

## Transformation Via the Virtual Classroom

**Lucky Hawkins**

Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, New Zealand

### **Abstract:**

**Aim:** This presentation explores my journey from Meat Labourer to Doctor of Professional Practice through online and distance learning. The broader aim is to develop strategies for individuals to enhance their success in virtual classrooms.

**Method:** Over eight years, I completed 16 qualifications amidst career shifts, relocations, disasters, and moments of perseverance. My research is rooted in autoethnography, informed by my identity as a Māori and Cook Island researcher, and guided by Kaupapa Māori principles such as *Kanohi kitea* (face-to-face), *Titiro*, *Whakarongo*, *Kōrero* (observe, listen, speak), and *Mā te Māori* (benefits for Māori). I seek an Indigenous autoethnographic framework to narrate my transformative journey through tertiary education in an online/distance environment.

**Result:** This presentation highlights how the virtual classroom became a site for resilience, self-awareness, and reflexivity. My journey was profoundly altered when a cyclone destroyed my home and belongings, triggering repeated trauma and dislocations. The initial goal of community development remains but is now shaped by ongoing disruptions. Through surviving and adapting, I've discovered that resilience and regeneration emerge from these turbulent moments, amplifying the drivers of transformation as time and place weave unpredictably.

**Significance:** This story interweaves Indigenous and Western perspectives on physical and virtual learning, illuminating how they converge in navigating life's disruptions and fostering personal and collective growth.