

Te Ara Whakamua 2026

GIVE TO GAIN

Accelerating Action: Give to Gain Through Courage, Connection and Change

THURSDAY | 27 AUGUST 2026 | HISTORIC VILLAGE | TAURANGA | BALCONY ROOM

TIME	SESSION	SPEAKER
1.30pm – 2.00pm	REGISTRATION & ARRIVAL	
2.00pm – 2.05pm	Mihi whakatau / karakia	Tawa Farrell
2.05pm – 2.15pm	Welcome	Jonathan Usher (MC)
2.15pm – 3.00pm	Leading with Courage Including Q+A	Jazz Thornton
3.00pm – 3.05pm	Activity: What does Give to Gain me for you?	Jonathan Usher (MC)
3.05pm – 3.20pm	Leading by Stepping Back: Trusting the Next Generation	Ngahiwi Tomoana
3.20pm – 3.35pm	Disability + Accessibility Action	Juliana Carvalho
3.35pm – 3.50pm	Working as a Collective	Ezra Schuster
3.50pm – 4.00pm	Joint Q&A (all three on stage together)	Ngahiwi, Ezra, Juliana
4.00pm – 4.15pm	Afternoon break / Give to Gain Cards	
4.15pm – 4.30pm	The Power of Lifting Others as we Rise	Cassandra Hogan
4.30pm – 4.45pm	Women's Health (good for men too)!	Vinka Wong
4.45pm – 5.00pm	The Ripple Effect of Investing in Others	Anna Mellalieu
5.00pm – 5.10pm	Joint Q&A (all on stage together)	Cass, Anna and Vinka
5.10pm – 5.20pm	Closing remarks & Give to Gain card collection	Jonathan Usher (MC)
5.20pm – 5.30pm	Magic...	Jonathan Usher (Magician)
5.30pm – 7.00pm	Networking, refreshments and Give to Gain Wall	Everyone

Program subject to changes.

One small act. Real forward motion.

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As you head into networking drinks, pin your card to the Give to Gain Wall alongside everyone else's. A few brave volunteers will read theirs aloud during closing remarks — and we'll be back in touch in four to six weeks to remind you of the commitment you made.



In 2021 at the New Zealand Magicians convention in Auckland, Jonathan won best comedy magician, best performance of the convention, and best performance in the evening Gala Show. In 2022, the Variety Artists Club of New Zealand awarded him Variety Artist of the Year. He was recognised in the 2026 New Year Honours with a King's Service Medal for services to the Community and Entertainment.



Jazz is also the author of the bestselling books *Stop Surviving, Start Fighting* and *My Journey Starts Here*. Her contributions have earned widespread recognition, including the Point of Light Award from Her Majesty The Queen and the title of Young New Zealander of the Year. Through fearless storytelling, Jazz continues to inspire understanding, resilience, and meaningful action.

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NGAHIWI TOMOANA | SPEAKER

LEADING BY STEPPING BACK: TRUSTING THE NEXT GENERATION

Ngahiwi Tomoana is of Ngāti Kahungunu (Ngāti Hawea, Ngāti Hori) and Samoan descent, and has been involved in hapū and iwi development for most of his life. He was the longest-serving iwi chair in Aotearoa, leading the Board of Ngāti Kahungunu for 26 years from 1996 until 2022, when he made way for a new generation of leadership. He was also Chair of Pou Tāhūa, the Iwi Chairs Group focused on international trade and economic development within the National Iwi Chairs Forum, and continues in that role today as the visionary behind Te Aratini — built on the belief that culture counts in commerce, community and conservation.

He holds several other key strategic positions, including a seat on the Chief Ombudsman Board, Taumata Whakapūmau for the Wai 262 claim, and Chair of Te Wānanga Whare Tapere o Takitimu, and is passionately involved in advocating for the rights of Māori and other indigenous peoples on the global stage. Ngahiwi is a loving husband to Mere Tomoana, a father of six tamariki, and a grandfather to twenty-one mokopuna.



JULIANA CARVALHO | SPEAKER

DISABILITY / ACCESSIBILITY ACTION

Juliana Carvalho is an award-winning disability advocate, bestselling author, and inspirational speaker. Born in Brazil, she became paraplegic at 19 and transformed her experience into a mission to drive change. She created and hosted the Brazilian public television show Make a Difference, directed the award-winning short film If the Eyes Cannot See, The Legs Cannot Feel, and won Marie Claire Brazil's Best True Story Award.

Her autobiography, In My Chair or Yours?, has sold more than 30,000 copies in Brazil, and the English edition reached Amazon.com's Top 100 Hot New Releases. Since 2012, Juliana has called Aotearoa home, dedicating herself to leadership in the disability sector.

www.juliana.co.nz



EZRA SCHUSTER | SPEAKER

WORKING AS A COLLECTIVE

Ezra Schuster is the Regional Public Service Commissioner for the Bay of Plenty and a respected public sector leader known for his collaborative, community-centred leadership. In his current role, Ezra leads cross-agency regional collaboration, helping enable locally led and community-driven leadership alongside government.

A proud first-generation New Zealandborn Samoan, Ezra has held senior leadership roles across education, health and social development, including leading education initiatives across the Pacific region. During COVID-19, he helped lead regional all-of-government coordination efforts, and led the establishment of the Bay of Plenty's first regional Pasifika advisory group to government, the Pasifika Vaka. A former Chair of the NZ Commonwealth Leaders Dialogue, he was awarded a national leadership fellowship at Oxford University. He's married to his childhood sweetheart Rachel and they have five children.

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CASSANDRA HOGAN | SPEAKER
THE POWER OF LIFTING OTHERS AS WE RISE

Cass Hogan is a life and business coach, speaker, and the founder of He. Men's Mental Health Event and She. Women's Mental Health Event — community movements focused on creating safe spaces for honest conversations, connection, and change.

Known for her authentic and down-to-earth approach, Cass combines lived experience, leadership, and practical insight to challenge stigma, encourage courageous conversations, and empower people to lead with empathy and humanity.

Through sold-out events, coaching, and speaking engagements across Aotearoa, Cass continues to inspire others to lead differently, lift others as they rise, and create meaningful change that lasts.



VINKA WONG | SPEAKER
WOMEN'S HEALTH

Vinka Wong is a Clinical Nutritionist, educator, and speaker known for translating complex health science into practical, realworld strategies.

With over a decade of clinical experience, she specialises in blood chemistry analysis, hormonal health, and personalised nutrition.

Vinka works alongside healthcare professionals and organisations across New Zealand, delivering engaging talks that simplify topics such as energy, metabolism, hormones, and preventative health.

She is also the founder of an innovative health software platform that empowers individuals to self-request blood tests and gain deeper insight into their health.



ANNA MELLALIEU | SPEAKER
THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF INVESTING IN OTHERS

Deeply aligned with this year's Give to Gain theme, Anna Mellalieu believes that meaningful progress happens when we actively invest in others. As Administration Manager at Bay Financial Mentors, Anna supports initiatives that provide advocacy, guidance, and practical assistance to those facing financial and personal challenges. Her passion for giving back is further reflected in her creation of My Will Wishes, a guided booklet born from personal grief to offer clarity, comfort, and practical support to grieving families.

Beyond her professional role, Anna is committed to developing the next generation of leaders through volunteering with a youth development programme, Tipu Skills for Life, mentoring rangatahi wāhine to build confidence, a future dream, resilience, and self-belief. Anna leads with purpose, creating meaningful opportunities for others to succeed and flourish. An entrepreneur and celebrant, Anna embodies the spirit of sponsorship and mentorship in everything she does.