

# NEXT ANNOUNCES INAUGURAL FELLOWSHIPS

DECEMBER, 2019



## **NEXT Foundation has launched an inaugural fellowship programme.**

The fellows, who will be supported for a year, will undertake research in two of NEXT's investment focus areas, the first 1,000 days of life, and healthy rivers.

"All of the fellows NEXT selected are current and future leaders in challenging areas of education and the environment. They are keen to develop further their understanding of the concepts of strategic philanthropy and its potential to catalyse system change in these critical areas," says NEXT environmental director Jan Hania.

"They are a diverse group and all show a common passion and ambition to make New Zealand a better place for our land and our people – so clearly align with NEXT's vision to make our country better for future generations."

Jan Hania will lead the environmental fellows working towards solutions around healthy rivers and catchment restoration, and NEXT kaihautu member Mike Ferrand will lead the three educational fellows, developing strategies in the early years, the first 1,000 days of life.

"The first 1,000 days of life is a pivotal part of NEXT's investment focus," says Mike. "These three fellows working in this area have the ability to bring insight into how we can change our systems in New Zealand to maximise impact for the betterment of our tamariki and their whānau. We are looking forward to working together, and where it might lead."

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# THE FELLOWS

## ENVIRONMENT



**ANDREW SCHOLLUM**  
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANT

### The Project

Developing a framework for people and technology to help with healthy river management in urban environments.

### Why I am interested in healthy rivers

After travelling and working in Wellington I returned home to West Auckland and moved into a house not far from where I grew up. I took my kids swimming in the local river – a river that used to be known as a great fishing spot when my father was growing up, but that everyone avoided in my youth because by then it had become too polluted to swim in. I'd been told the Council has spent tens of millions cleaning up the river and assumed it had worked. Both my kids developed a rash from the water and I began to ask some questions. Over the past 5-6 years I've shifted the focus of my work towards the generation of robust information on the health of urban waterways and its effective communication to the public. I'm driven by a strong commitment to scientific accuracy, transparency and accountability. And I feel we can't expect our rural cousins to make changes to the way they manage their land and waterways if us city-dwellers aren't prepared to lift our weight.

The NEXT Fellowship gives me the opportunity to look-up and be strategic, chart a path enhances the impact I am able to make, 'fill-in' gaps in my capability, and develop ideas and try things that have the potential to be transformational but that I can't do through my day-to-day work.



**NAOMI APORO**  
ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISOR

### The Project

Setting a platform for restoration of waterway health within the Tasman region through focussing on key issues of leadership, fragmentation, and transparency.

### Why I am interested in healthy rivers

I come from a culture where I am the River and the River is me. I believe that the first right of water, goes to water. My expectation is that any relationship I have with water must be underpinned by reciprocity in an equitable exchange where both sides benefit. It is because of my beliefs that I feel a deep sense of duty and responsibility to lead and support efforts to correct what is fundamentally broken in our societal relationship with water, and to ensure there is a better pathway forward for future generations to follow.

The fellowship is energising and inspiring, helping me to step out of my normal space and challenge the possibilities of what could be achieved if we dared to do things a bit differently. It's pushed me to think strategically about the activities that are critical to building a foundation that helps to move community, iwi, industry, and local authorities forward together in the restoration of catchment wellbeing. It's also created the opportunity for me to connect to a network of like minded individuals who are leaders in getting awesome stuff done!

# THE FELLOWS

## EDUCATION



**ANDREW SHARP**  
CEO BOBUX INTERNATIONAL

### The Project

How might we use strategic philanthropy to help reduce childhood poverty rates in NZ?

### Why I am interested in the first 1,000 days of life

After living and working all around the world, I truly believe NZ is the best country on the planet. We have an amazing environment, creative businesses and desire for a fair and equitable society. However, the operating systems that we live under are outdated and not serving us anymore. From government to businesses to most families in the country, we are struggling under the weight of these systems and need to shift to more contemporary solutions. We hear about our people, particularly our tamariki, struggling - living in cars and garages, going to school without lunch or raincoats, and the gap between the haves and have-nots widening even further. The NZ we believe in can fix these systemic issues, and that is what we are trying to achieve.

We all lead busy lives and most see that we must challenge the status quo to earn the results we want for ourselves, our families and our society. The NEXT Fellowship provides some space and structure, allowing us to understand, plan and execute a path forward to making positive change. I am very grateful to be allowed this space and feel privileged to work and learn alongside some inspirational leaders in their fields.



**LEANNE DAWSON**  
FOUNDER OF SPACE, A PARENTING SUPPORT NETWORK

### The Project

Exploring systems leadership to better support children in their first 1,000 days of life.

### Why I am interested in the first 1,000 days of life

Learning has been a huge part of my life, in my roles as a secondary teacher, researcher, trustee on school boards, trainer, facilitator and early year's advocate. Over the past 20 years, I have been actively working in the parenting education and support and early year's sector, supporting communities to engage with parents as they transition to parenthood.

I am interested in understanding and making sense of the complexity of the system we are working in and identifying the fundamental changes in thinking and practice that might be needed to shape the leadership of the future. In addition, exploring the conditions required to support system change. Our communities and organisations are adorned with passionate, capable and competent people, so how might we create the capacity to facilitate collective learning, dialogue and sense making?

Being offered the generosity of time and space to critically reflect, explore, learn, and share in an area of your passion and interest coupled with benefit of sharing this journey with other fellows, friends and representative of NEXT Foundation is a true privilege.

# THE FELLOWS

## EDUCATION



### **THALIA WRIGHT**

SPECIALIST ADVISOR, FAMILY AND CHILD ISSUES

#### **The Project**

Putting responsive relationships at the heart of our care and protection support for babies and their whānau in the first 1,000 days of life.

#### **Why I am interested in the first 1,000 days of life**

For the last 25 years I have worked as a specialist child and family advisor. I work across traditional boundaries and seek out the spaces where government, NGOs and community intersect. The way we collectively nurture our children and support the adults who care for them is fascinating and I am excited by the opportunities the findings from neuroscience have opened up. The evidence supporting the fundamental value of attuned, responsive relationships in the first 1000 days of life is clear and resonates strongly with cross-cultural wisdom. We know that relationships rich in 'serve and return' both repair harm and help babies to thrive. There is potential for disrupting intergenerational cycles of disadvantage and making progress on some of the most stuck social policy issues.

So I have been both intrigued by why all of us (not just government, but whānau, communities and the myriad of helping agencies in the early childhood space) aren't focusing more on this. What am I not seeing or understanding? What is making this so hard? What could we do differently?

This fellowship is giving me time to genuinely enquire, connect, and learn from others. At the end of this year I hope to be asking much better questions, more skillfully disrupting old and stuck conversations, and bringing more attention and purposeful focus to the importance of the first 1,000 days of life .