



Cultural Pou Workshop Summary

22-24 November 2012

Key Issues:

The **loss of language**, the **loss of cultural identity**, the **loss of tikanga** and the **loss of connection with each** other permeated the feedback from the Cultural Pou workshops and were clearly identified as **the significant cultural issues** confronting Te Rarawa at this point in time.

With the utmost of respect, the almost desperate tone of the workshop comments emphasised the graveness of this situation and pointed to an apparently tangible relationship between the social issues described in day one of the Summit, and the disconnection of our Te Rarawa whānau from traditional cultural values and identity.

The optimistic suggestions that the remedy for these ails presided in more marae wananga were tempered by the feedback that whānau attendance at marae wananga; and hui for that matter, is often meagre and regularly consists of those same dedicated whānau who continue to support the marae on an ongoing basis. But where are the others? The feedback posed the pertinent question of how do Te Rarawa reconnect our whānau with their identity and consequently bring them back to their marae, while they are still breathing and able to contribute; as compared to waiting until they come home to be buried?

The facilitator posed the question of whether it is better *to have*, or *to be*? The workshop identified a range of priorities that clearly describe Te Rarawa as an Iwi that wants *to be*... that is, to be fluent in te reo o Te Rarawa; to be connected and contributing to their hapū and marae; to be in touch

with and supportive of each other; and to be active in the retention and development of the authentic Te Rarawa cultural identity.

Retention and regeneration of te reo o Te Rarawa featured highly as a key priority to contribute to that state of being. This included support for kaumatua and kuia as the guardians of te reo me ona tikanga o Te Rarawa – and a timely reminder to value the korero of our elders, regardless of whether it is delivered in te reo tuakana (Māori) or te reo teina (English).

Numerous comments pointed to the need for improved mechanisms for teaching te reo o Te Rarawa, whether that be to tamariki and mokopuna; or ‘kohanga for grown-ups’; or even to kaumatua and kuia without te reo. During the Social Pou workshop, the iwi was informed that it takes three generations to save a language, but only one generation to lose it. The notion that regeneration of te reo must start in the home was received positively, in addition, feedback reemphasised the need to support kohanga reo and kura kaupapa Māori, also highlighted in the Social Pou workshops.

Cultural Priorities:

Other priorities included the protection and promotion of taonga tuku iho. The notion of a Te Rarawa archival kaupapa and mechanism was supported and feedback indicated a strong interest in understanding the history of Te Rarawa taonga which was inextricably intertwined with the tikanga, te reo and history of Te Rarawa Hapū and Whānau – whilst also recognising the importance of preserving the mana of these taonga and their guardians. A whare tohunga and whare wananga to preserve and actively incorporate these taonga into our contemporary experience was also mooted more than once. As was the desire to preserve the knowledge of Te Rarawa whakapapa; and to advance Te Rarawa research.

The workshops also confirmed a desire to support mahi toi in all its forms, as a tangible expression of creativity that holds the potential to not only express the Te Rarawa identity on a local, national and international stage, but also to promote the use of Te Rarawa reo me ona tikanga amongst its own whānau, especially exceptionally talented Te Rarawa tamariki.

While these aforementioned priorities featured consistently in the cultural pou workshops, the resounding cry coming through the workshop notes was for hapū and marae to be strengthened, in order to lead the renaissance of these kaupapa in a manner that reflected the function of the different cells in the human body. Just as healthy cells are necessary to fortify the human body, so too are healthy hapū and marae, necessary to fortify Te Rarawa as an Iwi. Albeit at a different scale,

the very same development needs of the iwi, are present at hapū and marae level. While the advantages of critical mass underpin the logic of collaboration at an iwi level, the feedback reinforced that connection with Te Rarawa whānau is the domain of hapū and marae, which are best placed to advance the aforementioned priorities.

With these things in mind, the workshop participants turned their attention to the question of “what do we need to do to achieve these priorities”.

The notion of self-reflection featured in this part of the feedback. Firstly in the form of a challenge to comprehend that the primary barrier to progress resided in our own perspectives of what we could, or could not do. Some participants noted a slight prickling of conscience when one speaker suggested that people seek advice from the mirror as to how to overcome excuses for not learning te reo.

At the other end of the scale, feedback indicated a strong desire to see ourselves better reflected in the world in which we live; and noted that we should not rely on the Government and the media to define who we are as a people. Greater provision of Te Rarawa visual and performing arts, commercial and cultural branding, archiving, kapahaka, carving, ta moko and the like, would allow us to regularly see our own reflections, thus reinforcing our identity. Mechanisms like wananga, summit hui, cultural centres, festivals, and modern technology were identified as the means to engage our people in these activities.

There was recognition that Te Rarawa whānau possessed a multitude of talents and skills, of the type that would be invaluable in fortifying hapū and marae for the journey ahead. Suggestions included: all Te Rarawa whānau having a whānau plan in place; the development of a Te Rarawa skills database; the formation of skilled Te Rarawa teams helping to develop the broader marae skills base; and drawing upon Te Rarawa’s ‘connected people’ to connect hapū and marae with those that could stimulate economic development within the rohe.

The Cultural Pou workshop proffered a vision of Te Rarawa as a population of te reo speakers. Where te reo me ona tikanga were normalised within Te Rarawa rohe; and our mokopuna were able to stand proudly as Te Rarawa.

Nō reira, ngā mihi atu kia koutou mō wēnei whakaaro pai, tēnā tātou katoa.