

# piupiu's village



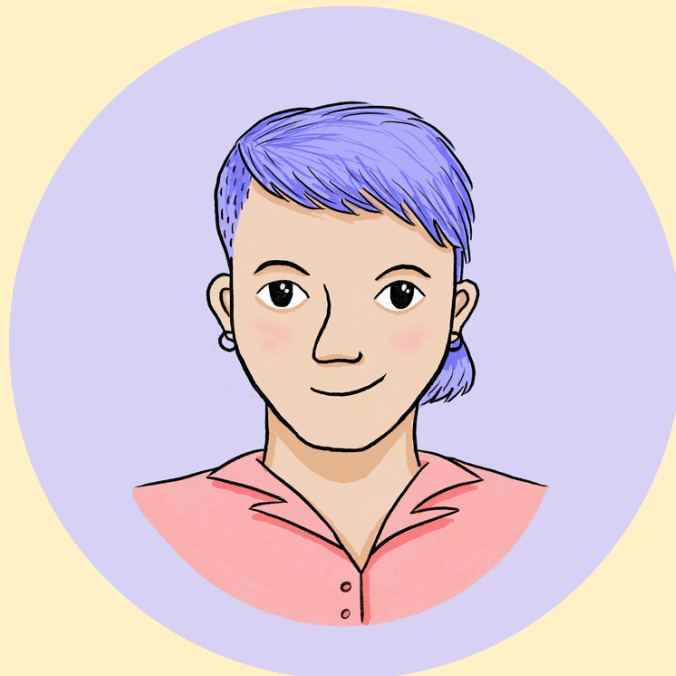
picturing family support  
for transgender young  
people in aotearoa



project village

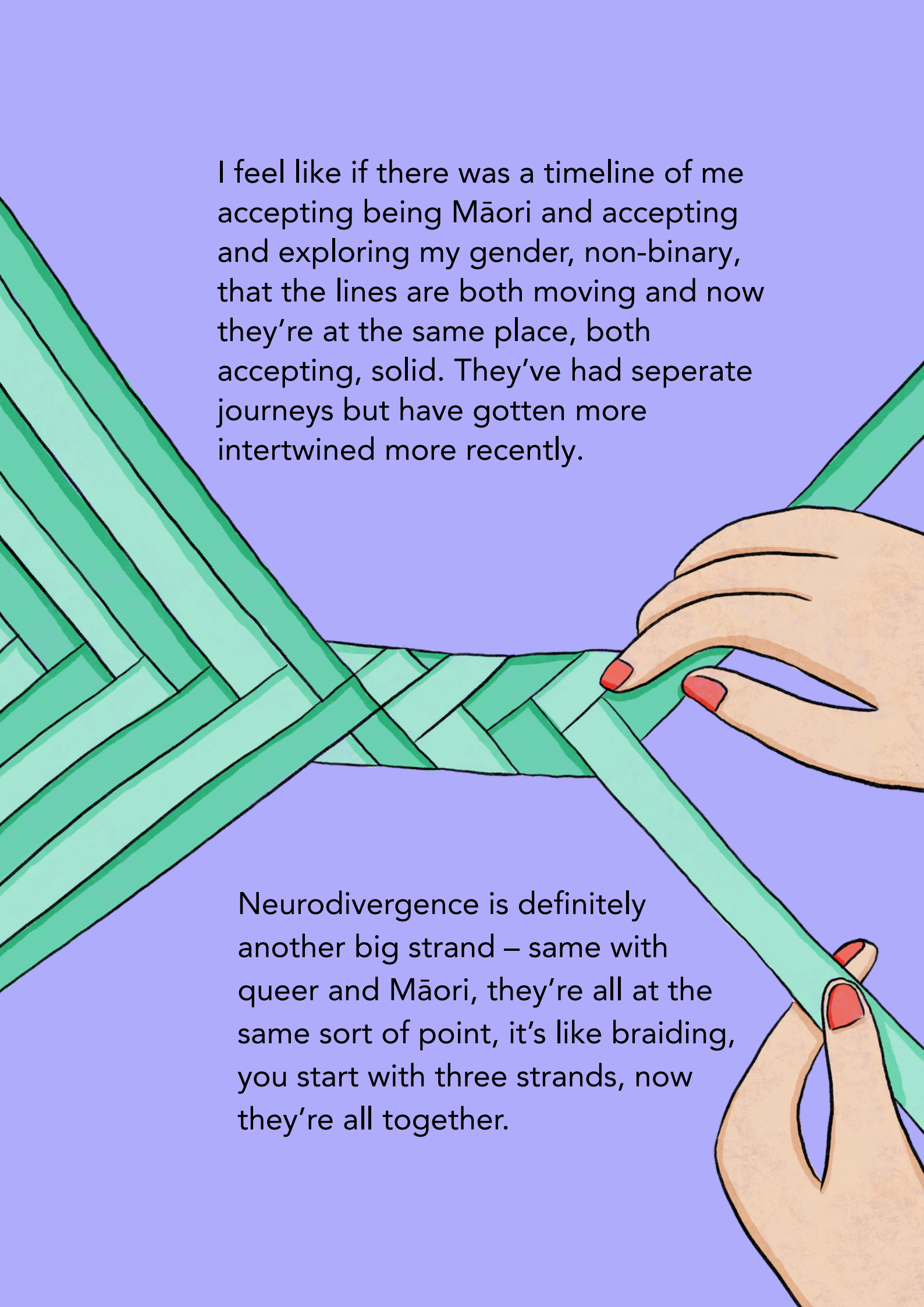
picturing family support for  
transgender young people in aotearoa

Project Village is researching what good family support looks like for transgender young people in Aotearoa, based on wānanga with them and their top supporters.



Piupiu is a rangatahi  
takatāpui.

**Here is their village.**

An illustration on a light purple background showing two hands with red-painted fingernails braiding several green strands. The strands are of varying shades of green and are being woven together into a complex braid. The hands are positioned on the right side of the frame, with one hand holding a strand from the top and the other from the bottom, both working towards the center where the braid is forming. The braid itself is a mix of the different shades of green, creating a textured, woven appearance.

I feel like if there was a timeline of me accepting being Māori and accepting and exploring my gender, non-binary, that the lines are both moving and now they're at the same place, both accepting, solid. They've had separate journeys but have gotten more intertwined more recently.

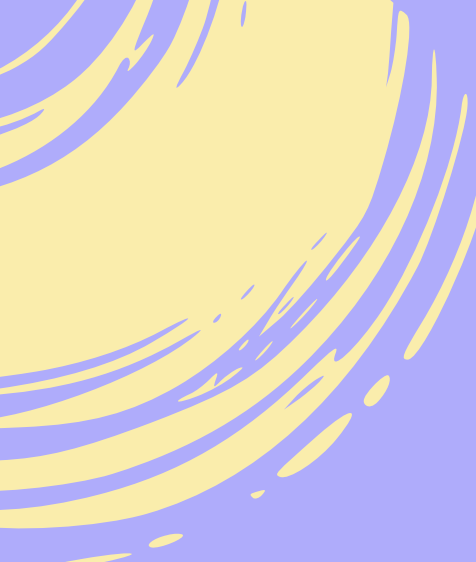
Neurodivergence is definitely another big strand – same with queer and Māori, they're all at the same sort of point, it's like braiding, you start with three strands, now they're all together.

I think because of that timeline, those merging together really feels connected and also just in the label takatāpui itself, I feel like that's the best label for me, both sexuality and gender wise, as a whole, just like, that's who I am.

That feels the best, and it's affirming the queerness and the Māori at the same time. Hearing about our tīpuna, they're like, we've always been part of the whānau.

And also hearing about our ancestors who were autistic and ADHD and they still had their roles in the whānau.

In my whānau there are several different people with all quite different ways of supporting me – because of when I met them, my own journey, where I was at that time and things, all quite different, all important though.



When I met Honeybee, I was still identifying as a binary trans guy, but I was having an internal struggle like oh I'm not sure about that, and then I met Honeybee, who was all gender queer and takatāpui and just very themselves, and I thought they're so cool.

They were wearing a black skirt and a hoodie and just that mix of gendered clothing, I was like, oh I vibe with that! That gender-envy, I want to be that person! And then it turned into I want to be with that person! It was both.

Letting me have that space to explore that, whether or not that's who I am, but like let's just see how this goes! Experiment with clothing, with pronouns, and just seeing how things feel.

Honeybee's individuality and authenticity is inspiring, I very much admire that about them.



# honeybee

This is my first T4T relationship and it's very different and I just feel so understood. We don't need to explain the gender stuff to each other, we already have that understanding from our own personal experiences. There's more niche ways of supporting each other that maybe a non-trans person wouldn't even think of.

It's mutual support, we support each other in the same ways. It's been easy supporting them in the ways that they also support me. Kind of mirroring the behaviour.

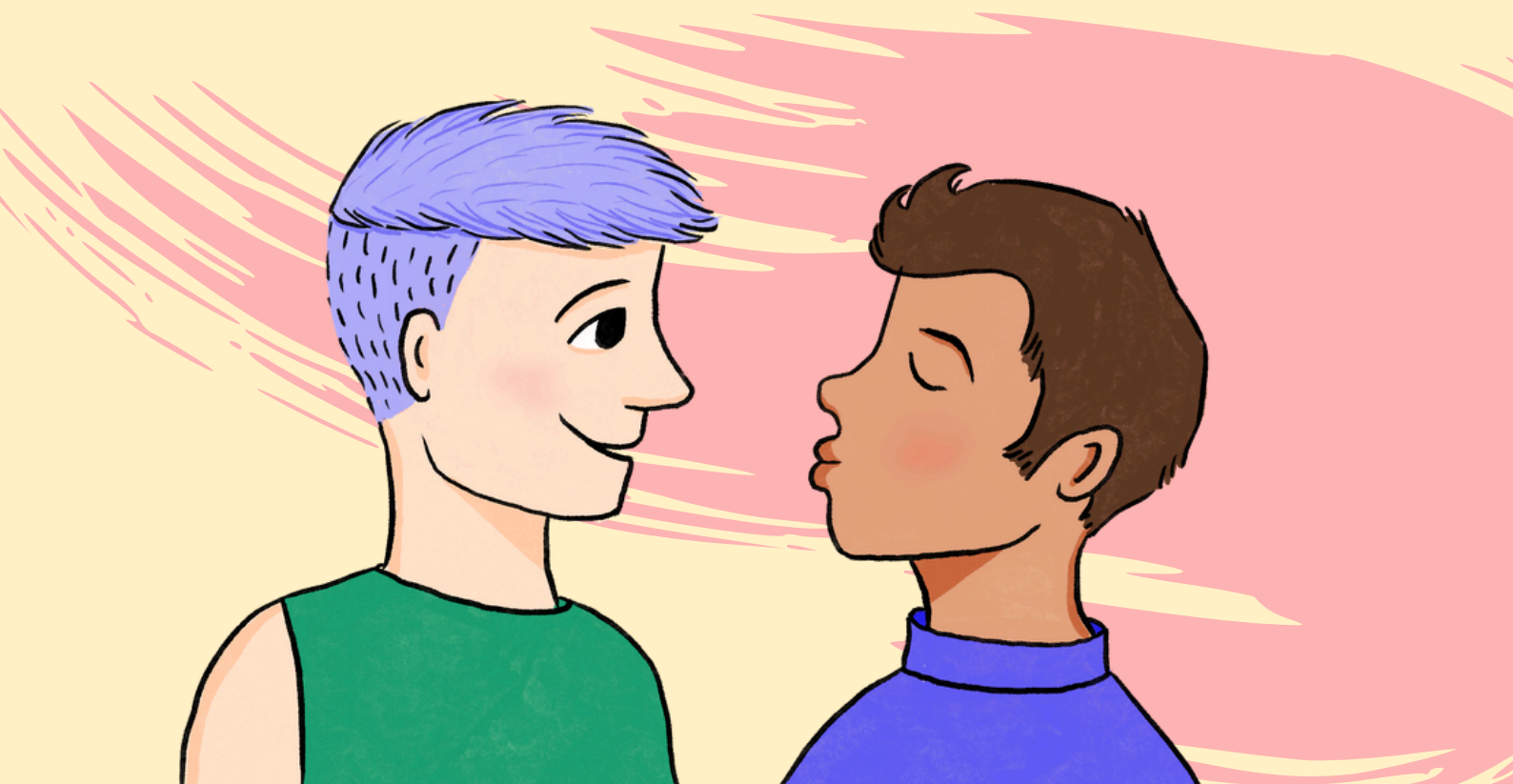
Dying their hair. I remember I was dying their hair for a while. And then the colour ran out, redying their hair a couple of times.



Gender's not that serious, you can play around with it, it doesn't have to be fixed. Cause I remember times when it did feel very serious. There's a time and a place for seriousness, but I definitely think being more playful means we can be more open.

Because we're living in different places a lot of my memories supporting their gender journey is like text messages, things online, voice messages, talking about things, sharing my perspectives and experience.

PDA, public displays of affection, doing side hugs on the bus, hand-holding, lil smooches. The excuse I use is "hey, you want some lip balm?" I like being seen with them out and about - I want people to know they're my person.



# honeybee's tips

Go with the flow – don't expect them to know everything, accept a non-answer as an answer, saying "that's okay, that's where we're at".

It's ok to sit in uncomfortable feelings. If an upsetting thing happens you don't have to cheer people up. Sometimes it's more meaningful just to sit with them through that.

Or ask more into that, be curious about it, like "why did that feeling come up, do you think?".



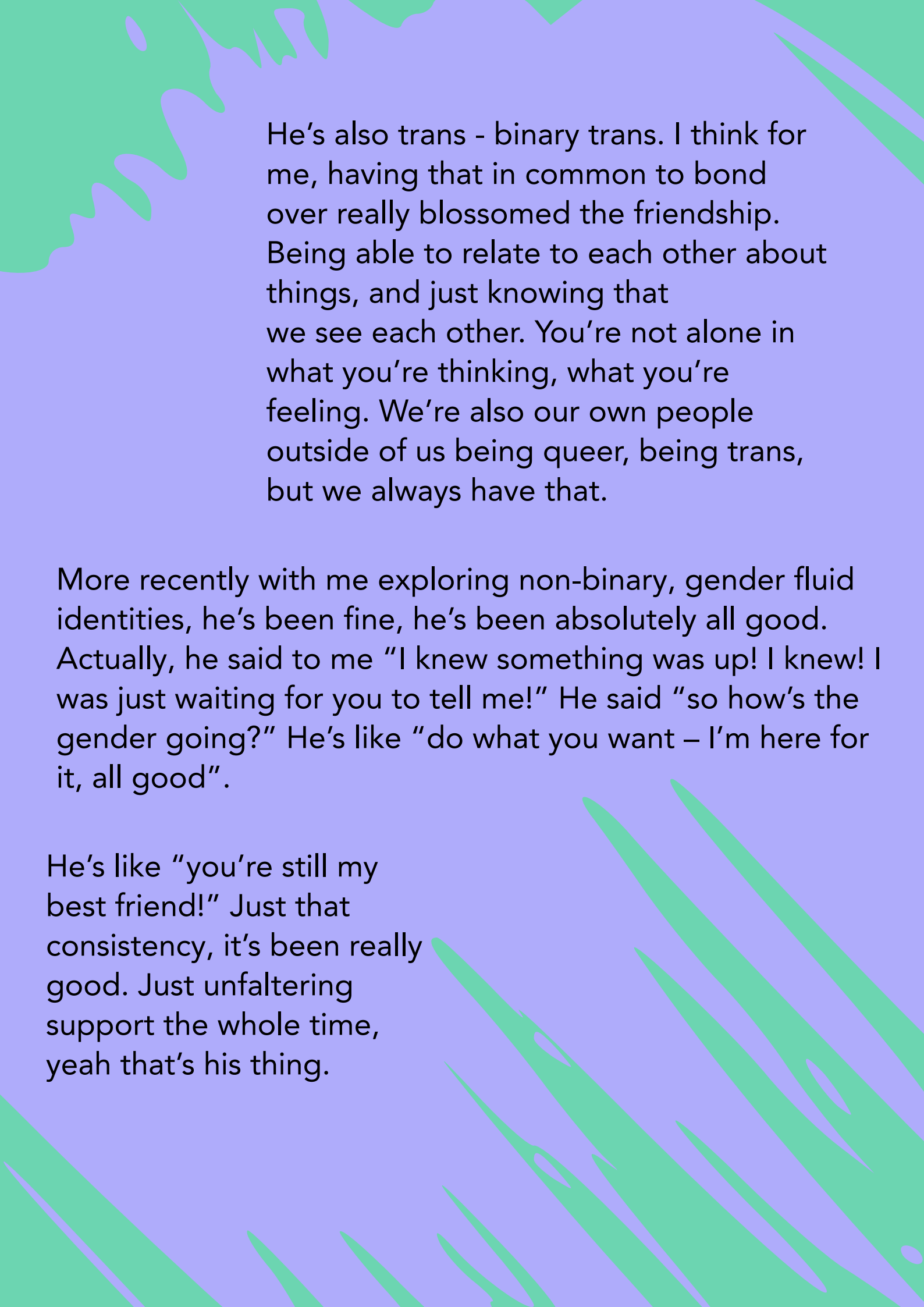
One of my best friends Enyn, I met him a little bit after I moved here. He's queer Pākehā.

We didn't live together at first, but he joined me at that flat later on, and now it's just us living together in our new whare.

We've been friends ever since, we just really hit it off. He's AuDHD as well, we've got that common ground, and he said to me that I really helped him to come to terms with that. To have the same sort of wiring in your brain, it's OK to be how you are, I get it.

We were both looking for a flat, so I saw his Facebook post, I was like oh this guy looks cool. We met up to look at places and he was like "do you actually just want to hang out?" and I was like 'yeah, sure'.





He's also trans - binary trans. I think for me, having that in common to bond over really blossomed the friendship. Being able to relate to each other about things, and just knowing that we see each other. You're not alone in what you're thinking, what you're feeling. We're also our own people outside of us being queer, being trans, but we always have that.

More recently with me exploring non-binary, gender fluid identities, he's been fine, he's been absolutely all good. Actually, he said to me "I knew something was up! I knew! I was just waiting for you to tell me!" He said "so how's the gender going?" He's like "do what you want - I'm here for it, all good".

He's like "you're still my best friend!" Just that consistency, it's been really good. Just unfaltering support the whole time, yeah that's his thing.

enyn

When we first met physically I'd already mentally been like, hmm, I feel like they might not be flowing into the full dude transmasc, I just felt like there's a little bit more to this that maybe they haven't realised.

They sent me a picture of them with a friend and they were both wearing skirts and I was like, oh awesome, and I remember having a discussion with them saying "hey, I just want to make sure that you feel comfortable to explore that and wear those kinda things at home as well and it isn't that me being very binary in my gender is in any way making it feel like you can't explore this".

Letting myself have time to process as well, so I don't overstep or say something wrong, and then kind of wanting them to feel like they can come to things for themselves and just kinda every now and then checking in.

We were sitting here and I was like: "how's the gender going?" So then, "okay, do you want to try they pronouns?" They had I think already been talking about that with Honeybee just between the two of them, so I was like OK you have this safe space, it's just the two of us at this place, is that something you want to explore? I wanted it to be like it's their journey, so you get to define what that is. I don't want anyone, let alone myself, telling you what this should look like and how you should be doing it.



Why I am so drawn to community and connection is we all do offer these little bits of ourselves that when combined create this safety net or network that can provide different things to support one another.

I remember when Piupiu started engaging with their takatāpui group, I was like that's amazing cause that's something you need, you deserve, and you're able to have that. It's been really awesome to see them grow in themselves through that path and it's like that's beautiful. I think it's good to be able to see where from different places we can come together to support Piupiu.



# enyn's tips

Observe and figure out how best to go about this and how I can be the best me for what they need.

Be really open and raw with one another. It doesn't have to be that you're having the most crazy in-depth conversation, it can simply be "hey, how are you?", "I think I've noticed something", "how can I be there for you?".

Actively listen without the expectations of how you would support or how you think things should look like, listen and just really hear what they're saying and be able to view that without projecting yourself onto it.

# phoenix

And then there's my other best friend Phoenix, who's queer as well, AuDHD as well, there's a pattern here! They are my longest best friend, from second year of high school. So we've been best friends the whole time, through my whole transition journey, everything, before T, before my name change.

I started T the last year of high school and my voice was cracking, so I guess they were supporting me by helping me deal with other people's shit, saying things to me. They're like "don't listen to them".

They pride themselves on the fact that they've never misgendered me, and were correcting other people! "I got your back the entire time", that sort of thing.

With them, it's constant support, having been there from the start, having seen all these iterations of me and just going with the flow: "yep!, all good!".



Just that unconditional acceptance, you're always my best friend, no matter what's going on, how you're dressing, what pronouns, anything.



Guncle is from the same area of the country as me so we have that sort of whanaungatanga vibes. He told me where he's from and I was like "oh, yeah, I get you, enough said!" and we're just able to bond over that and he also lives near where I live as well.

I remember I was having a hard time and I happened to be outside for some mahi that I was doing at a cafe, and he saw me and came over and was like "oh hey, how are you doing?" and gave me a hug. And I just really needed that.

I really connect with Guncle because he's the same, takatāpui, ADHD, autistic. All the things. He's like "yeah, I get you, yeah" and just having that community with someone who has all of those identities like you is really special, really nice.

I call him Guncle, like gay uncle, so that's the sort of role he has for me as well.

He supports me in a takatāpui way - not just queer, not just trans, but takatāpui specifically. Bring your takatāpui self who's autistic and ADHD as hell, bring all of it, bring yourself here and we will take you as you are, and accept you as you are, and celebrate you as you are. You're not just the parts. But also celebrate all those parts, just not individual, separate things.

Guncle said to me that if I'm keen he could organise me to do whaikōrero for something. I was telling him about my kauhau, my speech I did for my te reo class, and how that went and everything, and Guncle said well you know if you're keen, I would 100% support you if that's what you're wanting to do.

# guncle

Guncle was a nickname that one of the other kids came up with - just gay and uncle together. I think it feels right. I feel like operating from that space makes me want to be real.

Sometimes being real is being straight up with them, sometimes being real is laughing with them about dumb stuff, you know? Like whānau would.

Sometimes I am grumpy uncle...sometimes you have to be a grumpy uncle just a little bit. Sometimes I'm a grump at the wrong time and I get called for it and that's real too. I learn, I adjust, I move forward.

It also means being a bit of a role model as well, and I do try hard to be a good role model for these rangatahi. Lots of good chats about what it means to operate out of values and ground ourselves within te ao Māori and stuff like that.



The one thing I'm trying to plant the seed for lately is getting Piupiu up on the paepae. I think for Piupiu the next big step is getting them up to a whaikōrero so I'm asking them, what are your thoughts on this? Are you interested? Just starting slow.

Being able to whaikōrero that's a taonga tuku iho, it's being able to stand and represent your whakapapa and the wider rōpu. It's massive in terms of confidence building, in terms of developing a sense of self, a sense of achievement and capability and they're there!

I can't wait to see this happen. I'm gonna be bawling my eyes out on the paepae.

I would really be struggling through life I hadn't had those opportunities for me to help ground myself and figure out who I am and within my intersections as well, and I hope I can do it for Piupiu as well.

You might have your transness here, and your pansexuality here, and your aceness here, and your Māoritanga here, and your Pasifika connections here.. but like it's all part of the same.. it's a woven net...

We hold this belief that these parts of these young people's identity are.. beyond inherently connected, it's part of their whole self. Because it's just a person.. at the end of the day it might be all of this but really it's still just a person. The hononga, the tuia, the weaving strands of humanity.

Another very important aspect of being Guncle is just being dry as. I lean into it hard, and sometimes I get a few genuine chuckles, but most of the time it makes them cringe and that's okay you know? I have a very little sense of embarrassment and self-shame. If I can be my most authentic, goofy, silly self, then it gives them permission to be the same. One thing I always say is to be cringe is to be free.

A real big part of being Māori is just laughing until your ribs hurt. Just fun, just humour, we do the serious stuff like "believe in yourself" but a lot of what I do is talk smack and get them to laugh and have fun.

It's just one way I try to bring a bit of joy into people's lives. We could come here and talk about how sad the outside world is, but a big part particularly about being Māori is just being able to have a laugh at all the dumb shit - like it's healing eh?



# guncle's tips

Be a good uncle

Give them a feed

Joke around and have fun

Encourage them to be themselves

Take an interest in their world

Support their aspirations

Learn about gender

Listen to them

Let them lead what they need

Ground everything in aroha

# shout out to....

## Mana Tipua

A kaupapa Māori organisation led by takatāpui.

Mana Tipua is the only rangatahi takatāpui focussed organisation in Waitaha.

Their purpose is to tautoko (support) the hauora (health & wellbeing) and mana of rangatahi takatāpui and their whānau.



# find support

Below are some support services that can help you in your journey supporting rangatahi takatāpui/transgender young people.

## **Mana Tipua**

<https://www.manatipua.org>

## **InsideOUT Kōaro**

[www.insideout.org.nz](http://www.insideout.org.nz)

## **Rainbow Youth**

<https://ry.org.nz/>

## **Outline**

[0800 688 5463](tel:08006885463)

## **Gender Minorities Aotearoa**

[www.genderminorities.com](http://www.genderminorities.com)

## **Be There**

[www.be-there.nz](http://www.be-there.nz)

## **NZ Parents of Transgender and Gender Diverse Children**

[www.transgenderchildren.nz](http://www.transgenderchildren.nz)



Find out more at  
[www.projectvillageaotearoa.com](http://www.projectvillageaotearoa.com)



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