

Te Pūtahitanga o Te Waipounamu Symposium
Te Aho Mutunga Kore : The Eternal Thread
Hon Dame Tariana Turia

- ***Mihi to Ngāi te Ruahikihiki – Mana whenua - Taumutu (Te Mairiki Williams; Puamiria Parata-Goodall); Ngāi Tahu***
- ***Chair of Te Taumata – the nine iwi of Te Waipounamu : Molly Luke***
- ***General Partner Limited Board***

On the 7th October 2009 a hui took place at Chateau Marlborough to ascertain the interest of the people in an idea called Whānau Ora.

Subsequent hui occurred in Dunedin, Invercargill, Christchurch and throughout the country– a total of 22 hui over two months, attended by over 600 people.

At the conclusion of these hui, Professor Mason Durie, the Chair of the Whānau-Centred Taskforce - reported to me that *“the time is right to forge new pathways that will contribute to the empowerment of whānau”*.

The Taskforce reported that there were a number of key factors that would tell us whether Whānau Ora was being achieved:

- sustainability and adequate resourcing
- a 'Māori heart'
- a research and evaluation component
- local representation in decision-making
- minimal bureaucracy
- quality relationships between whānau, providers and iwi.

Today, this symposium, is the perfect opportunity to look back at those ideals of the people, to lift up a mirror and see how far we have come.

As I think back to that time two people are never far from my mind – Rob Cooper and Linda Grennell – both members of that taskforce, who had a dream for Whānau Ora to create the world of promise their tupuna had left for them.

There is no greater reason for Whānau Ora to succeed than to consider that context of legacy planning; of succession strategies; of the eternal thread of life for all our mokopuna to inherit.

I am so pleased to be with you all today, to celebrate your successes, and to mark this milestone moment in the journey of Te Pūtahitanga o Te Waipounamu.

It seems a lifetime ago since I was here in Ōtautahi attending the launch on 26 July 2014 – a launch which was simultaneously occurring with whānau events on that same day at Murihiku, Ōtākou, Te Tai Poutini, Whakatū, and Wairau.

At that launch I said to you: *“It feels like we are at a stage where nothing can stop us now. Nothing can stop us from growing the vision, from planting the seed of transformation amongst all of our whānau and helping it to flourish”*.

How beautiful it is today, to see those seeds of transformation have indeed flourished into over seventy vibrant initiatives recorded in digital stories, in poster form, in booklets, and in the spark in all of your eyes.

And if you were any doubt as to the collective project that is Whānau Ora, there are some little brown packets of seed able

to be taken home to plant in your own gardens to grow and flourish across Te Waipounamu.

I have to share a little story about my connection to Ranui Ngarimu – who along with her sister Miriama, has gifted the title to this hui – Te Aho Mutunga Kore, the Eternal Thread.

My relationship with Ranui goes way back - long before Parliament days – and it involved possibly the most harrowing experience in my life as my husband George and I travelled to stay with her, over what I thought the most terrifying road trip known to man – up and over the Otira Gorge.

I vividly remember crouching on the floor of the car, petrified to look down, way down to the river below. George was entirely unsympathetic, almost to the point of stopping the car and letting me out – but we did make it through in the end, to reach our destination. I don't think I could have been more grateful to reach Ranui on that day....and it will be lovely to connect up with her again during this hui.

Just two weeks ago I travelled that same road, as a passenger with Tā Mark Solomon, as we drove to Hokitika for the kaupapa of Tū Pono – Te Mana Kaha o Te Whānau.

In many ways I was determined to face the fear, to confront the memories of that treacherous road trip – out of my utter resolve to support Tā Mark in fronting one of our most critical issues – the elimination of violence and harm from the lives of our families.

I still didn't look down - but my focus this time was to look firmly ahead, to place complete faith in my driver, and to believe that we would make it no matter what. And of course, we did.

Whānau Ora is all about looking ahead, eyes wide open, placing the faith in our whānau to reach their destination in good health and strength.

It is ultimately about that faith – this is not about what some of my former colleagues used to want it to be – to fix families up, to do to and on behalf. Whānau Ora is in knowing that whānau can do it – for them and their mokopuna after them.

In Ranui and Miriama's beautiful book, they document the art of raranga as a precious gift from our ancestors that is maintained, nourished and enriched by weavers today.

There is a particularly striking kākahu depicted from the work of Morehu Greta Flutey-Henare, entitled *Whakawhanaukataka*.

The kākahu combines the rich blood red warp elements of harakeke with strands of purple muka. It is a vision of genealogy, the warmth of Papatūānuku with the connection of kinship.

But there is something else which takes your breath away when you look at this kākahu – and that's the fact that not only is it flawless in the intricate strength of its blood ties, but its style is derived from a traditional cape that is both functional and providing protection from adverse weather.

In many ways, this is what we expect of Whānau Ora.

The beauty of love shared, along with the call for care and compassion of those who need our protection. The flair and functionality of innovation sitting alongside of the collective force of te pa harakeke – the foundation of our families.

The beauty of the concept of harakeke is that we know it is grown out of our soils, has clothed and kept our people warm for centuries, has created us with a source of healing and

nutritional wellness as well as a product for industrial and commercial gain.

By 1870 there were 161 flax mills nationwide – the main region in the Manawatu but also in Wairau, Ōtautahi, Ōtākou, Murihiku and Te Tai Poutini.

Our ancestors were employed as “flaxies”; we bartered with flax and weaving for European goods. The nectar from its flowers made a sweet drink. The roots could be crushed for poultices, the gum from the base of the leaves healed wounds, the leaves themselves could be used as bandages.

A few years ago *Te Roopu Raranga Whatu o Aotearoa* conducted a trial with Landcare Research to understand the impact of different environments on the versatility and virility of the flax plant. They found that the flax that is best for weaving is grown in fertile, well-watered soils with good drainage.

My hope for these two days is that our conversations are fertilised with stimulating korero; that we are open to weaving the possibilities, ready to consider different ways of achieving change, and we test ourselves with honesty, with courage and with integrity.

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Returning to that 2009 Taskforce report, Ministers were told:

“Whānau Ora is distinctive because it recognises a collective entity, endorses a group capacity for self-determination, has an intergenerational dynamic, is built on a Māori cultural foundation, asserts a positive role for whānau within society and can be applied across a wide range of social and economic sectors”.

I always have a chuckle when there are some in Wellington who pose the questions as to what Whānau Ora is, or how will we know we have achieved results, because there has never been any question from our marae, our rūnanga, our hapū, our iwi that the institution of whānau is in fact the building block of our nation. And that requires little definition.

It is natural, it is constantly evolving, it is all around us.

It is in the flow of our awa, the strength of te pa harakeke, the visions of Putahi, the song beneath the words.

It is in the seeds of life - **Ngā Kākano o te Hā.**

It is found within your transformation – your stories – your waiata – your hīkoi – your gardens – your lives.

I want to share with you some words of my late cousin, Rangitihī Tahuparae, which have always guided me when I think about the skills, the strategies, the campaigns, the collateral that defines Whānau Ora.

*Me hoki ki ngā paiaka
 Mai i te urunga o Ngāi Tāua te iwi Māori ki roto i ngā kawai
 mātauranga o Tauīwi,
 inā honotia te peka Māori ki te rākau rāwaho,
 he rerekē tona hua me te rongō o tona kiko, he kawa.
 Kāti tēnei te whakahoki ki ngā paiaka a kui mā, a koro mā.*

*Let us return to our origins.
 Since the time we were immersed in the knowledge streams of
 Tauīwi we have become like a branch, grafted to a foreign tree,
 producing fruit of a different quality and somewhat unpalatable.*

It is time that we returned to the rootstock of our ancestors.

My cousin always reminded me that we must return to our foundations – the source of our strength – to cherish and protect the seed of life.

We have all the sustenance we need in our own root system; kaupapa me ōna tikanga. We do not need to turn into a hybrid fruit; a fusion of many different influences. We can rely on our

own foundations; to learn from our past to build hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning.

And so as we gather here over these next days, ask powerful questions of yourself and others; be present in the moment, test the theories and the conversations to assess whether we are protecting the eternal thread of life, from generations gone to those yet to appear.

In many respects the terminology we apply is not so important as the fact that we are willing to try to connect.

We might call it *human centred design* – trying to learn from the people we are devising solutions for.

We might describe it as *collective impact* - or *social enterprise* – or *innovation*.

We might describe those at the heart of the flaxshoot as *vulnerable*; we might label members of whānau as *perpetrators*, *victims*, *clients*.

We might come up with *place-based solutions*.

We might talk of *social investment*; of *social bonds*, of *social capital*.

Of course we must be open to new ideas – and Te Pūtahitanga has demonstrated that with consistent vitality – whether that be via the hothouse, dragons den, accelerator lens, or Te Kākano o te Totara – the leadership programme featuring the explorers and entrepreneurs that will shape tomorrow.

But the one, unchanging, perpetual foundation to all of these concepts is whānau.

Whānau in its many rich and varied forms.

I am a firm believer in the power of an outcomes approach – the framework that creates a definition out of our dreams and moemoeā.

And what I know, more than ever, is that if anybody can, whānau can.

We have so many beautiful whakataukī that are associated with your symposium theme– including of course ***kua tupu te pa harakeke*** – the flax plantation is growing.

This, to me, is what the nine iwi of Te Waipounamu always intended – that Whānau Ora would grow and flow and change

and shift in direct relation to the needs and priorities of your own.

I am so very proud of all that all of your whānau are doing – and will do. You give me every reason to know we can back ourselves – your courage, your ingenuity, your love for your whānau is something that gives us all hope.

You are creating the eternal thread from one generation to the next – the thread that all of our mokopuna will take hold of, to weave a new tomorrow.

It is, therefore, with the greatest joy that I declare this inaugural symposium – Te Aho Mutunga Kore – officially open.