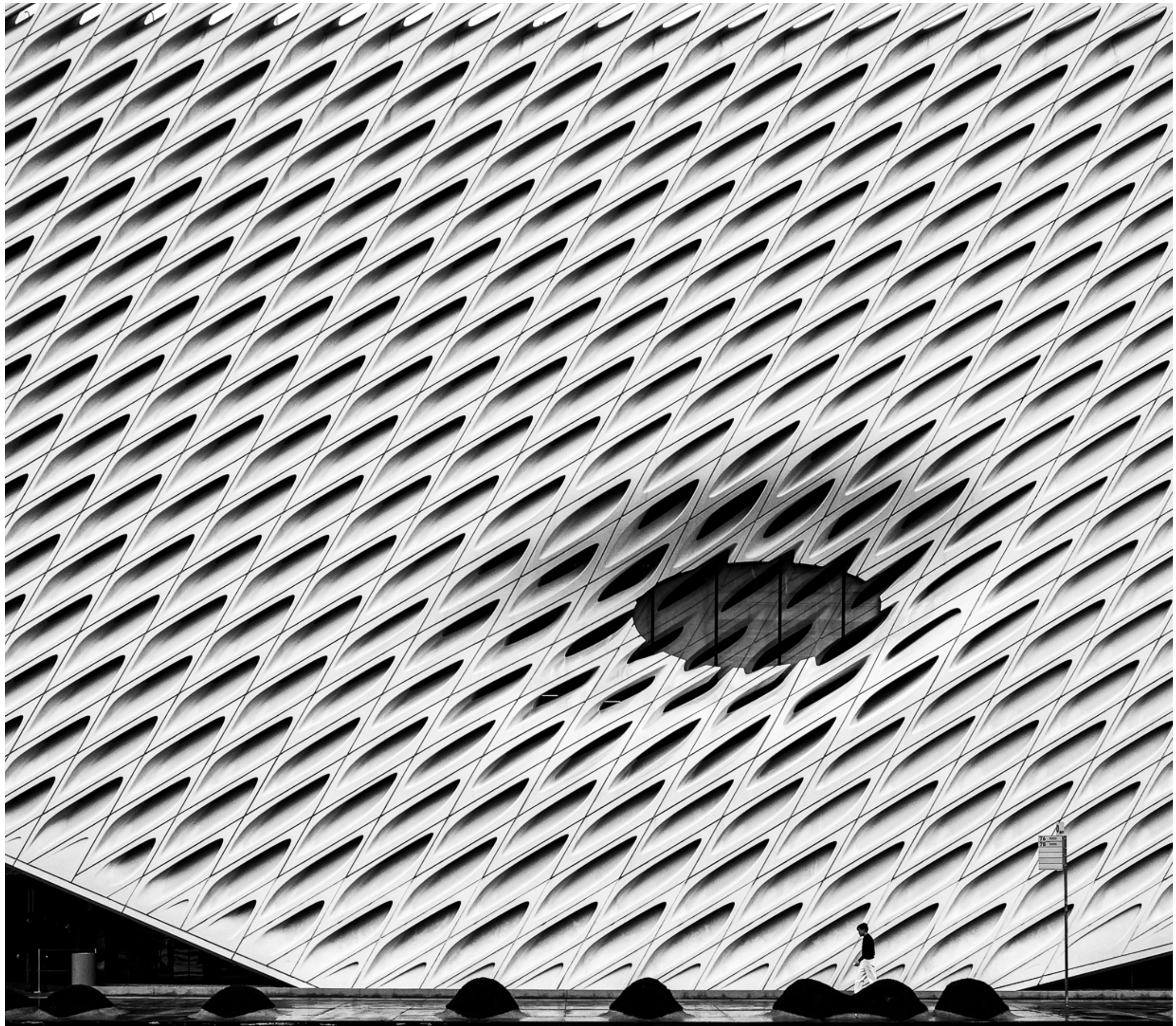


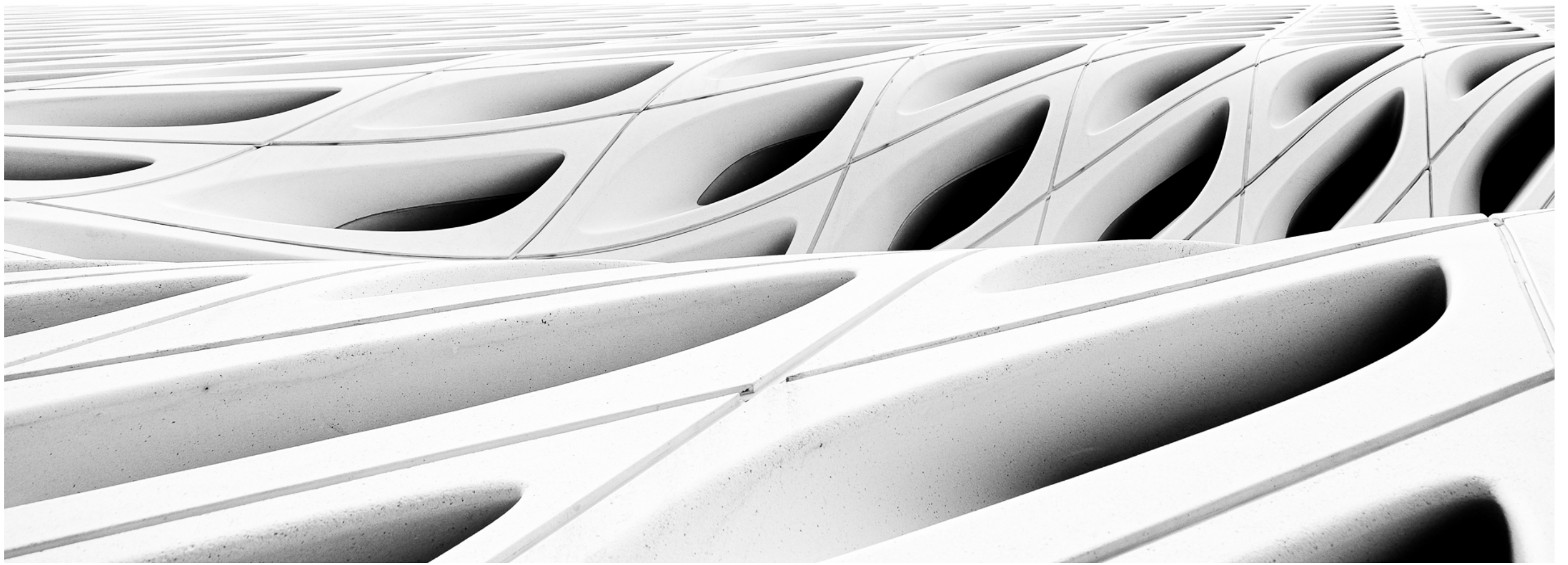




















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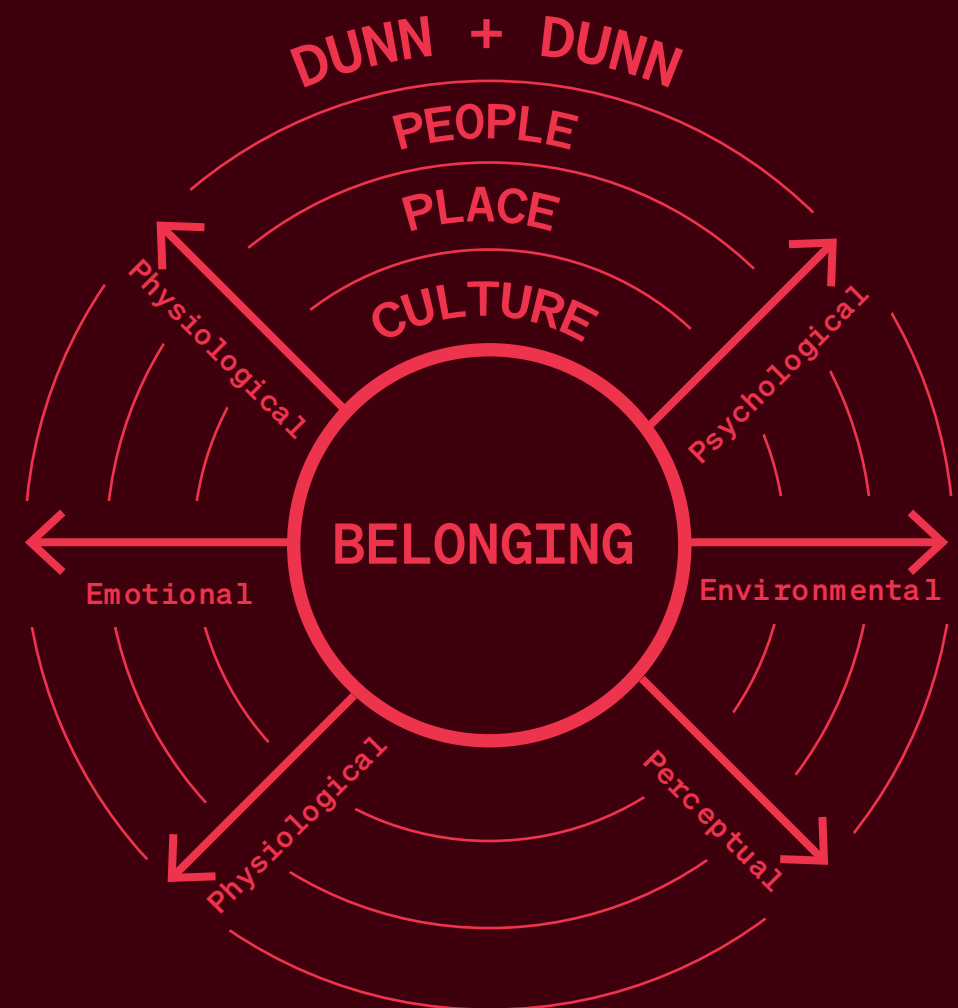
Why Belonging Matters in Learning Environments

- 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: How They Shape Experience

- 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





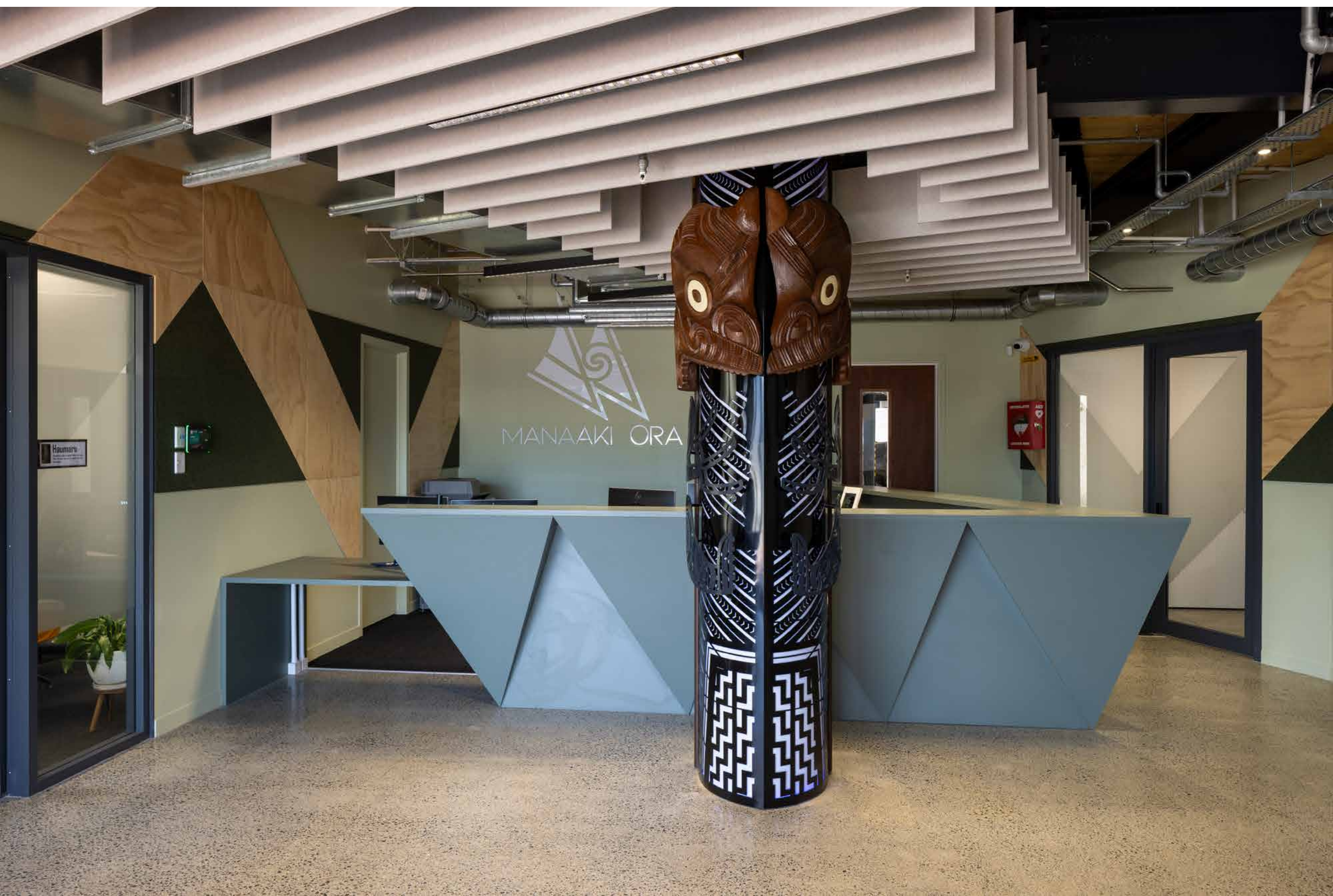
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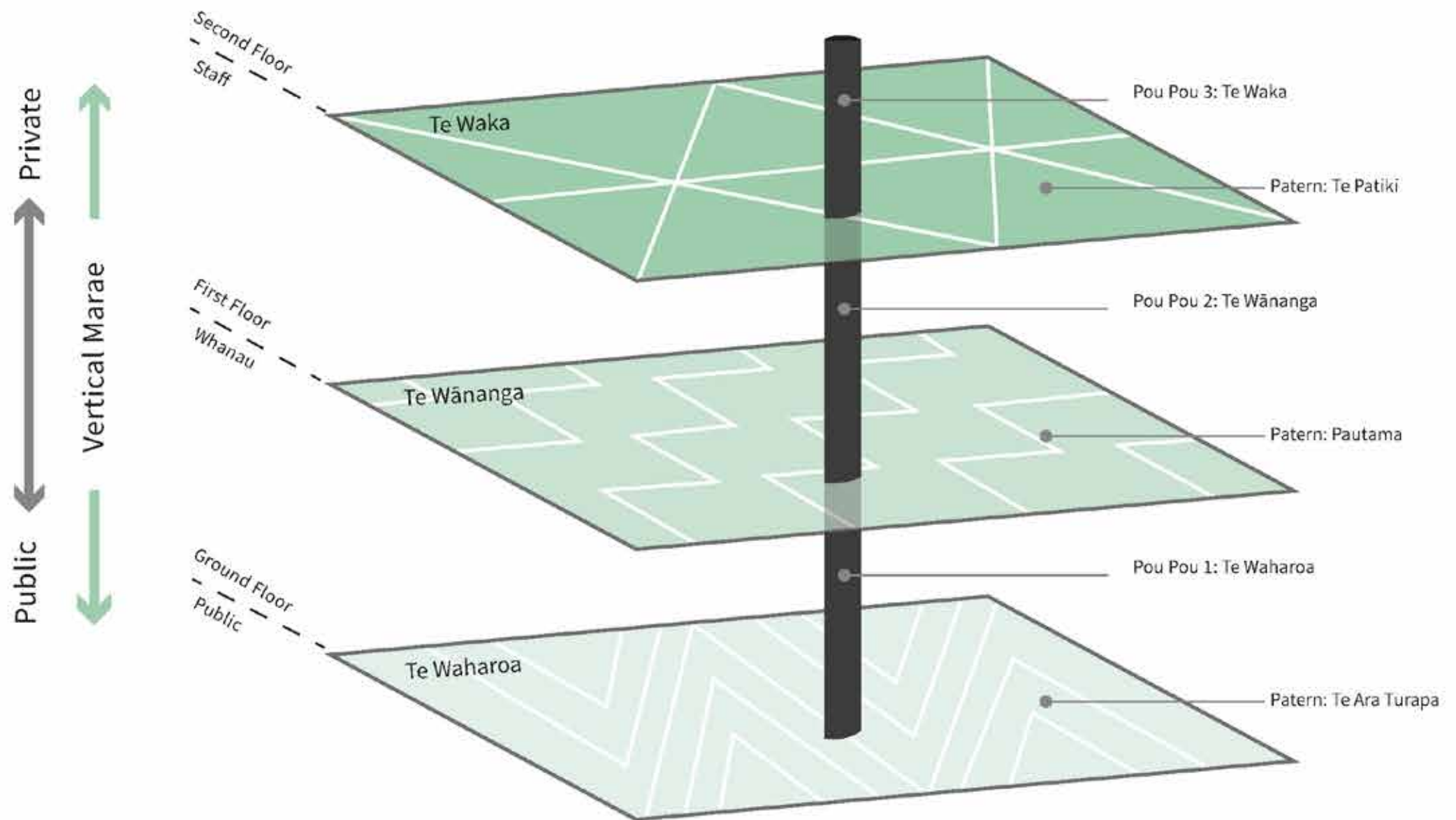
People: Stories, Rituals, and Daily Life

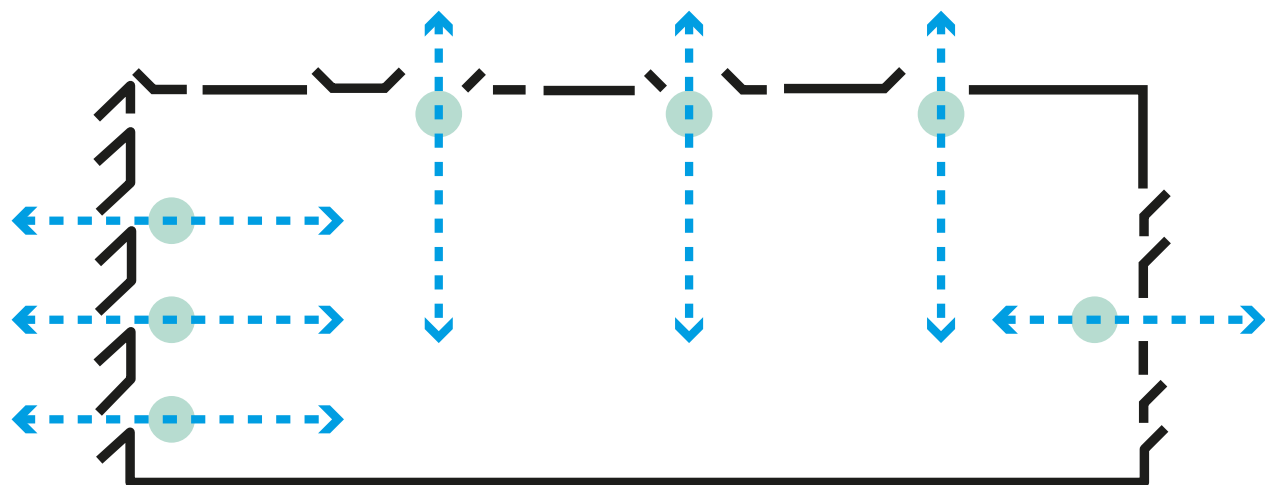
- Design that reflects rituals, traditions, and social organisation
- Participatory methods: co-design, community engagement, all voices heard
- Vernacular research: form follows culture-in-use
- Case study 4: Te Rito o Manaaki ora + cultural principles drive plan from and vertical planning
- Case Study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




Te Rito o Manaaki ora

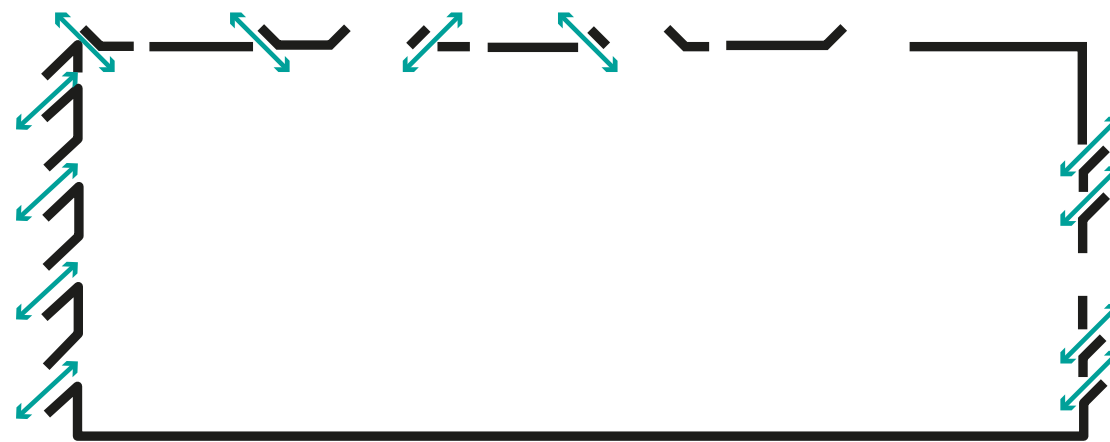






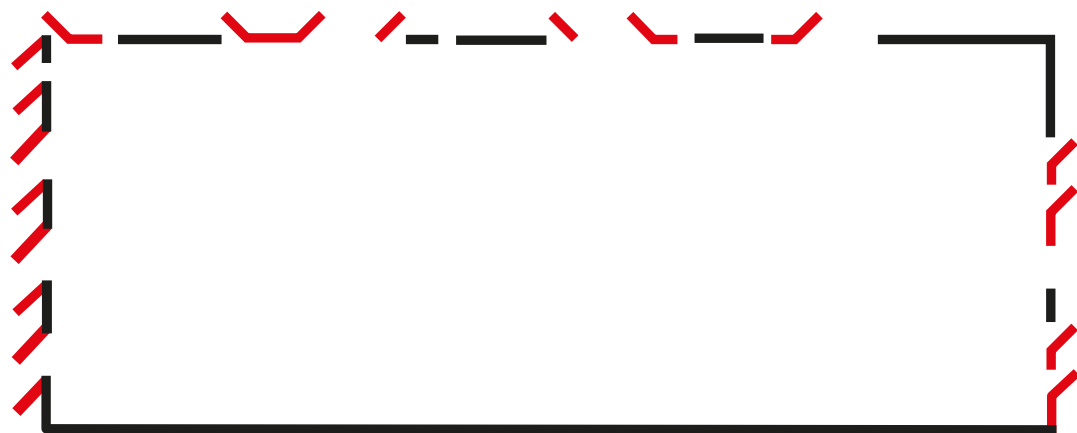






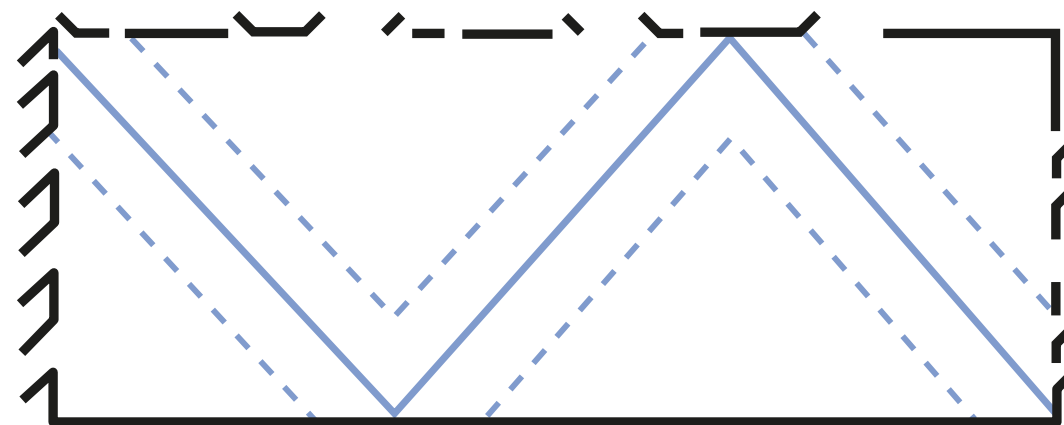
-  Large openings aligned with public/social spaces and circulation zones to bring natural light deep in to building footprint. Generous views to the exterior.
-  Planting to filter natural light & enhance biophilic environment
-  Building outline





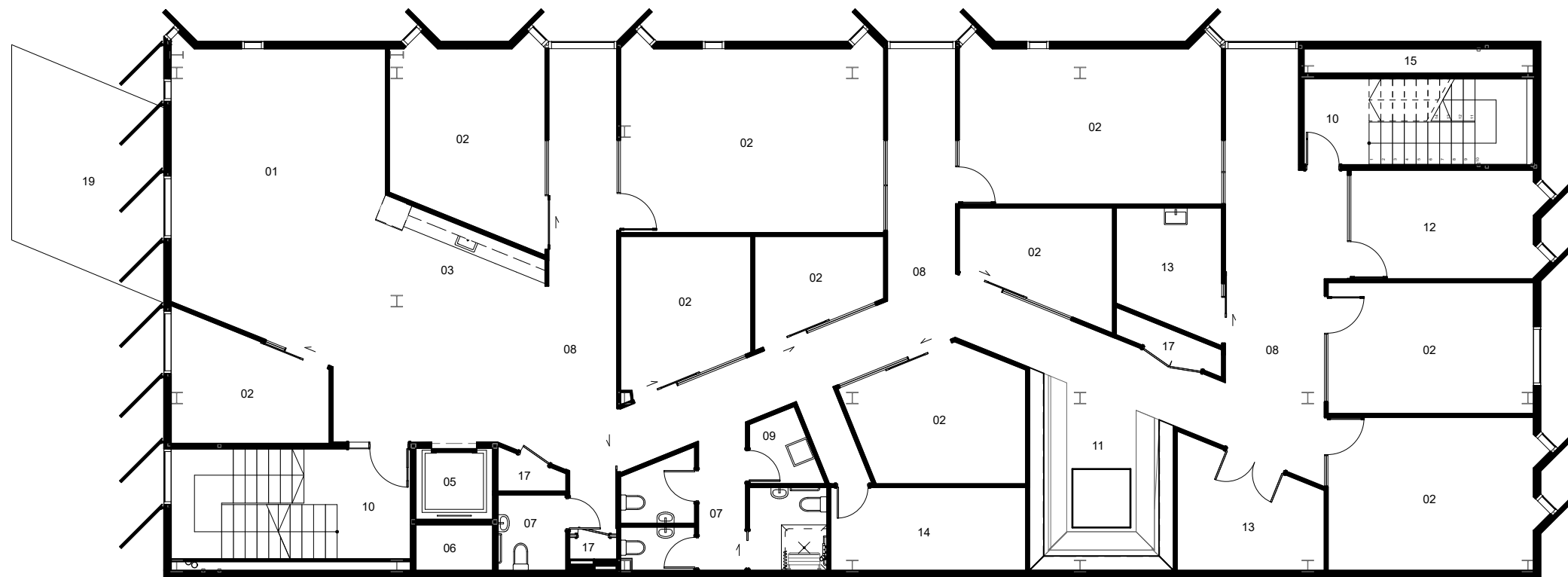
-  Framed views to the Rotorua town square and lake while maintaining privacy to interior spaces from neighbours..
-  Building outline



-  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

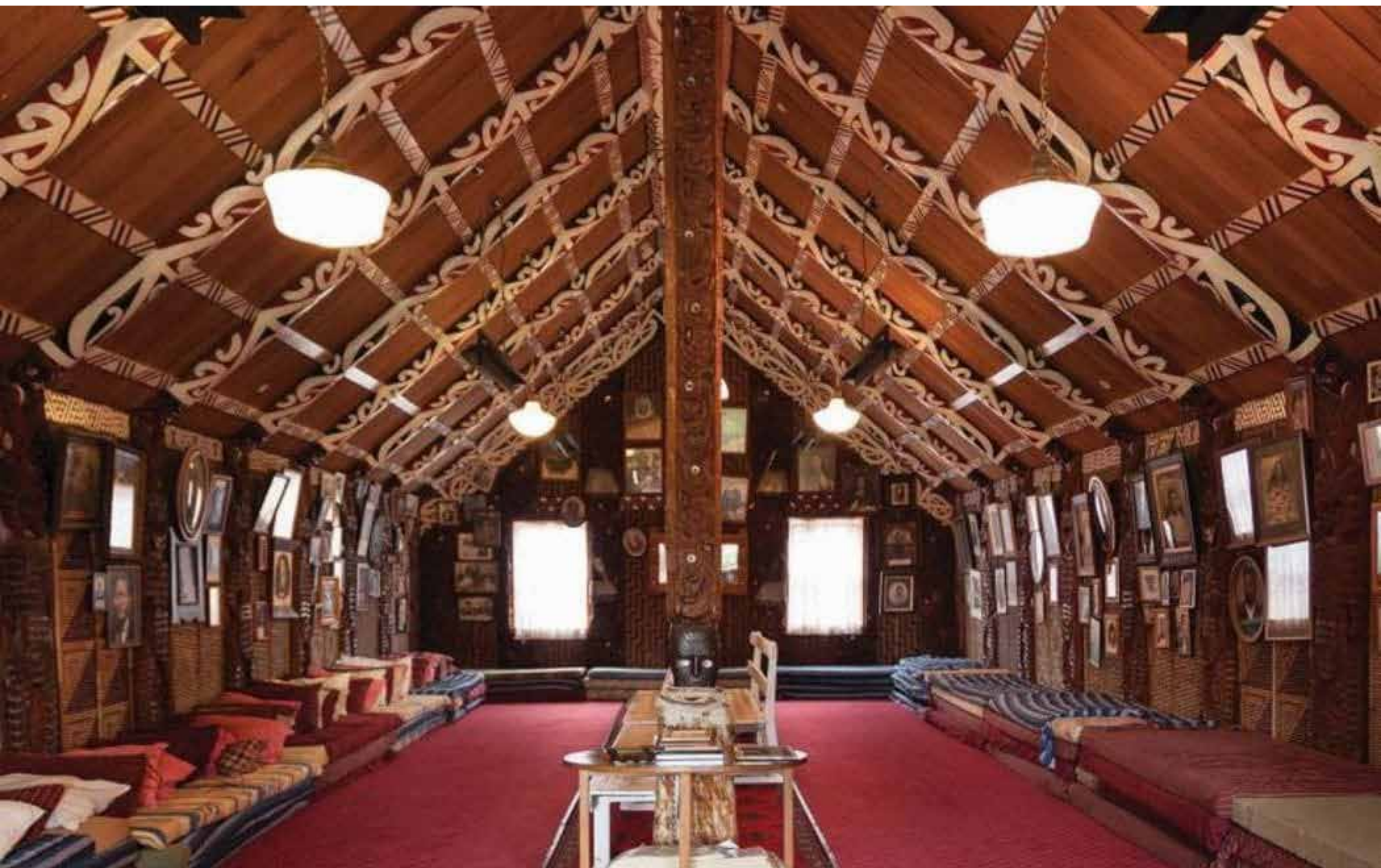
- 01 Whanau Space
- 02 Counseling Room
- 03 Kitchen
- 04 Lobby 1
- 05 Lift
- 06 Service Riser 1
- 07 Toilets
- 08 Corridor
- 09 Cleaners
- 10 Stairs
- 11 Booth
- 12 Consultation 1
- 13 Consultation 2
- 14 Storage
- 15 Service Riser 2
- 16 Lobby 2
- 17 Services
- 18 Veranda



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

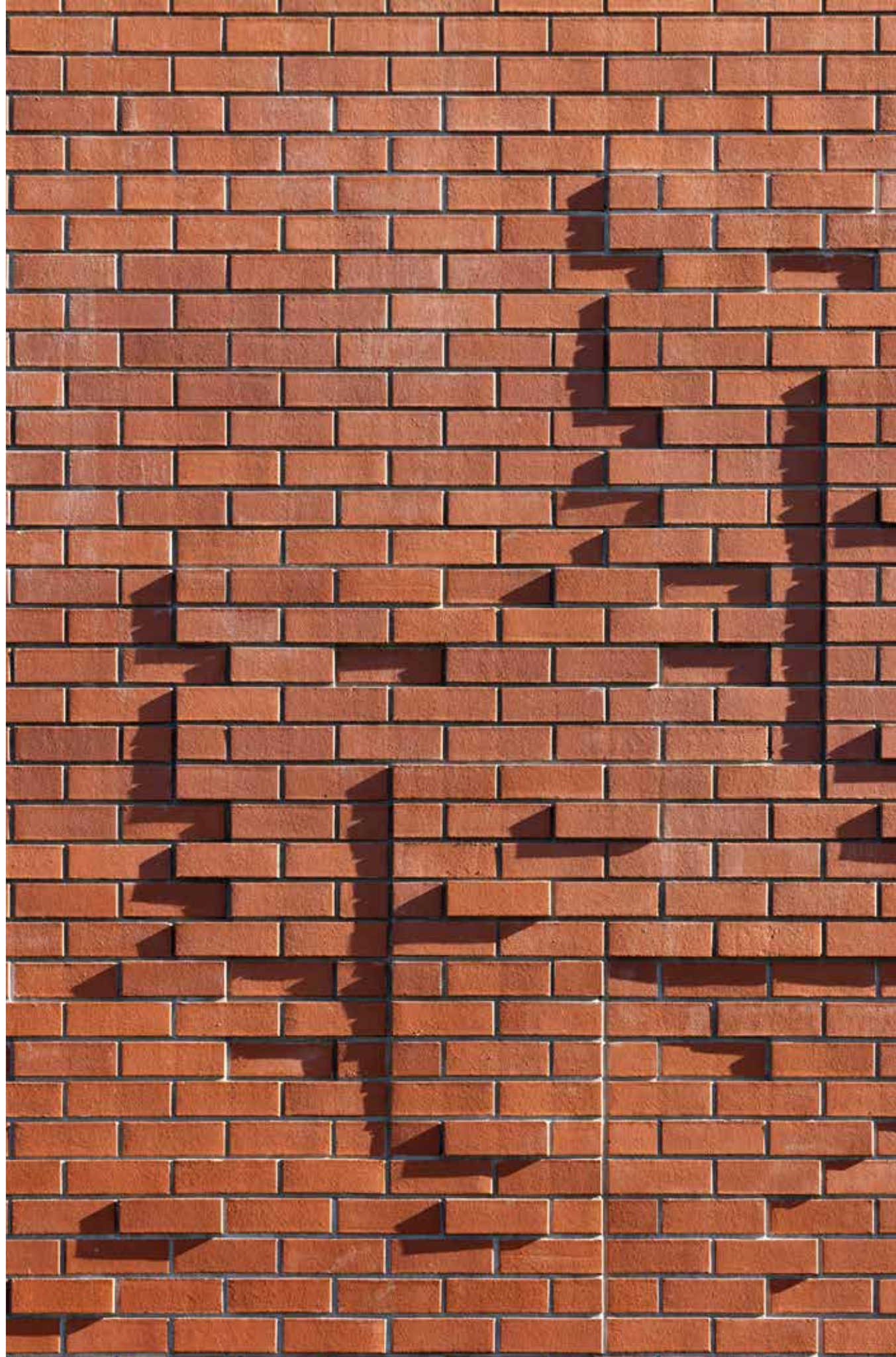




St.Johns Church



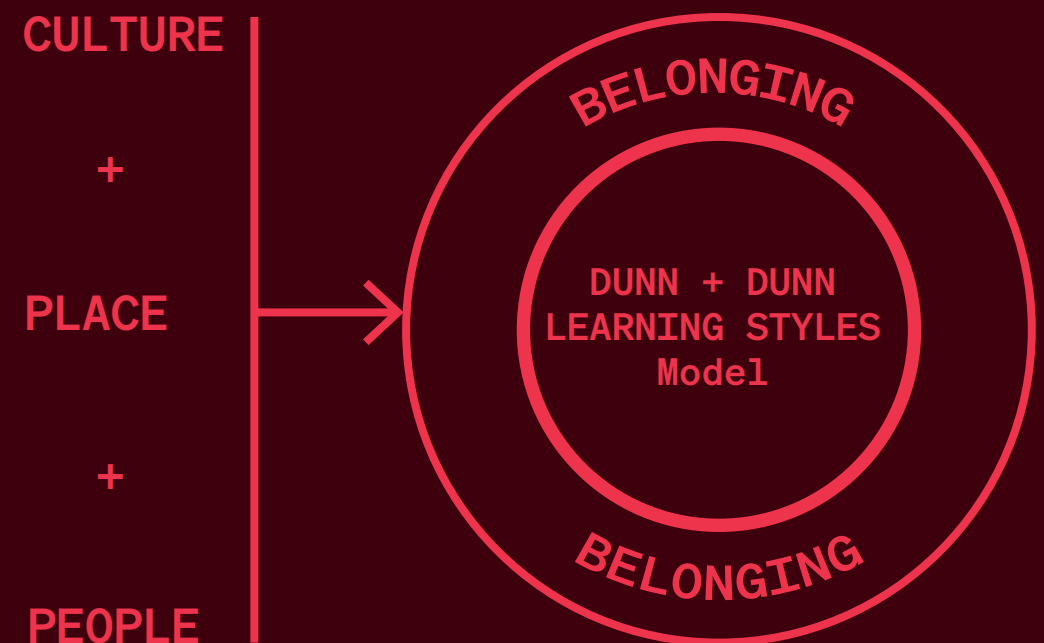




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Bringing It Together: Belonging × Dunn & Dunn

- 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

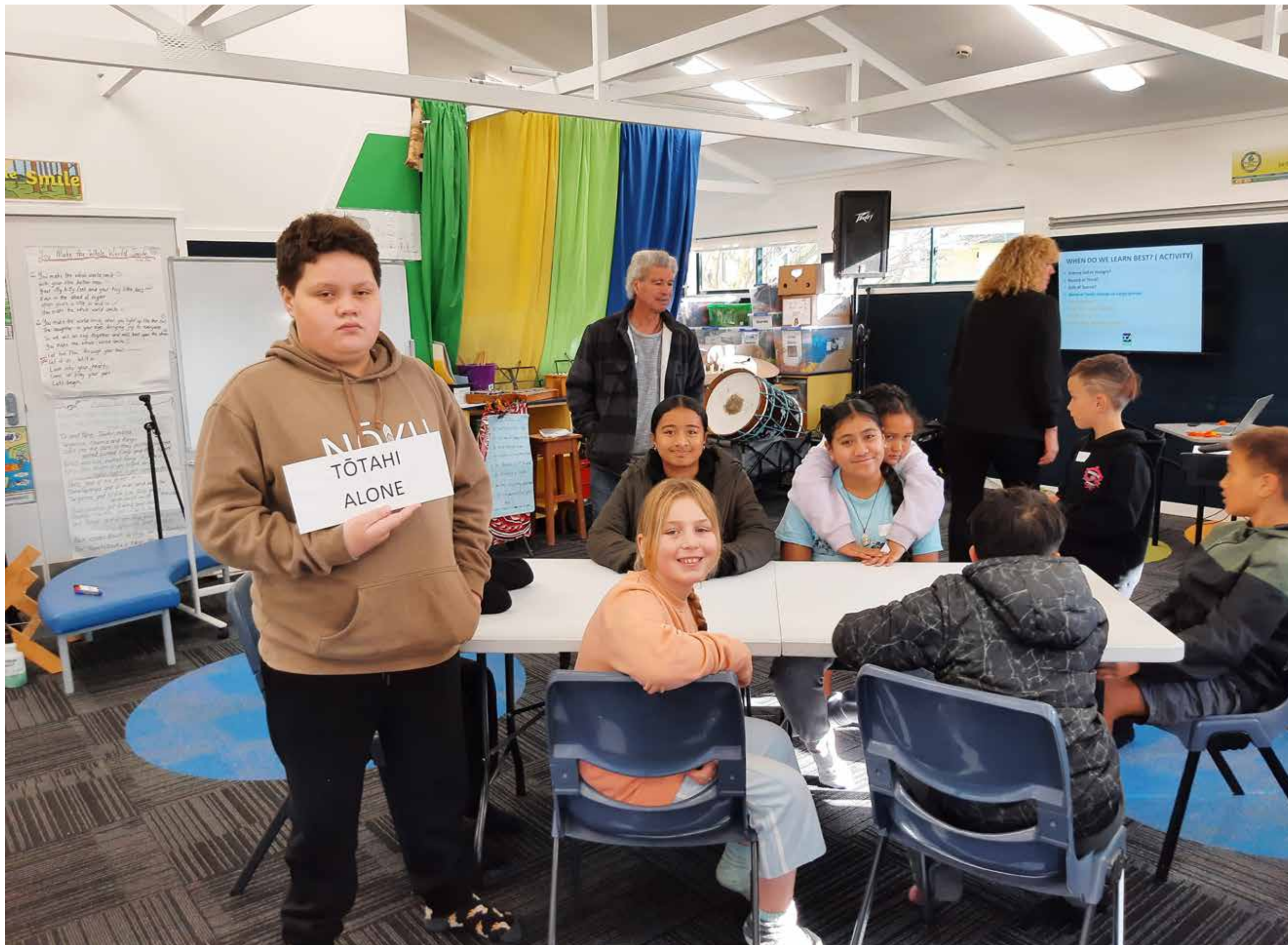


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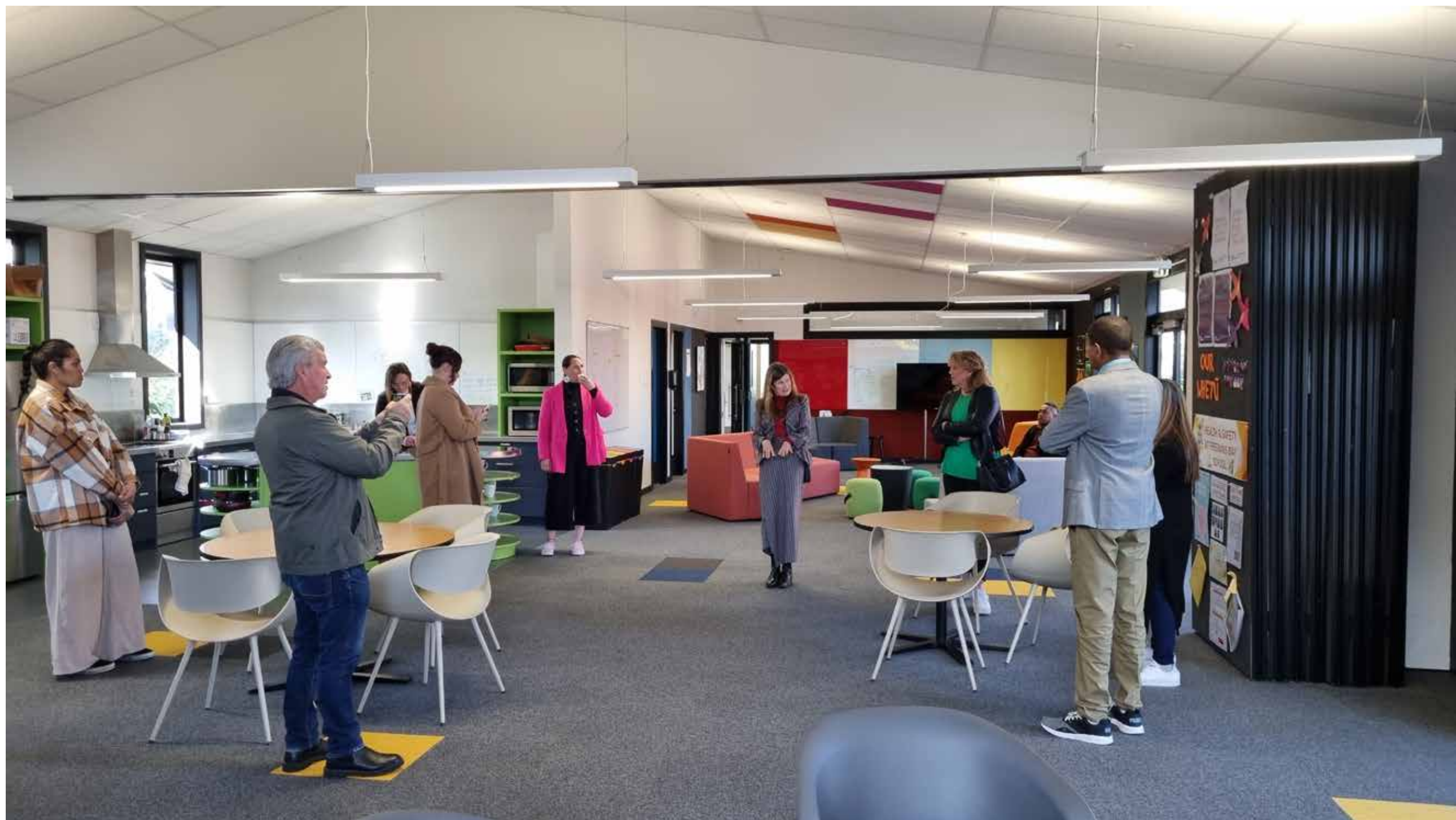
Process: Co-Design & Trust

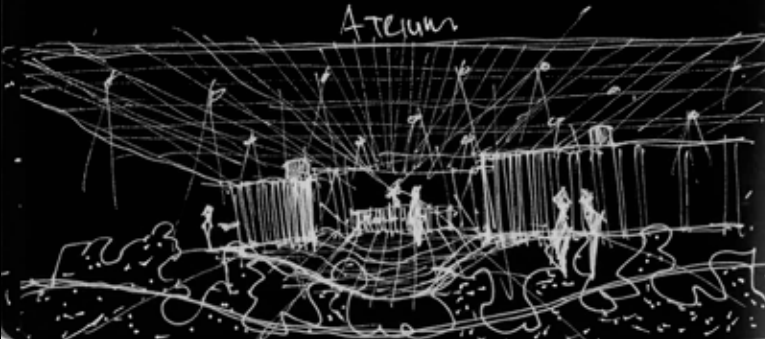
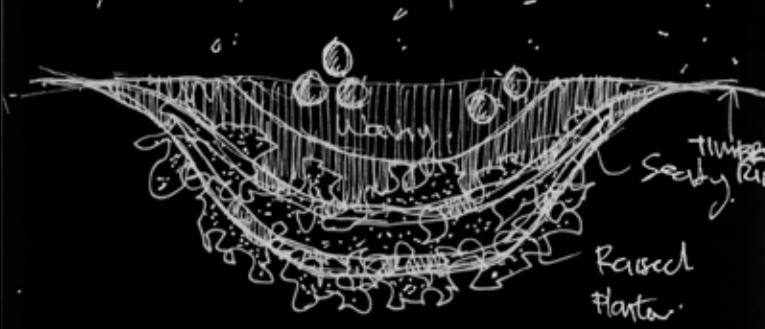
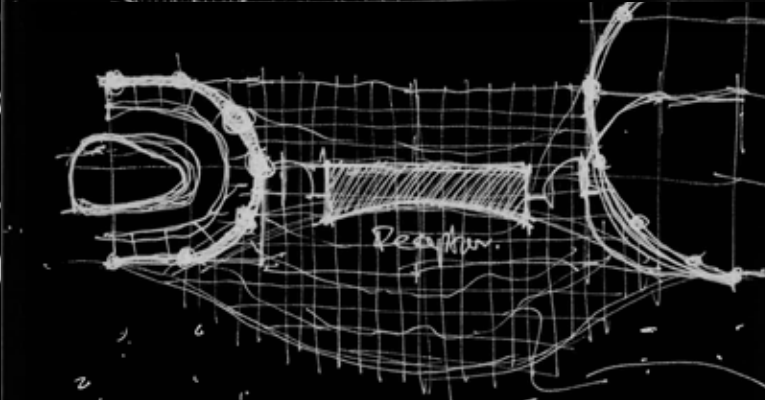
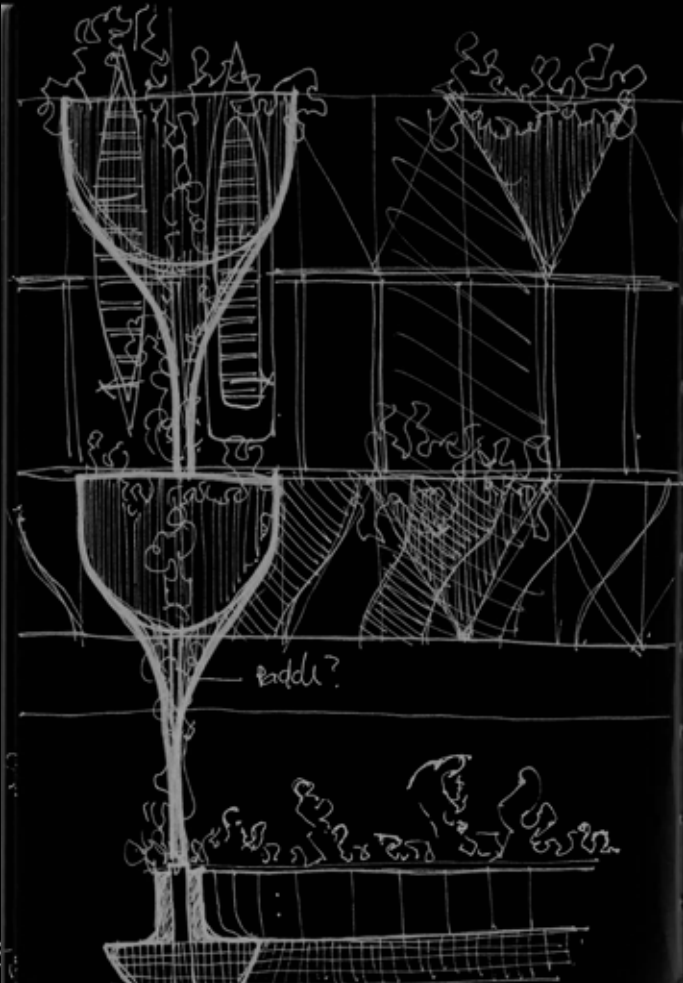
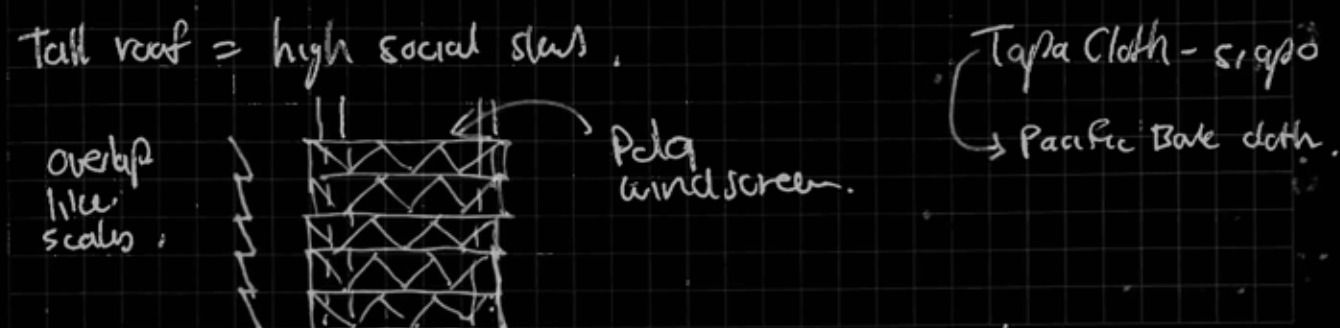
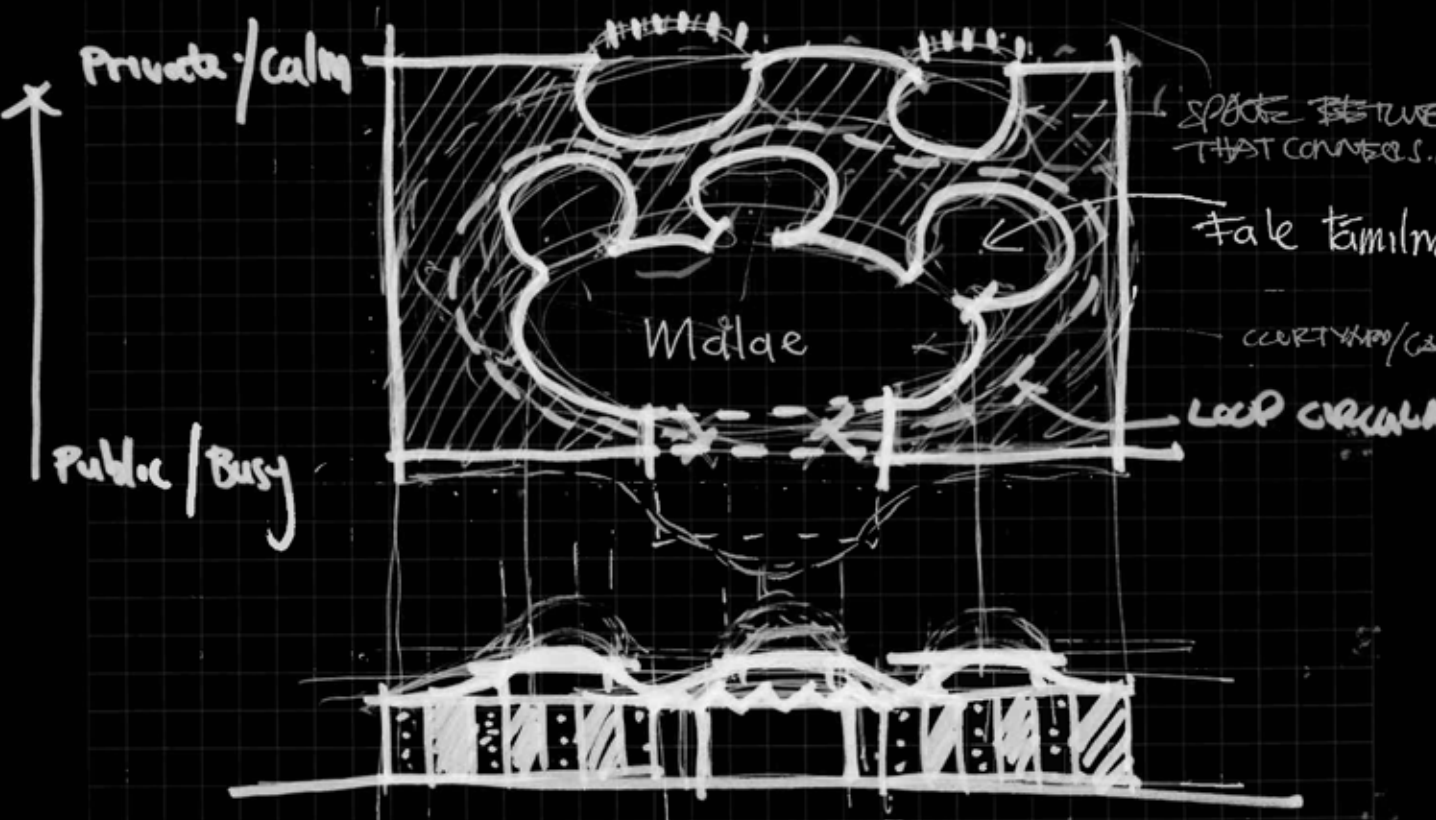
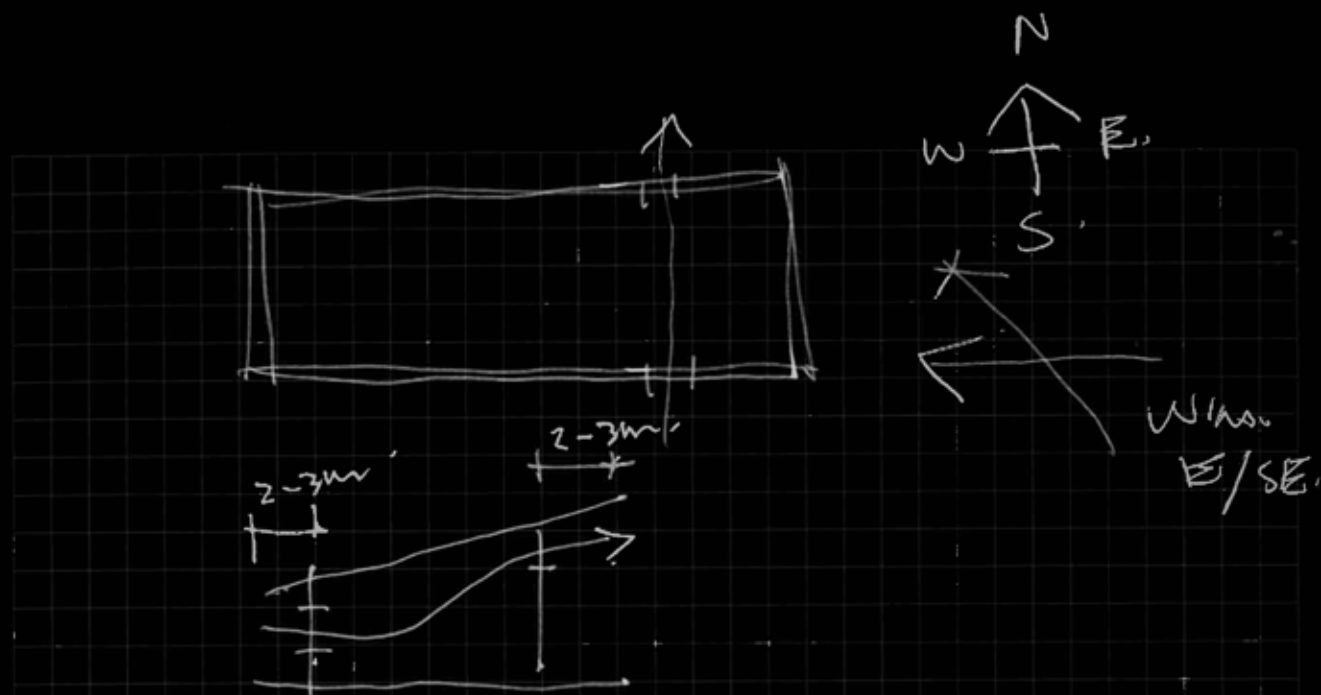
- Engage ALEP + First Nations + Community early
- Use community workshops, small group meetings, one to one conversations,
- Engage local/community artists
- Ensure all voices heard
- Field Trips
- Ensure custodianship, authorship, and benefits remain with community
- Governance: feedback loops, to participants.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











- RISK REDUCTION?
 LOW WTF PRESTIGE / PITCH
 - Deepen Relationships
 - Low Risk



Take Tele / Board RM
 Another space for
 Agency?

Recreating old palatials.
 - columns / features 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 !

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- 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

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

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THANK YOU !



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