



## CIRCABILITY ANNUAL REPORT 2022

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Thank You

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- Vash Memar
- April Atkinson
- Kahura*k*i Bronsson-George
- Programme Coordinator
- Community Engagement Coordinator
- Marketer and Digital Content Designer
- Far North Coordinator
- Circability Cultural Advisor

Research "Growing circus employment pathways in Aotearoa" 2021/22

By Rachael Trotman

## Chair's Statement



Kia ora and greetings from the Circability Board of Trustees

Like many organizations working intensively in diverse communities in covid 2022, Circability has faced its share of challenges to provide a continuity of service.

Despite this reality, we have been a successful recipient of the CARE fund (MCH - Covid Response Fund with delivery support from Arts Access Aotearoa) This funding is being delivered for over three years and has already made a significant impact on how we deliver and promote the range of services and events across the Auckland region.

Of equal importance to this end is our relationship with the Ministry of Youth Development through their Akonga Fund, where we are cultivating relationships with community providers and schools, and has enabled significant growth in working with high-needs youth and diverse groups in Te Tai Tokerau.

CNZ has funded our second National Youth Circus Festival, a huge highlight of the year that continues to deliver 'for and by' youth circus development and consolidates one of our key strategic initiatives.

Our Creative Directors Report highlights these exceptional developments and achievements.

The unpredictable covid environment has been challenging to sustain the revenue-building streams of our service and we have had to adjust some aspects of our operational infrastructure accordingly. Our general manager Mel Powell has done a truly incredible and inspired job over the year that she has been with us and has provided the groundwork and coordination to consolidate Circability's work and transition. It was with a heavy heart that we accepted Mel Powell's resignation, but with the fiscal foundations solid to proceed with our operational transition.

Circability continues its commitment through innovation to engage and broaden our ability to provide professional and inspiring social circus arts. In this Annual Report, you will also see the research and endeavour that we are committed to over the next 5 to 10 years.

Fundamental to our vision is our commitment to work in partnership with Maturanga Maori practitioners and providers in exploring synergies in cultural arts practices through Whare Tapere and social circus arts.

Embedded in this is our commitment to a national sector response in developing a tertiary qualifications framework that we see is imperative in building a sustainable professional career pathway for creative practitioners to successfully deliver and respond to the exponential growth and demands of this profession.

Circability's guiding principles are inclusivity, celebrating diversity, and being accessible to all.

I am honoured to be a part of this essential creative enterprise, and though we are still clearly facing challenges as a broader sector we are focused on solutions and real opportunities to advance our work and connection to our communities in need.

I want to acknowledge the dedication and inspired work of all the staff, tutors, contractors, and volunteers, you are all incredible in the work that you deliver tirelessly with passion and zeal. Collectively we embrace the future.

Ngā whanaungatanga  
Erwin Van Asbeck Board Chairperson.



## Board Members

Thank you to our volunteer board of trustees and advisors for your strategic input, guidance, and amazing generosity over the past 12 months. We appreciate you.



**Erwin van Asbeck**  
Chairperson



**Angela Withers**  
Child Protection Portfolio



**Ron de Vries**  
Finance Portfolio



**Chris Adams**  
Health & Safety Portfolio



**Alysha Dodampegamage**  
Circus Artist and  
representative of young  
Circus artists



**Roka Nash**  
Circus artist and  
representative of the disabled  
community



**Kieran Taylor**  
Circus Artist, Circability  
Volunteer Assistant Tutor, and  
representative of young Circus  
artists



# Creative Director's Report



## 2021 - 2022 - The year of "walking the well-being tight wire"

It makes me proud to look back and be able to say "YES, we did it".

Balancing the increased demand for our weekly programs and hosting sector-leading events with the well-being of our team was a challenge.

We followed advice from people like former mayor Bob Harvey saying " Your work is essential for the wellbeing right now, your playful positivity, bringing the smile back and getting people out of their bubbles is very important, probably saving lives.

But to do that, you have to make sure you - as each person in your organisation and you - as a team are ready for the task - looking after your wellbeing first ".

At Circability, we acknowledged this advice, and implemented weekly wellbeing checks, linked with available resources and if needed "hands-on support".

As many of you know, I personally had to pause directing our work and take a well-being rest to recharge and start performing again.

In regards to our "daily" work, we still managed to "walk the wire" and arrive on the other side with an increased number of weekly classes and positive outcomes for our participants of all ages and all abilities.

Especially our "out of the bubble" public space activations like "Circus in Parks" in Auckland and "Shine on Kaitaia" over the 6-month summer period had a big impact on our whanau members.

On a national stage we were applauded for our aspirations to lead the social circus sector by hosting key events like "Youth Circus Festival", " Kanohi Kitea - Maori culture - Whare Tapere and Circus Arts" and 'Celebrate Together' - the International Day for people with disabilities".

Our research " Growing Circus Employment Pathways in Aotearoa" conducted by Rachael Trotman is an important spotlight to show pathways and give direction for future developments. Those developments are aimed to make Circability and our sector more sustainable and resilient, through national and international partnerships and career development.

All these achievements and setting ambitious goals for the future were possible through the work of our people. I want to acknowledge those who have moved on from our organisation for their support, passion and commitment to our work. A special recognition "drum roll please" for Mel Powell, our former general manager for adding structure and enriching our work on many levels. I also want to acknowledge those who joined us this year as participants, tutors, coordinators, board members or volunteers and those who supported us financially, with advice or hands-on. Our condolences to the family of our first inclusion tutor Morgaina Mathias, who left our world this year, but leaves us with lasting memories and inspirations for the next generation of inclusive and diverse team members.

Thanks to each and all of you

Thomas Hinz  
Creative Director



## Strategic Plan

We are improving lives through Circus Arts, including more people and involving more communities

*"We put a smile on everybody's face"*



### Include

Our **pilot youth transition programmes** enable young people with disabilities to showcase their strengths and find employment in the performing arts through the leadership of our participants.



### Impact

We provide **workshops, performances and classes** across Auckland and Northland including Kindergarten, schools, service providers for people with disabilities, community organisations and public spaces and parks.



### Involve

Circability has a growing demand for our services from **community groups, local boards, families and organisations** across the Arts, Social Development, Education, Health and Corporate sectors.

## 3 year plan 2022-2024 Growing a thriving social circus in Aotearoa

1 Leadership

2 Partnerships

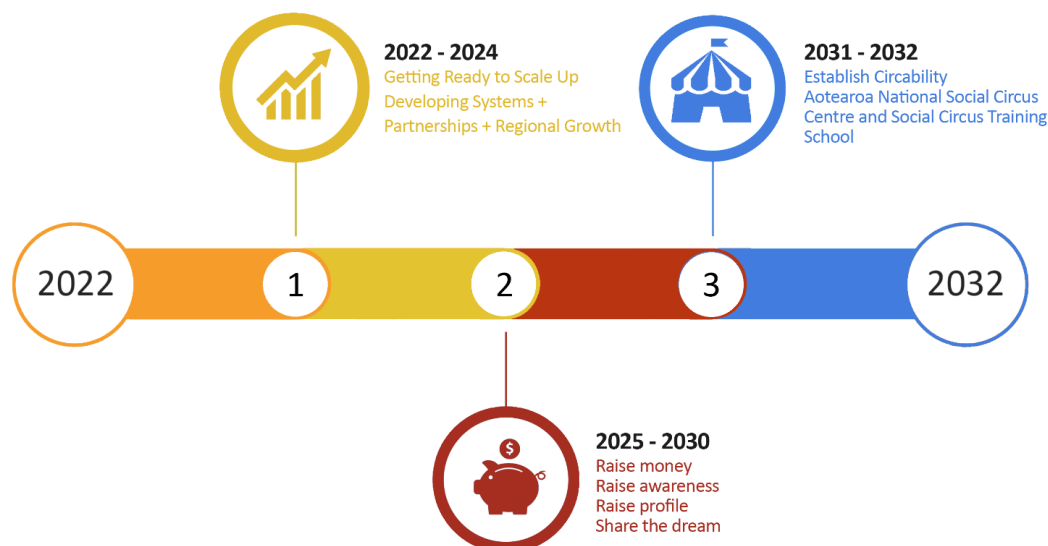
3 Share the vision

4 Aotearoa Regional Growth

5 Research & Advocacy

6 Social Circus Training

# Circability 2022 - 2032



## Business Plan 2022- 23

### Business / Organisational structure:

- Circability is a charitable trust, led by a creative director and by the programme and the community engagement coordinators. They are supported by an office coordinator, accounts manager, funding support, our marketing, and digital content designer and work closely together with our Far North programme coordinator, a Northland youth coordinator, and over 20 contracted circus tutors.
- Following up on our event “Kanohi Kitea - Toi Maori and circus arts” we engage with 2 culture advisors on Mātauranga Māori to create safe spaces for circus practice.
- Circability works from our HQ “Circability Central”, Victoria Park, Central Auckland.
- Circability provides mobile circus services around Auckland and Northland in various locations like kindergartens, schools, service providers for people with disabilities, community organisations, and public spaces/parks.
- Circability delivers a Power of Inclusion (POI) pilot youth transition programme that enables young people with disabilities to learn performing arts skills with the aim that they find work in the creative sector. Central to the POI kaupapa is

the direct involvement and leadership of our participants in the development of the program.

- Circability has MSD Level 3 accreditation and all our workers are police vetted.

### Business focus 2022-23

1. Sharpening our brand “all ages - all abilities - ALL TOGETHER”  
> Together is where we achieve wellbeing and inclusion
2. Prepare for national delivery of our service through regional hubs
3. Secure a sustainable business model through key partnerships in developing Pathways to Employment and Qualification
4. Raise awareness through Media presence and digital strategy

### Where do we get our funding:

Our multi-year funders are:

1. Ministry of Youth Development  
> Ākonga Youth Development Fund

2. Ministry of Culture and Heritage  
> Ngā wāhi Auaha - Creative Spaces Fund

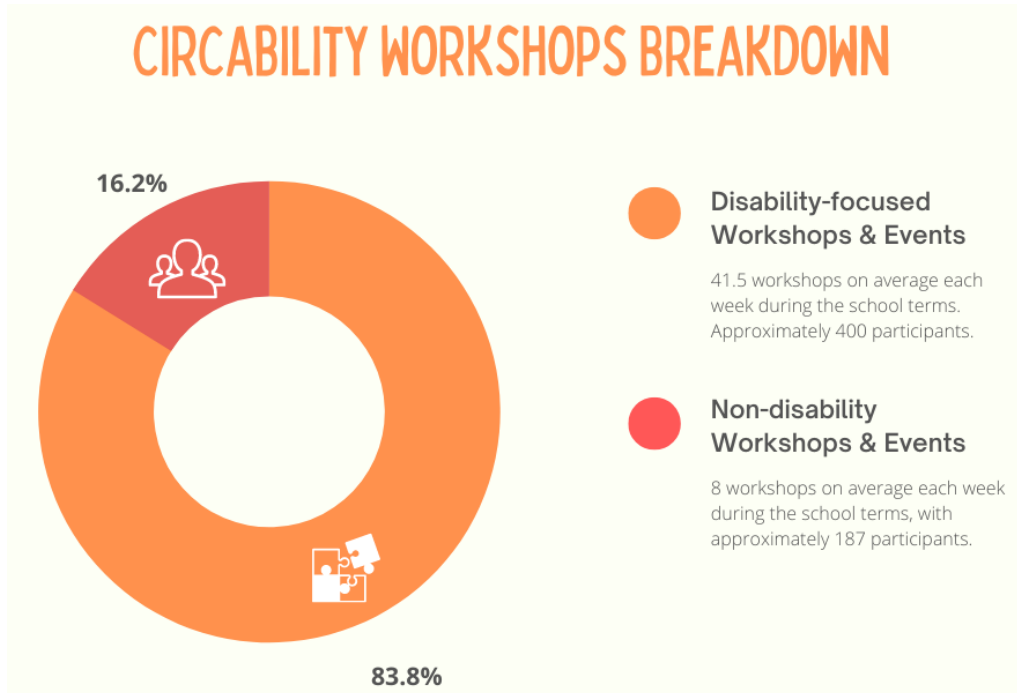
Project funding predominantly via:

Foundation North, Creative New Zealand, Lottery, Sport / Active, Auckland City Council, and the Waitemata Local Board





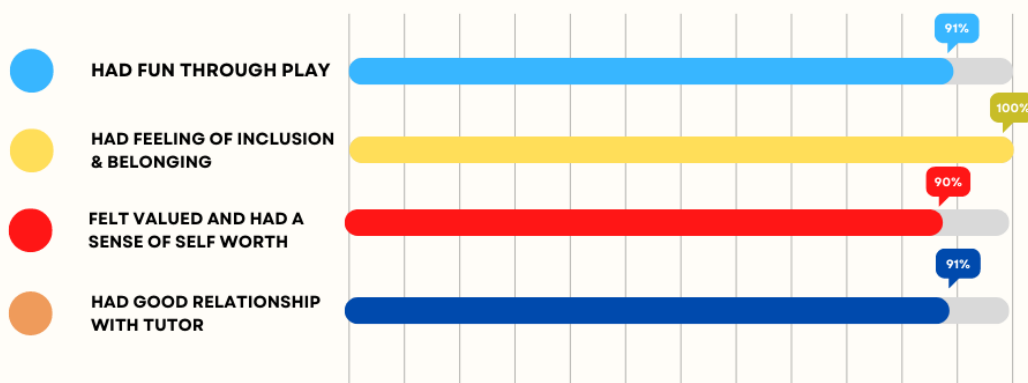
What we do:



We are a unique and award-winning Circus Arts organisation providing an average of 42 workshops per week for over 400 participants, in Auckland and Northland, and through our outreach programmes, we are reaching over 5,000 participants. We deliver circus arts classes, community events, and workshops for all ages and abilities across the Auckland region and Northland, using circus as a tool for developing personal confidence, resiliency, and physical literacy, connecting people, and sharing joy. A particular focus of the work is developing inclusion programmes for people with disabilities - using circus arts as an agent for social change.

Circability was awarded the Arts Access Aotearoa Creative Space Award (2016) for outstanding leadership and commitment to inclusive and accessible Circus, and the Arts Access Aotearoa Community Partnership Award (2013).

## CIRCABILITY CLASS SURVEY, TEACHERS & TEACHER AIDES



Strategic Alliances and Partnerships:

Circability has an ever-growing demand for our services from community groups, local boards, families and organisations all over Auckland and Northland. Circability has also built significant collaborative relationships with a number of key entities across the Arts, Social Development, Education, Health and Corporate sectors including:

#### Local

TAPAC, Auckland Arts Festival, Corban Estate Arts Centre, Pumphouse Takapuna, Akina Foundation, NZ Coaching & Mentoring, Auckland Deaf Society, Youth Town, YMCA, IHC, Alliance Francaise, Council 'Out & About', Harbour sports 'Active Asian', Hibiscus, Bays and Albert-Eden Local Boards, Rotary Club Henderson, Totora Farm, PHAB, Recreate Trust, Manu Tukutuku Community Centre, Elizabeth Knox Carehome, Wilson Home, Kaipatiki Community Facilities Trust, Harbour Hospice, AKA (Akl Kindergarten Assn), Grey Lynn Kindergarten, Pt Chevalier Kindergarten, Mt Eden Kindergarten, Toy Makers Cottage Preschool, Ponsonby Montessori Kindergarten, Central Auckland Special School, Rosehill Special Needs School, West Auckland and South Auckland Middle Schools, Kowhai Intermediate, Ponsonby Intermediate, Pasadena Intermediate, St Mary's College, Takapuna Grammar, Epsom Girls Grammar, Waitakere College, Selwyn College, Randwick Park Primary School, Grey Lynn Primary, Freemans Bay Primary, Kelston Deaf Education Centre, University of Auckland Dance department, Starship Hospital, Toi Ora, Odyssey House, Health Vision, Glendene Community Hub, Parafed Auckland, Dance & Arts Therapy, SpinPoi, Lotteries NZ, The Funding Network NZ, The Warehouse, CBDenergy, Oceania, Main Course, AccessAble, For The Love of Bees, Geneva Elevator and ActorsLab.

#### Regional

Creative Northland, Circus Kumarani (Dargaville/ Whangarei), CirCool Waipu, Northland Youth Theatre, Kaitaia Youth Theatre, Ngati Whatua/Te Ha Oranga, Kaitaia College, Tikipunga College, Auckland Libraries Services Network, Northland Library Network, Emerge Aotearoa, Sport Northland, LYNKZ Whangarei

# Impact Report

## 1. Youth Circus Festival

### Youth Lead

This year, we provided a platform for our rangatahi and our youth with disabilities to take things into their own hands by being able to support them to take more leadership roles within the Youth Circus Festival. We were able to create an organic inclusive and diverse environment for everyone to participate and have a good time together.

### Inclusive and diverse

We are proud to have been able to link this new national youth event with Maori Tikanga and social circus focused on youth with disabilities.

Good to see high-skill masterclasses and special needs classes happening right beside each other, and participants having a good time together.



### Access and Digital footprint

We also increased our digital footprint, by making sure people have access and can participate through life-streaming the event and recording it for our social media, resulting in over 140 people viewing the event from the comforts of their own homes and living conditions, resulting in over 9,000 hours of watch time. We believe this approach is crucial given the digital pathways that are being opened to our youth and when we consider how many people use social media in the day-to-day.

### Artistic showcase

A major highlight of the event for us was allowing the youth to hold their own show at the end of the event, run by them and involving them as the performers. The families were beyond excited to see their young ones' talents on the main stage and we were thrilled to see this level of independence and initiative.

Events such as the Youth Circus Festival, and our continued evolution of it, is a great platform for Circability to widen our social impact to more communities and to create a healthy community-driven physical and digital event.



## **Partnership**

Based on the key partnership with the Dargaville-based organisation Circus Kumarani, we teamed up with the local circus trust Circool Waipu - Tauranga provider "Circus in a Flash" and Wellington group "Colossal" and "Circus Aotearoa".

Live to change event, not just for the participants with disabilities - some staff members were super excited too and want to join the circus now > [\[See Video\]](#)

Tiaho Trust Whangarei CEO Jonny Wilkinson published [this article](#) about our Youth Circus Festival with a therapy focus in the Herald.



## **Challenges we faced**

### **COVID**

A major challenge we undoubtedly faced was the impact of COVID-19 on both our staff, and us as a business. Leading to a reduced number of participants all over our initiatives, and regional separation of our Auckland and Northland teams. During this, we knew we had to take action and create safe methods of communication and operation. One of the many steps we took was launching the Joy Market campaign, a digital archive of our tutorials for those who were no longer able to participate in person. We also transitioned a large number of our classes to digital classes - and while we saw a great turnout at the start, we could feel the lack of interaction led to many people ultimately wanting us to return to in-person classes.

### **Approach to problem-solving / achieving success**

With the Youth Circus Festival, we knew challenges were inevitable, but with the actions we took, we were able to minimise them as much as possible. With the youth, we were able to set up prep meetings at the venue prior to the event days to make sure everyone is comfortable and confident in themselves. A quiet retreat room was also present to allow for a time-out when the atmosphere felt overwhelming, for both our Circus Youth and also our participating youth who may have sensitivities to specific environments, and giving them a safe space to be in was very beneficial

## **2. Growing Circus Employment Pathways in Aotearoa - RESEARCH PAPER > Activation**

A key focal point of work this year has been enabling the independent researcher Rachael Trotman, to work on 'Growing Circus Employment Pathways in Aotearoa' for Circability.

This research, with the help of ANZCA (Aotearoa New Zealand Circus Association) - AAA (Arts Access Aotearoa ) will serve as a great starting point for growing Circus Arts in Aotearoa and provide a sustainable pathway for those who want to get involved.





## **National partnerships for a resilient future**

The future social circus development will be looking good if supported through national networks.

Important here the focus on:

1. Pathways to Qualifications in :
  - Circus Arts
  - Social Circus
2. Pathways to Employment
  - in Circus Arts
  - In Social Circus

## **International partnerships**

A great opportunity to learn from others and be effective in the process is the establishment of International networks.

We can build here on past engagements like:

Presenting the research "Developing community circus in Aotearoa New Zealand" at the

1. Australian Circus Sector Conference in Melbourne
2. "Effective Circus Conference in Tampere / Finland.

There, becoming a founding member of GICS (Global Institute for Circus Studies".

Now, for future developments in Qualifications we are talking with:

- Carawan, the European Youth Circus Network about their Social Circus teacher Qualification Circ++
- NICA ( National Institute for Circus Studies) & Swinburne University / Melbourne

## **Wellbeing**

The immediate impact for our sector right now, in those challenging times - just talking about those international links and raising awareness about future developments > increased motivation and wellbeing support!!





### **3. Circus in public spaces = wellbeing through Social Circus**

#### **"Shine on Kaitaia"**

##### **Partnership**

We participated in the weekly community partnership project "Shine on Kaitaia" over the summer season at a SkatePark in Kaitaia.. We teamed up with He Whanau Marama Trust who initiated this project, Waitomo Papakāinga and Te Hiku Media, and the "Spark up" team. Our 2 hours circus workshops provided access for everybody to individual activation, the interaction between participants, and the opportunity to play in a safe space in public.

##### **Wellbeing**

We had a weekly event that was reaching out to at-risk children and youth and being able to offer them a wrap-around service that was needed when needed, but most of all we were able to just simply share the joy of learning Circus skills, sharing fun and laughter in a public but safe environment.

The attendance ranged from 15 - 50 participants. Our tutor has built meaningful relationships over time and has identified a majority of participants experience a high degree of social need and face daily struggles at home, school, work, and in public.

##### **Resilient Future**

In the long run, linking this project with circability's project " Kanohi Kitea Maori culture and circus Arts" will be beneficial.

And it will inform future circability tutor training about how we can support real-life challenges best.



## Circus in Parks Auckland

### **Partnership**

Initiated by the council "Out & About" team, we are partnering with our network members who provide services to people with disabilities in early childhood - education and after school. It gives a great stage for our regular circus practitioners with disabilities to shine in public and make their families proud. It is an opportunity for them to perform and teach others - beginners of all ages and all abilities. And not just that, there is also the important aspect of cultural diversity.

### **Cultural Diversity**

We arranged for interpreters to help us deal with language barriers and inform us about cultural backgrounds, important for us to engage with them and to create a safe place to practice for those participants.



### **Resilient Future**

Again, linking this project with Circability's project "Kanohi Kitea Maori culture and circus Arts" will be beneficial. As our cultural advisors said "this park's activation is our Whare Tapere" in action.

And it will inform future Circability tutor training about how we can best engage with multicultural participants.

See Kanohi Kitea 2021 [\[See Video\]](#)





## Our Commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi

During the COVID pandemic, we have borrowed more and more from the Māori worldview to learn about well-being practices to support and nurture our team during this challenging time. We are on a journey to bring the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi into our everyday mahi and kaupapa at Circability. This includes our partnerships, our policies, the protection of our people, and te taiao. Our values of ngā reanga katoa, ngā aheinga katoa, amui katoa - all ages, all abilities, all together - is better are the building blocks for our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, partnership, participation, and self-determination of Maori.



*Image taken during Kanohi Kitea 2021*

2022 Audited Financial Report (see attached)



## Thank You



First and foremost, thank you to our wonderful students, tutors and operational support, and to those who have volunteered countless hours with us.

Thank you to our primary funders, the Ministry of Youth Development, the Ministry of Culture and Heritage and Arts Access Aotearoa for believing in the power of inclusion, and for your support and acknowledgement of the role we play in the development and wellbeing of our communities.

We would also like to thank and acknowledge Foundation North, and the NZ Lotteries Grants Board for their significant contribution to the operations of Circability.

In addition, we would like to thank our other funders going forward including Auckland Council, Sport NZ, Aktive, Sport Waitakere, Ministry of Education, Takapuna Devonport Local Board,

Albert Eden Local Board, Whangarei District Council, and Waitemata Local Board.

And finally, a special thank you to those organisations from the Far North in Kaitiāia - in Northland's Dargaville, Whangarei, Waipu and here in Auckland who we work closely with throughout the year. The provision of discounted services, generous in-kind support and ongoing partnerships has been invaluable.

Our Partners and Friends -

Thank you for supporting our work and community!



## Staff Feedback

Tobias Miller, Programme Coordinator

It has been a very challenging year in many ways. All of the lockdowns and related restrictions have forced Circability to continue to adapt to working online. Our tutors had to struggle with maintaining their personal wellbeing (physical, mental & emotional) in the midst of social isolation for many weeks, on top of the challenge of teaching through zoom calls and tutorial videos. The year has created opportunities to grow in areas as well, such as regular classes, Circus in Parks & similar events, as well as one-off workshops for schools & organisations.

The restrictions, growth, and financial status lead to necessary changes in our team. The loss of our general manager Mel left a big hole in our operations requiring people to step up and take on new responsibilities. From my role as senior tutor to the move into a management role as program coordinator, I was faced with many challenges, and am still (four months later) figuring things out as I go. The responsibility has revealed to me many of the ins and outs of the planning and organisational work that goes on behind the scenes which were previously unknown to me. One of our biggest challenges recently has been realising that our processes are in dire need of an overhaul, but with the issues being brought to our attention we have started the upgrade process which will result in improved efficiency in the coming months and years.

It has been great to see the variety of workshops, classes, and events that Circability is involved with. From the growth of our disability classes in the terms of new groups and students to the requests for new holiday programs and one-off workshops for schools and organisations, to the growth and ongoing provision of our park activations through our Circus in Parks program with the Auckland council and direct work with local boards. It has been great to see the Circ.Us youth develop over the months into a community of passionate leaders, resulting in an awesome Youth Circus Festival as well as youth camp amongst other things!

Tobias Miller  
Program Coordinator





## Mark Williams, Community Engagement Coordinator

A big part of what Circability means to me is giving me the opportunity to get back into working in the Circus industry and seeing the benefits of how the work myself and the team do impacts the communities we work with. A major project for the year that I was involved with running and attending was the Youth Circus Festival, which was an amazing experience, being able to do what we all love and seeing Circus youth thriving and developing their talents. Undoubtedly a challenge during the current climate with Covid and the limitations surrounding it, but ultimately we made it work and had a blast doing so, with the youth all excited for future events to come.

Being the Community Engagement Coordinator, a big part of my role includes centre management and community engagement. Throughout 2022 we have been increasing our local footprint by allowing the public to come and see what Circability is all about and directly take part and learn with our centre workshops and juggling classes. Although we've faced some difficulty getting momentum during Covid lockdowns, I'm excited to take advantage of our headquarters location in Victoria park and show everyone what Circus is all about.



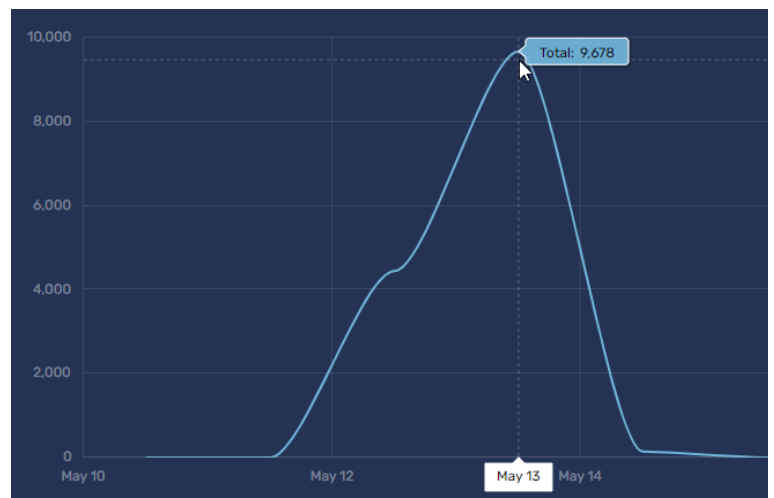
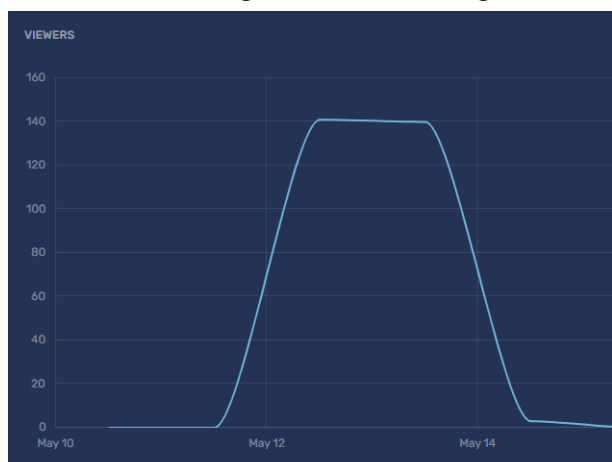
## Vash Memar, Marketer and Digital Content Designer

2022 has been an interesting year, to say the least, especially as someone with zero background in Circus arts. Having joined the Circability team just over a year ago in 2021, it has been an eventful and positive experience ever since. Throughout the past year, I've had the opportunity to learn from many of my coworkers and have challenged myself to utilise my skillset in a brand new environment to myself, and have so far seen positive results.

Throughout the year, a key focus of ours was our social footprint, to be able to get involved in more communities and expand our operations into more regions to create a national network of social circus. We achieved this by activating our centre in Victoria Park, to increase local awareness of whanau and corporates, allowing people to walk by and instantly connect with what the circus is, try out juggling, ask what we do, or directly see the impact we have on others who walk by. Throughout the last year, we saw an 875% increase in page reach on Facebook and a 2,200+% reach increase on Instagram, which was fantastic to see such quick results so quickly, showing there's at least somewhat of a demand for Circus arts content on social media. This was echoed when we live-streamed the Youth Circus Festival event, where we saw over 140 viewers tuning in concurrently, engaging and enjoying the event from home.

We also made the choice to modernise our existing logo and update our website design to be more accessible and appealing for general use. This led to an influx of engagement and web traffic almost instantly. This change couldn't come at a better time considering the environmental and social impacts of Covid 19 on businesses and families, and will undoubtedly be a continued effort from myself and the team to increase brand awareness and maximize accessibility to our audience.

Vash Memar,  
Marketer and Digital Content Designer



### Reach

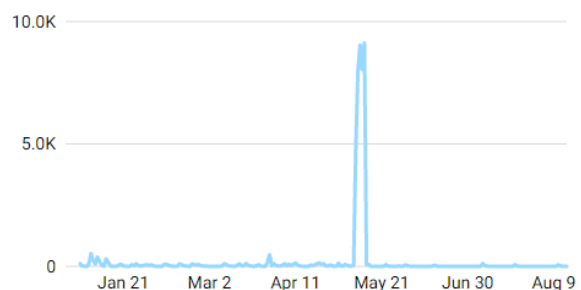
#### Facebook Page reach ⓘ

37,540 ↑ 875.8%



#### Instagram reach ⓘ

21,698 ↑ 2.2K%





## April Atkinson, Far North Coordinator

Circus in Kaitaia in 2022 has been interesting and challenging. Full of highs and a few lows. I started off with a hiss and a roar, delivering Circus in the Park at Jaycee park, and I started doing this alongside shine on Kaitaia's spark-up BBQ by the skate bowl, where we were feeding hungry children from age 5 up to 24, and the odd adult passer-by. What a great combination, kids with not much to do, free food, and circus! We had a weekly event that was reaching out to at-risk children and youth and being able to offer them a wrap-around service that was needed, but most of all we were able to just simply share the joy of learning Circus skills sharing fun, and laughter in a public but safe environment. Working back in schools has been challenging this year due to school closures, covid restrictions, etc. I've had one school that wouldn't let me back in until just recently. The far north has been hugely impacted by covid this year more than in previous years. One of the greatest moments for me this year is being able to bring in another trainee circus tutor, finally, I'm no longer alone delivering circus in the far north, finally, circus in the north can grow!

Liz has been very supportive of my classes and was able to run them while I was impacted by COVID and was out of action for a few weeks. Through the youth circus festival back in May, I met up with two very circus-passionate people who have since become willing volunteers and support and help run an after-school class on the East Coast in Mangonui. I was also very humbled and privileged to be a part of the Tumanako project in conjunction with shine on Kaitaia, other community service groups, and Mr. G Street artist working with youth to deliver the most amazing, beautiful, and powerful murals with the message of hope to our youth. I spent eight hours over two days delivering free circus workshops. What drives me to still be teaching circus skills after 20 years... well apart from being fun and joyous, Circus has meaning! From socialisation to well-being, the physical, emotional and mental well-being. Circus has an impact! A positive impact that can save lives, that tells people It's OK to be you, and you are awesome!



## Kahuraki Bronsson-George, The Prince of Purple

In May of 2021, I had the immense privilege of being invited to the Youth Circus Festival with Circability to conduct a workshop in Mau Rākau and Māori movement, which was such a success that I was invited to keep in touch with the leaders of Circability to discuss creating a Circus event entirely with the Māori and Pasifika communities in mind. That event became Kanohi Kitea, held in early August at the Grey Lynn Community Centre and Circability Central headquarters, in collaboration with Matua Monty Hune and his daughter Marama of Te Roopu Taurima, Sara-Lee Jacobs of Sports Waitakere, Wiremu Sarich of Te Ara Whetū, Dr. Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal, <http://www.charles-royal.nz/about> Dolina Wehipeihana of Betsy and Mana Productions and many, many others.

As a person of many roles in this kaupapa, a lot of wonderful highlights came from each one: Because I'd had some technical issues setting up for my performance, I asked the audience at large for a karakia to help me focus, and received a very lovely one in Cook Island reo. Once I had finished my performance, I received a very heartfelt response from the audience; a karaka, 3 haka, and a whaikōrero, as well as several individual mihi once the whole performance section of the day was done.

The following day, there were many presentations on who various people were, their backgrounds, and the organisations they work with. Two outstanding presentations were from Sara-Lee Jacobs on the origins of Hiko, Tongan juggling, and Dr. Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal on the history of Te Whare Tapere, and how he'd set about making one on his whenua. It was quite a challenge following such rich presentations, but I spoke from my heart and tried to follow their shining examples of speaking to the origins of what led me to where I am today.

After the day-long presentation hui, Thomas and I got on the road to begin the series of workshops he'd lined up for us, putting the kōrero built up in the Kanohi Kitea hui into action immediately. Our first one got us working alongside Sara-Lee again, with Thomas delivering a juggling workshop through Sports Waitakere. Our second had me delivering what I believe to be the very first reo Māori immersion Circus workshop to a group of tamariki at Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Piripono, with Matua Monty and Whaea Marama supervising. For the grand finale, we went to Whangārei and had a rich day of wanaaka alongside Wiremu Sarich and his Taoaka Tākaro, a collection of ancient Māori games that could really change how children learn many important life skills, like teamwork, coordination, physical/mental agility, and leadership.

Following on from Kanohi Kitea, I was invited to teach a series of weekly workshops online with Te Roopu Taurima, and CLM Community Sport. The usual difficulties of trying to teach online classes ensued, such as the internet deciding it wanted to sleep, yet much enjoyment was shared. Most importantly, relationships were built, maintained, and strengthened. In the last class of the year with Te Roopu Taurima, Ayden and I were given much waiata and haka as a sign of heartfelt thanks for our creation of fun learning spaces for our whānau whaikaha.

The following year, the Youth Circus Festival was held at Waipu, in the Celtic Barn and Coronation Centre. Thomas, Wiremu, and I made sure that it started off on the right cultural footing, with a whakatau to open the proceedings, and mihi to the Mana Whenua, Patuharakeke, who sadly couldn't make it. Wiremu once again showed his revolutionary ancient teaching methods with a giant rope-weaving game, the idea being one person teaches another without words, just mirroring the actions. We also had Rachel Trotman of Weave <https://weavingchange.nz/> deliver some very helpful research about the Aotearoa circus industry, with a view to creating more sustainable career pathways.

Keen to keep the momentum going, Thomas organised a zoom meeting with Wiremu, Rachael, Nick "Taz" Davies, myself, and Joonas Kalari, Taina Kopra, Tea Seppala, three professionals in Finland, two representing the University of Tampere, on the EU Youth Circus Network Caravan. The first meeting of its kind, it essentially had the Aotearoa side discussing its aspirations for Circus via Rachael's research, Nick's collaboration with Toi Mai, and Wiremu's experience teaching rakatahi, then the Finland side sharing that they managed to achieve recognition of Circus as an important artform in 1992, via collaboration with the University of Tampere. That kōrero left us inspired for the future of Circus in Aotearoa.

I am greatly looking forward to performing, speaking, and teaching in Kanohi Kitea 2022! It will involve a tour through Tāmaki Makau Rau and Whangārei again, with the new addition of Kaitiāia. With all, we have learned, and all we are still learning, we aim to make Kanohi Kitea a beacon for a truly unique style of Circus that could only be created in Aotearoa, and says much about our cultural identity, from our Polynesian origins to our foundationally-bicultural history, and our cosmopolitan present and future. As Dr. Te Ahukaramū says, we are in such a state of cultural catch-up. If we can continue building on the foundations set in last year's Kanohi Kitea, we will play our part in weaving many revitalised indigenous values into our cultural fabric, leaving behind a better country for future generations.

Kā mihi nui,  
Kahuraki Bronsson-George,  
Owner-Operator of [Kahuraki The Prince of Purple](#),  
Co-Founder of Māori Circus Practitioners In Aotearoa and Australia  
Circability cultural advisor



Wiremu Sarich and Kahuraki Bronsson-George at Northland Circus Centre, Whangārei, Kanohi Kitea 2021