A close-up photograph of vibrant green leaves, showing detailed vein patterns and a slightly glossy texture. The leaves are layered, with some in the foreground and others in the background, creating a sense of depth. The overall color palette is various shades of green, from light lime to deep forest green. The text is overlaid on the central part of the image.

# Therapeutic Agent

Words and images from the  
Taranaki LGBTQI+ community



*Little Rose Part I* (2020)  
Shannon Novak

## Umbrella terms

There are many umbrella terms used for sexual minorities that are not heterosexual and gender minorities that are not cisgender (where gender identity matches a person's biological sex assigned at birth). You might have heard umbrella terms like LGBT (or a variation of this), rainbow, and/or queer.

Each umbrella term is valid, and there is no global standard. The best thing to do is to research each umbrella term and if in doubt, don't be afraid to ask for help.

Some umbrella terms are expanded below.

**LGBTQI+** (or variation of): Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, and the + sign represents other sexual minorities that are not heterosexual and gender minorities that are not cisgender (e.g. Asexual, Pansexual, Genderfluid, and many more).

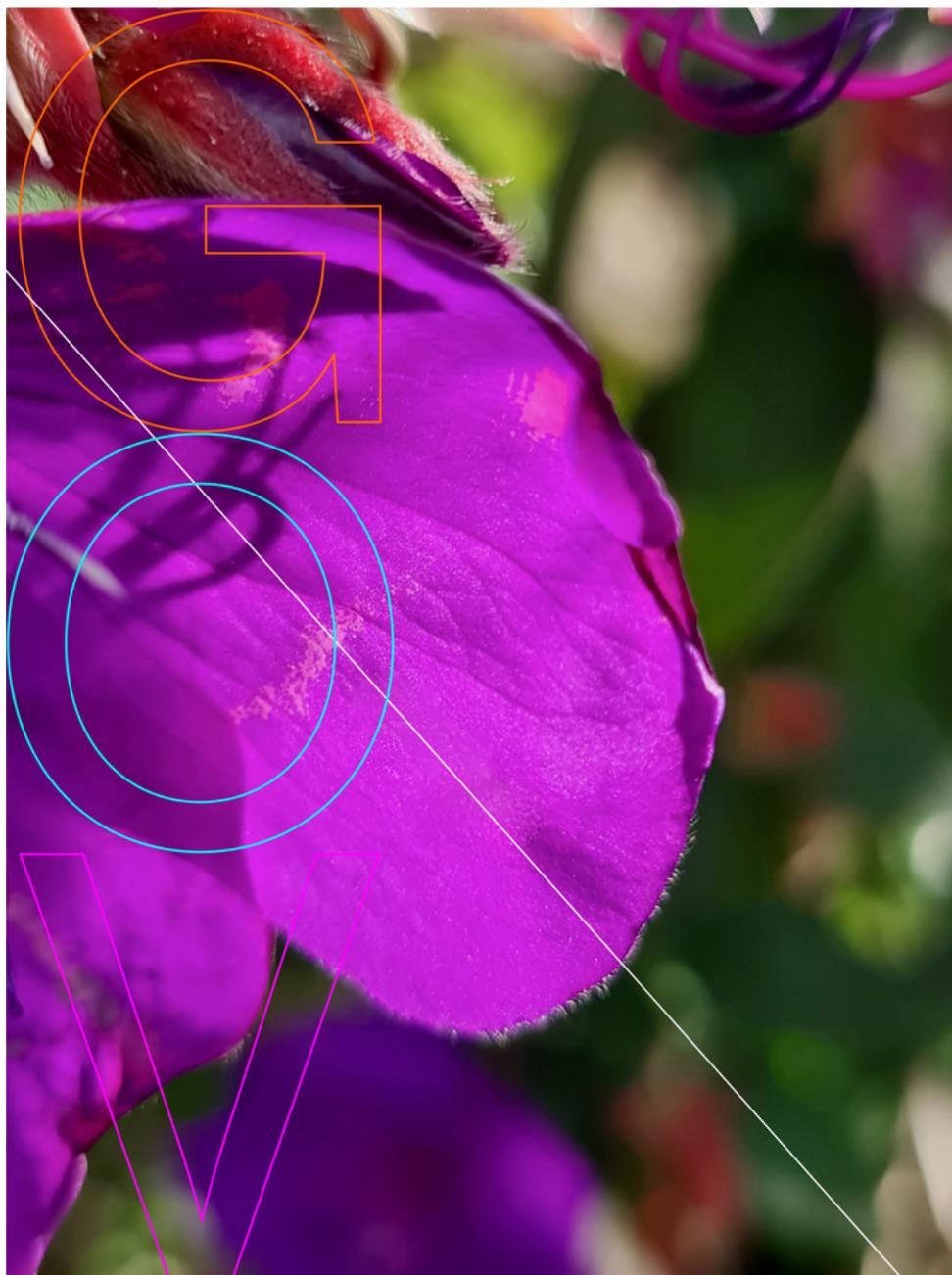
**SOGIESC:** Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics.

**MVPFAFF:** Mahu, Vaka sa lewa lewa, Palopa, Fa'afafine, Akava'ine, Fakaleiti (or leiti), and Fakafefine.

For more terms, have a look at OUTLine's glossary:

[www.outline.org.nz/glossary/](http://www.outline.org.nz/glossary/)





*Little Rose Part II* (2020)  
Shannon Novak

# Shannon Novak, Artist and LGBTQI+ activist

New Zealand is relatively progressive in terms of LGBTQI+ rights. We have almost all the same rights as everyone outside the LGBTQI+ community. You would think then it's a pretty safe country and that there probably isn't a great need for safe spaces for the LGBTQI+ community. This is a common misconception.

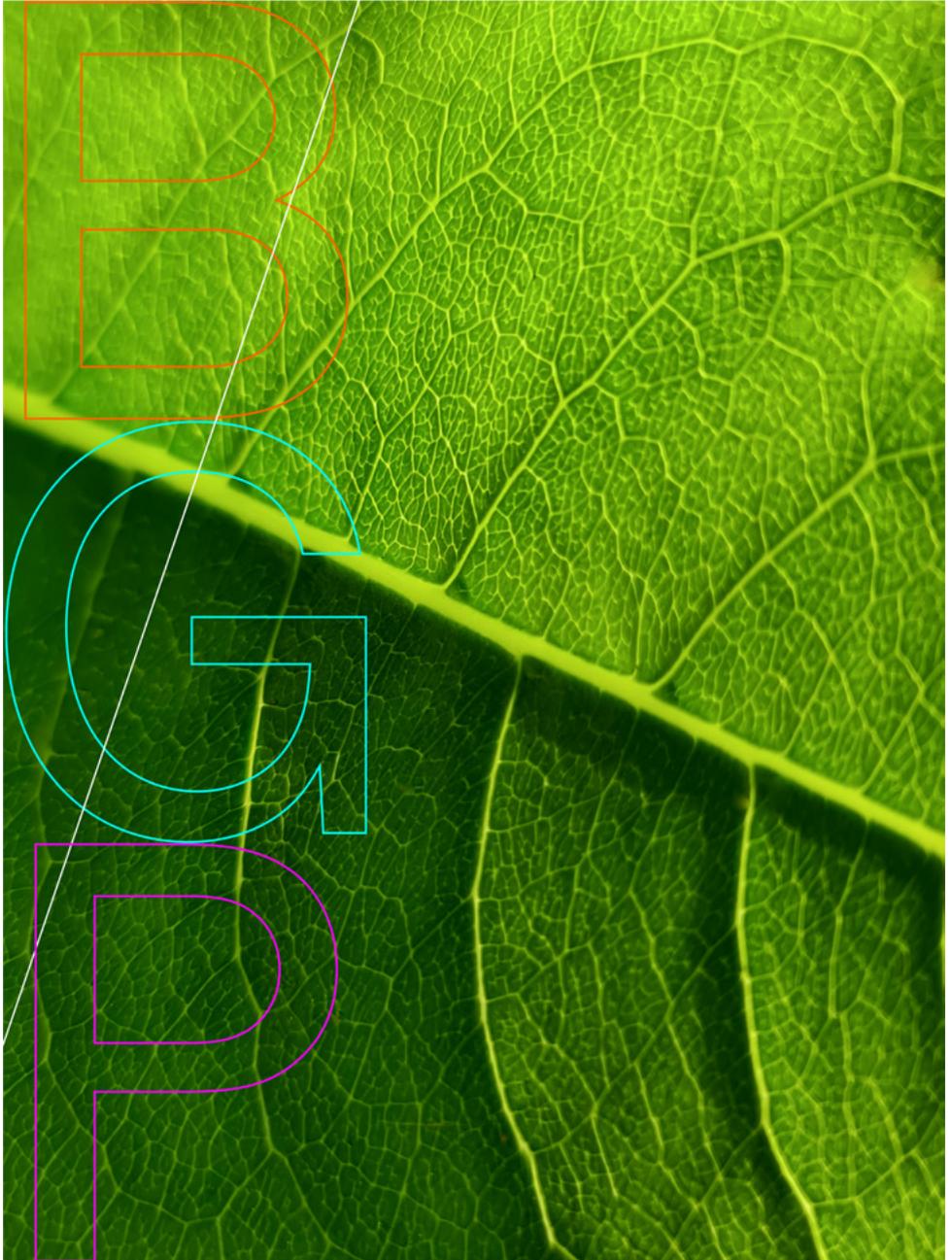
Having rights doesn't necessarily mean or guarantee acceptance.

Acceptance takes time and requires a conscious effort from every one of us. There will be individuals and groups out there who, regardless of what the law says, do not accept the LGBTQI+ community for various reasons. This may result in implicitly or explicitly hostile spaces, therefore a need for clearly identifiable safe spaces for the LGBTQI+ community.

A safe space is a space where the LGBTQI+ community can freely express themselves without fear. It is a space that does not tolerate violence, bullying, or hate speech towards the LGBTQI+ community.

The more safe spaces we have, the greater the support and acceptance levels for the LGBTQI+ community. The greater the support and acceptance levels, the stronger mental health in the LGBTQI+ community may become. By creating safe spaces, we become therapeutic agents, actively helping to reduce LGBTQI+ anxiety, depression, and suicide rates.





*Little Rose Part III* (2020)  
Shannon Novak

**“A free, safe, and just New Zealand values diversity by uplifting, empowering, and respecting a dignified life for all”.**

**New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2020, p. 60.**



*Little Rose Part IV* (2020)  
Shannon Novak

## Provide a safe space

Shannon Novak is the founder and director of the Safe Space Alliance, a LGBTQI+ led nonprofit organisation that helps people identify, navigate, and create safe spaces worldwide.

You can apply to be a safe space, and if approved be listed on the global safe space directory and map. There are no costs/fees.

Both physical/offline spaces (e.g. a street address) and digital/online spaces (e.g. websites) are welcome. In some areas of the world, online spaces may be the only form of safe space possible, particularly where being part of the LGBTQI+ community is illegal. In addition, there are many individuals, businesses, and organisations that operate solely online.

Visit [www.safespacealliance.com](http://www.safespacealliance.com) for more information or contact Shannon at [contact@safespacealliance.com](mailto:contact@safespacealliance.com)



## Taranaki in focus

### **Wesley Milne, Taranaki Regional Coordinator, RainbowYOUTH.**

Taranaki has an awesome ever-growing rainbow community, although rainbow flags are yet to fly down Devon Street there's still an amazing presence developing within the region. Small individual changes can make a world of difference, so I'm confident in the Taranaki community's ability to include our wonderful rainbow young people, raise their voices, and create a supportive local environment for them.

As a young queer transgender person, growing up in Taranaki presented itself with quite a few challenges. Being the first out trans person at my high school meant having tough conversations with staff, arguing to have basic rights such as wearing the correct uniform and using the toilets. The support I received from my friends and many staff members during this time was so reassuring that being transgender is normal and not a burden to anyone. Finding the rainbow community in Taranaki was also hard as a young person because of the disconnect a lot of us face, I wanted badly to not feel alone but I could not find that sense of belonging and community. Luckily with the RainbowYOUTH Rural Rainbow group, I found my people and felt like my queer identity had a place in Taranaki.

Another struggle that comes with being visibly queer in a rural community are challenges such as staring and whispers in public, slurs being shouted, getting questioned in public toilets. I am not the only person to have faced challenges such as these but it's important to highlight that this happens in our Taranaki. When people outside of the rainbow community develop a better

understanding of our experiences we will start to see a more inclusive overall community develop.

I am now the Taranaki Regional Coordinator for RainbowYOUTH, within this amazing role I provide one on one support to young people and their whānau. It's incredible to speak with young people from all around the mountain and form unique connections with them. People working within other support services are all eager to work together and support these young people in any way they can. What I currently see in our young people is a resilient response to the struggles they face around disconnections with the rainbow community, accessing gender affirming healthcare, and bullying. These young people are amazingly strong and are awesome at navigating where they want to be. It's not all work that we can do alone but work that we can do together.

With a community approach we should focus on listening to our young rainbow people talk about what they experience and how they want to see change. From working together, we can ensure our young people who are already so strong and resilient are safe and included within the Taranaki region. We should all individually take on this responsibility to learn about the rainbow community and become strong allies, stand up for any bullying and raise queer, gender diverse, and intersex voices!

*RainbowYOUTH in Taranaki provides 1:1 support for rainbow young people and their whānau, connects with services and schools, helps set up peer support groups, works with existing peer support groups, and holds events. Milne states that safe spaces for the rainbow community enable them to feel comfortable and accepted when entering the space, helping young people flourish. RainbowYOUTH's vision for Taranaki is that the region is a place where queer, gender diverse, intersex, and takatāpui young people can thrive.*

# Looking towards wider New Zealand

**Taine Polkinghorne, Human Rights Advisor: SOGIESC, New Zealand Human Rights Commission.**

The Human Rights Commission (Commission) has a broad mandate to promote and protect the human rights of all people in Aotearoa New Zealand. Based on the principles of self-determination, dignity, and equality, in 2020 the Commission published *Prism*, a report on human rights issues relating to sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) in Aotearoa New Zealand. This work was borne from kōrero which took place across five community hui in 2018, informed by community leaders, and supplemented by desk-based research. While sexuality diverse communities have had the benefit of rapid gains in social acceptance in Aotearoa New Zealand, the pace of change for those with diverse gender identities, gender expressions, and sex characteristics has been much slower.

Many issues persist. The report explores six key human rights issues as they relate to SOGIESC diversity. It provides recommendations for policy and decision makers to ensure that SOGIESC-diverse communities enjoy the same rights and freedoms as other people in New Zealand. *Prism* found that discrimination continues to be widespread, amending official identity documents can be difficult, and unmet information needs present obstacles for identifying and resolving issues for people with a diverse SOGIESC. Individuals who spoke to the Commission spoke of large gaps in the areas of health, education, and employment.

Although an original contribution, *Prism* must be read in the context of work undertaken by communities, groups, and organisations in regional and urban New Zealand over many years. The views

traditionally missing from the discussion must be actively sought and resourced in order to represent the full diversity of SOGIESC diverse people. Building on the progress of the trailblazers before us, *Prism* shines a light on a path towards the enjoyment and fulfilment of all human rights for people with a diverse SOGIESC.

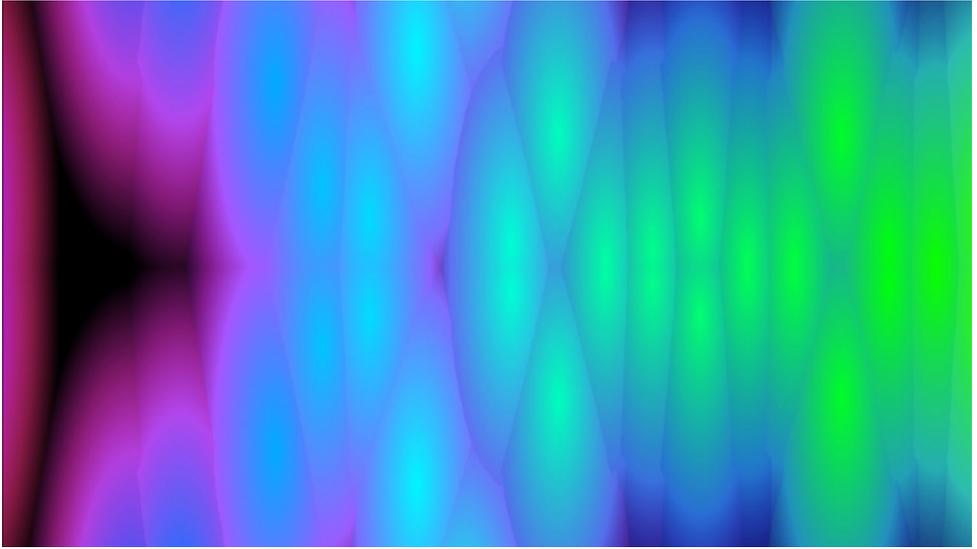
*Taine Polkinghorne is the New Zealand Human Rights Commission's advisor on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). He contributes to advancing human rights within Aotearoa New Zealand by connecting communities with decision-makers through consultation, research, and strategic advice. Polkinghorne states that ongoing education and respectful discussion help to foster safe spaces, thereby enhancing mana and building connections between those involved.*

## Ian M Clothier

Ian M Clothier is an eighth generation descendant of the culture of Hitiarevareva, commonly called Pitcairn Island and now referred to as Pitkern-Norf'k culture. Born in Christchurch (Ōtautahi) and educated in Australia and Auckland (Tāmaki Makaurau), Clothier graduated with an MA Honours First Class.

Identifying as gender fluid, they currently are a PhD candidate with a Vice Chancellor Scholarship at Auckland University of Technology, Director of Creative Research at Intercreate.org, a part time Senior Academic at Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki, and an independent artist and curator who has exhibited 107 projects in 15 countries.

They are a member of the National Rainbow Committee of the Tertiary Education Union, and sees safe spaces in Ngāmotu New Plymouth as essential for the health of generations.



*DNAwhakapapa01* (2019)  
Still from *DNAwhakapapa* (2019)  
Ian M Clothier and Josiah Jordan

This still is from a generative video based on my DNA. Josiah Jordan wrote the DNA data-to-audio conversion and I developed the organic and rainbow generative visuals. This work will be presented in Montreal and online at *ISEA2020: Montreal*.

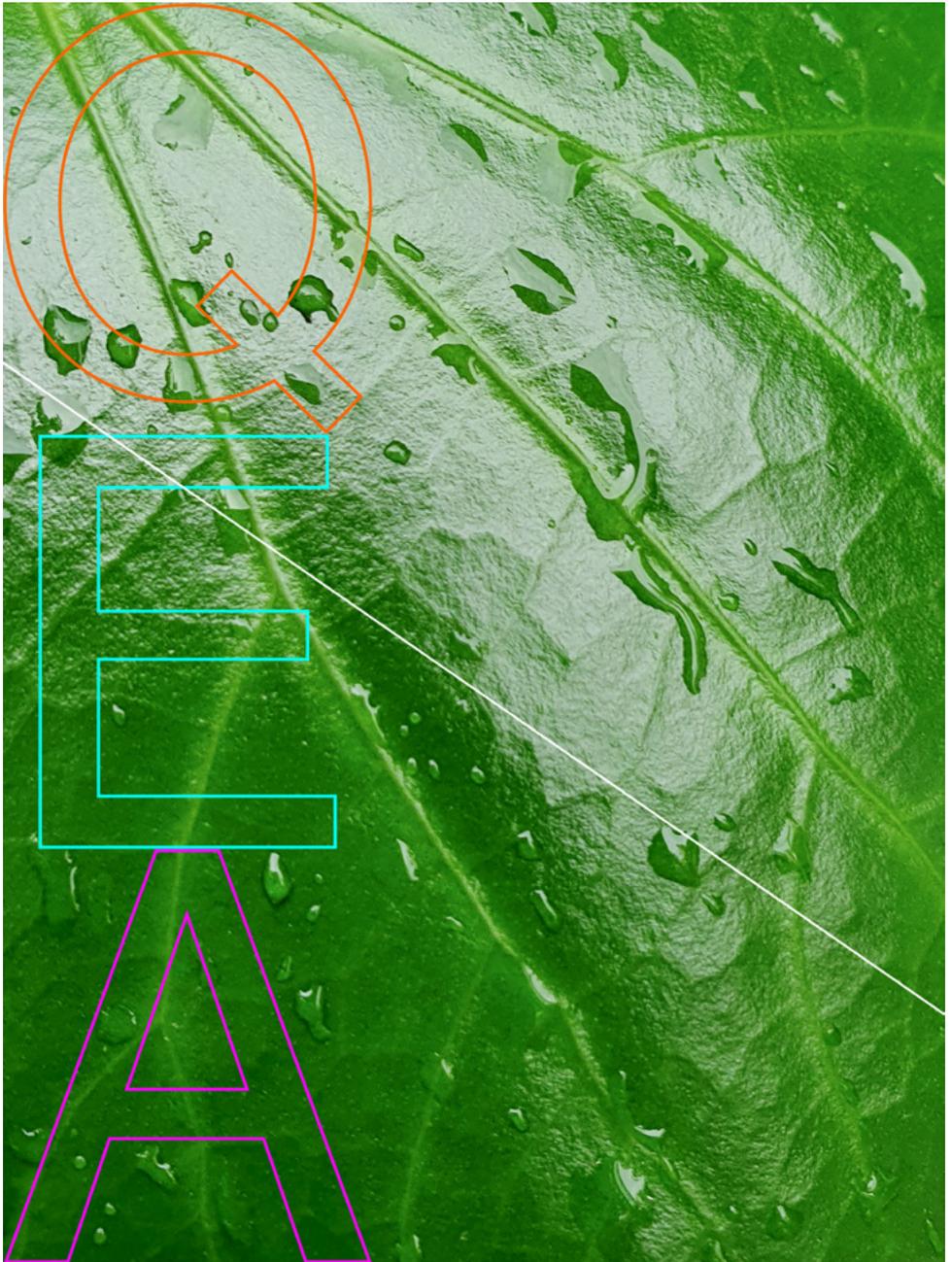
## Select what applies

- Female**
- Male**
- Gender diverse**
- Another gender**
- Some of the above**
- All of the above**
- None of the above**

Options (2020)

Ian M Clothier

As a gender fluid person, options on forms for different genders need expansion. Currently Statistics NZ is preparing a policy document and has called for submissions. In addition to *Male* and *Female*, *Gender diverse* was the previous third possible check box, and now they are proposing *Another gender* which I find awful as it sets up primary genders and *others*. Getting the phrase right is tricky, but if we include artist driven interventions, a solution may be found.



*Little Rose Part V (2020)*  
Shannon Novak

**“For youth with a diverse SOGIESC, school is often not a safe environment in which they can thrive and learn”.**

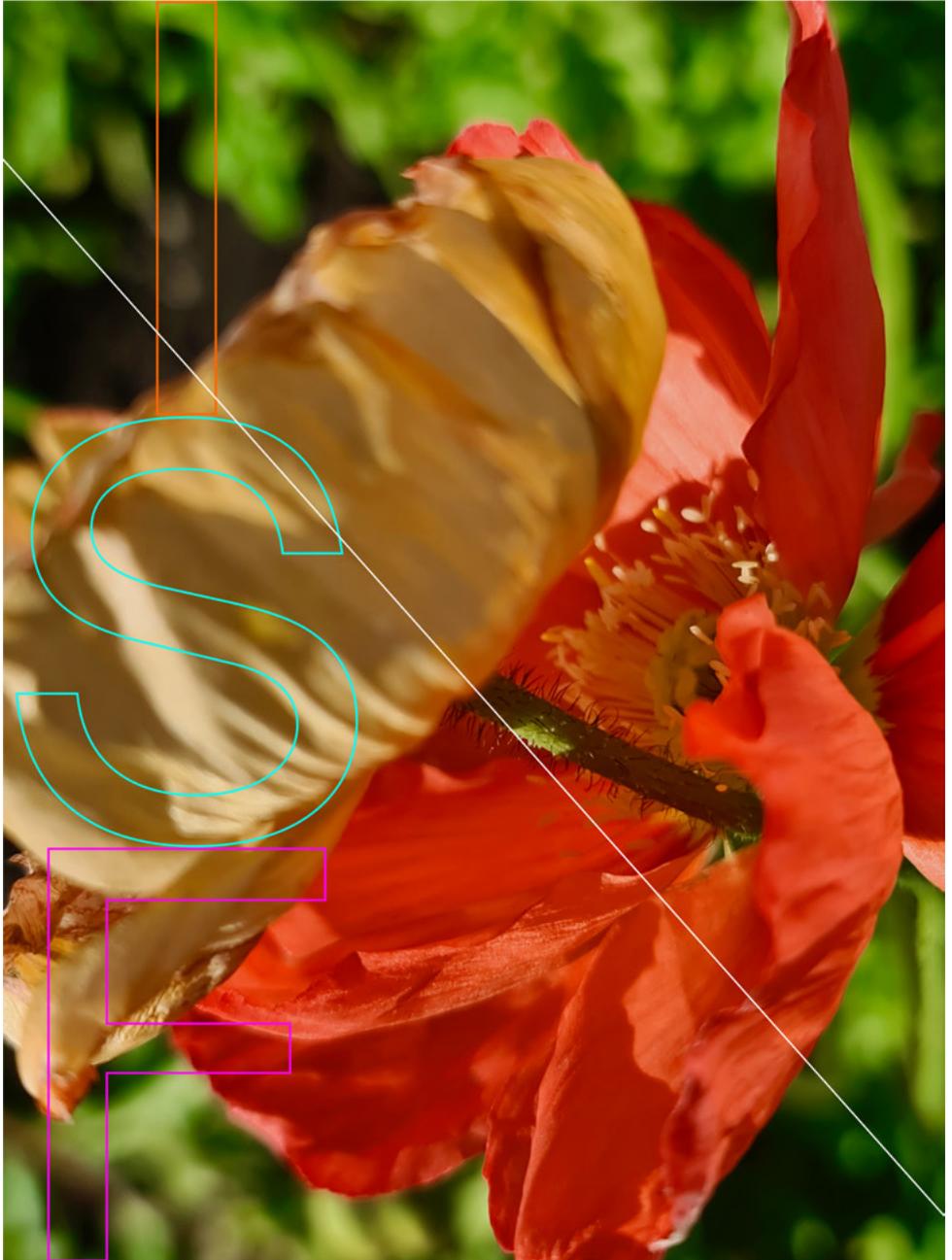
**New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2020, p. 5.**

## Erika and CoCo Flash

Hi, my name is Erika Flash. I'm a homosexual male who performs in the art of drag. My preferred pronoun is she when I present as Erika Flash. I work and perform as a drag queen professionally all over New Zealand but primarily in Taranaki. As Erika Flash one of the things I do is read children's books to children all around New Zealand about inclusivity, diversity, anti-bullying, and progressive thinking towards open mindedness. I encourage LGBT+ to be who they are and to do it proudly. I believe strongly that our community in Taranaki requires safe spaces to act as an antibiotic toward depression amongst the LGBT+ community. Thus doing so provides love, equality, and acceptance. I have found Taranaki to be a progressive town in terms of acceptance and equality but I have had personal experiences with being catcalled a "tranny", being hit in a night club, and I've had vomit noises made towards me as I've walked through town as Erika Flash. With my personal experiences the positive vastly outweighs the negative but none the less bigoted behaviour and a lack of equality is still present within the community. The sooner everyone catches up the better.

The persona of CoCo as a drag performer is a bouncy disco diva with a retro attitude. The person behind the queen is not who anyone expects and the guessing game is quite interesting for her. A straight cis female in her forties is not who most people would pin to being a drag queen nor an activist for the LGBT+ community. Transphobic slurs directed at CoCo are common from the public, some seeing CoCo as a transsexual female. Some don't believe females can be drag queens, but they can! CoCo sees first hand what happens daily to many in the LGBT+ community. She is a strong ally and advocate for her many rainbow friends and loved ones.





*Little Rose Part VI (2020)*  
Shannon Novak

**“Many students reported that certain areas of the school, such as bathrooms, buses and more secluded areas of the school are very unsafe for rainbow students to be in, and had to be avoided”.**

***InsideOUT, 2019, p. 11.***



## Shaun du Plessis

My name is Shaun du Plessis. I am a 37 year old gay man from New Plymouth. I have lived here most of my life.

I did move out to bigger cities to where I felt I could be who I was truly on the inside. Yet, this is home. I am always drawn back to my birthplace, be it that mountain, or something even more spiritual. Taranaki is my home.

As time goes on, there is more acceptance here in the provinces. Growing up we had an amazing youth group for the LGBTQ+ community – a safe space we could feel comfortable in.



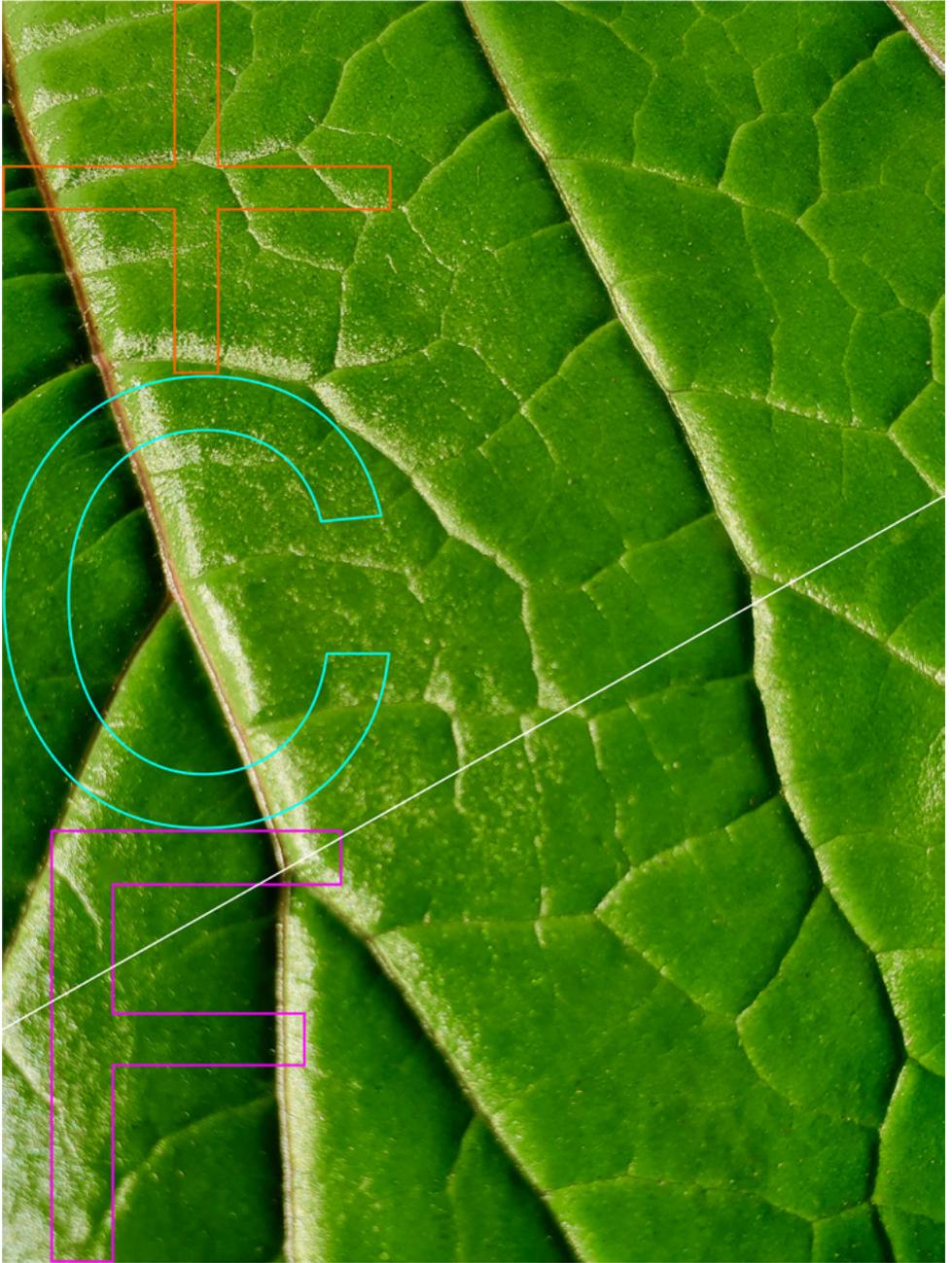
*Depression* (2020)  
Shaun du Plessis

I created *Depression* while I was walking down a very deep and dark path. I faced love, lust, and confusion. It's hard to feel something for a guy and not get it back. The darkness grew and I began to see the signs. This work represents how I felt as reality escaped me.



*True Colours* (2020)  
Shaun du Plessis

This was originally designed as a water colour tattoo (without the text). I am becoming comfortable with my sexuality in a small rural town, and I feel it's time I really showed my colours. The tattoo is yet to happen, so until then I have this image.



*Little Rose Part VII (2020)*  
Shannon Novak

**“A significant percentage  
of people with a diverse  
SOGIESC do not feel safe  
enough or fear discrimination  
at work or when applying  
for jobs”**

**New Zealand Human Rights  
Commission, 2020, p. 5.**

## References

New Zealand Human Rights Commission (2020). *Prism: Human rights issues relating to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) in Aotearoa New Zealand: a report with recommendations.*

Retrieved from: [www.hrc.co.nz/files/9215/9253/7296/HRC\\_PRISM\\_SOGIESC\\_Report\\_June\\_2020\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.hrc.co.nz/files/9215/9253/7296/HRC_PRISM_SOGIESC_Report_June_2020_FINAL.pdf)

InsideOUT. (2019). *Creating Rainbow Inclusive Schools.*

Retrieved from: [www.insideout.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Creating-Rainbow-Inclusive-Schools-Public-Report-2019.pdf](http://www.insideout.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Creating-Rainbow-Inclusive-Schools-Public-Report-2019.pdf)

## Local support

RainbowYOUTH: Taranaki

Web: [www.ry.org.nz](http://www.ry.org.nz)

Email: [wesleymilne@ry.org.nz](mailto:wesleymilne@ry.org.nz)

Phone: 022 471 5098

Drop-in centre: 69 Devon Street East, New Plymouth.



## In a crisis

If you're experiencing a crisis, please contact one of the following organisations.

### Depression.org.nz

Web: [www.depression.org.nz](http://www.depression.org.nz)

Phone: 0800 111 757 available 24/7

Text: 4202



### Lifeline Aotearoa

Web: [www.lifeline.org.nz](http://www.lifeline.org.nz)

Email: [counselling@lifeline.org.nz](mailto:counselling@lifeline.org.nz)

Phone: 0800 543 354 available 24/7

Text: HELP (4357)



Lifeline also provides the following:

**Suicide Crisis Helpline:** 0508 TAUTOKO (0508 828 865)

**Kidslines:** 0800 KIDSLINE (0800 543 754)

### OUTLine

Web: [www.outline.org.nz](http://www.outline.org.nz)

Phone: 0800 OUTLINE (0800 688 5463)

any evening between 6-9PM to talk to a trained volunteer from the LGBTQI+ community.



### Youthline

Web: [www.youthline.co.nz](http://www.youthline.co.nz)

Email: [talk@youthline.co.nz](mailto:talk@youthline.co.nz)

Phone: 0800 376 633

Text: 234



# Puke Arika

*Liberation (Puke Arika) (2020)*  
Shannon Novak

*Therapeutic Agent* is an exhibition by artist Shannon Novak that explores challenges faced by the Taranaki LGBTQI+ community in the past and present with a view to creating positive change for the future.

**Puke Arika Museum**  
**15 August 2020 – 5 April 2021**