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Sent: Saturday, 27 August 2011 4:39 p.m.
To: 'Te Whiu Hapu Distribution List'

Subject: Observations thus far from the Tuhoronuku mandating hui: my report to Te Whiu Hapu

Te Whiu hapu, tena tatou

Earlier this week I reported my observations to TeRau. Having reported to Te Rau, recognising his role as our hapu chair, I follow that up with this email and similarly provide to you all an account of my korero, observations and experiences thus far.

Before doing that, I wish to clarify an issue that has been the subject of repeated questioning at the hui. That is, what is the role of hapu kaikorero? And what is the role of hapu representatives on Te Rōpū O Tūhoronuku?

Hapu Kaikorero

Hapu kaikorero are just that. They are people who have the authority from their hapu to speak on behalf of their hapu. In our case, Te Whiu Hapu at its hui in May appointed me as kaikorero for the purposes of the Tuhoronuku process. This is a simple explanation. However, it's apparent from korero thus far at hui that some feel authorised to question the mana of other hapu to appoint their own kaikorero. Astounding as that sounds, that one would question the rangatiratanga of another hapu to make their own decisions, it happens; and an example of such an incident at the Avondale hui is reported below.

Hapu Representatives on Te Rōpū O Tūhoronuku

The structure of Te Rōpū O Tūhoronuku provides for 7 members who are elected by hapu kaikorero. These members are called hapu representatives being as they are elected by mandated hapu kaikorero. Hapu representatives bring to Te Rōpū O Tūhoronuku a hapu perspective and they are readily able to represent the interests of hapu. One example of such interests (which may be termed a future interest) is – in the event that Te Rōpū O Tūhoronuku gains mandate from Ngapuhi to negotiate settlement – ensuring that negotiators (who will be appointed by Te Rōpū O Tūhoronuku) work in the best interest of hapu when, for example, negotiating the return of hapu land.

I think this is a useful example because there appears to be a lot of concern about the return of hapu land; some are concerned that return to hapu is not planned. As far as I have observed, and in all the korero in which I have participated, nobody is arguing against the principle that hapu land should be returned to hapu. It seems to me that some (not all) – to further their own ends - are raising such concerns, unwarranted though they are, to cloud the issue around the structure of Te Rōpū O Tūhoronuku in general, and the positions of hapu representatives specifically. This kind of clouding is, at best, mischievous; at worst, it manifests unconscionable disregard for the rangatiratanga of hapu.

I now give an account of some of my experiences of the mandating hui at which I have been present. The following is not a full account of the proceedings of the hui. It is a brief account of my experiences and observations and the things that I have said. As always, I am happy to account for my korero. Please feel free to distribute this email to whanau or as widely as you wish.

The Avondale Hui

At the Avondale hui, a kaumatua challenged me saying that Te Whiu has been "extinct for 300 years". This is even one step up from disrespecting the rangatiratanga of another hapu – it's a proposition of non-existence. My immediate response to him was that I didn't feel particularly extinct and that if that's his view I'd be pleased for him to bring his korero to Tauwhara. At lunch, I sought out the kaumatua one-on-one, not in a confrontational way, but just me and him kanohi-ki-te-kanohi. I told him that he knew what he said was wrong, and particularly so in front of a hui of more than a hundred people. I said that I was an easy target for him in that environment, but in some ways I'm like the little billy goat in that story, "The Three Billy Goats Gruff". I said that I bet he wouldn't dare come to Tauwhara to tell all my bigger brothers (and sisters!) what he'd just said. He then proceeded to tell what (he assumes) our Aunty Akinihi and others had known of our whakapapa but had never told the likes of Te Kerei. I told him that Akinihi is my father's sister. I know what they knew, Te Kerei and others know too. I told him that he shouldn't presume to tell me what my father and his siblings passed on to their children. Neither should he presume that an attack on me personally is not an attack on Te Whiu wholly.

Also at Avondale, a Te Kotahitanga leader challenged me in the open hui saying that my own cousin Te Kerei didn't support my appointment to Tuhoronuku. I couldn't respond in open hui - such was the commotion at the time. So again, I caught up with him kanohi-ki-te-kanohi afterwards. I told him that Te Kerei had come specifically to a meeting of hapu kaikorero in Mangere in June to support me. That hui of hapu kaikorero elected me to Tuhoronuku, and I appreciated Te Kerei's presence and support.

The Hoani Waititi Marae Hui

On Friday night, the meeting moved to Hoani Waititi Marae. It was wonderful to see my tuakana Te Rangi and my Arena tuahine there. All of us Tuhoronuku members were asked to give a korero about our background etc. Apart from that, I didn't address the hui further.

The Otago Hui

The next day at Otago, I was challenged on two things. One, another Te Kotahitanga leader asked how - after writing the submission I did - I can now support Tuhoronuku. Two, a lawyer said that he'd overheard my conversation with someone else (the day before at Avondale) and that - when I was asked about whether we on Tuhoronuku are being paid - I said "I expect that I will be reimbursed, but don't know the details of how much that will be". The lawyer – referring to a comment that Sonny Tau had earlier made that Tuhoronuku members are reimbursed - asked "If Sam Napia doesn't know how much he's being paid, is he disconnected; or is he a liar?" Again, the commotion of the hui was such that I did not get the opportunity to answer at the hui.

The Mangere Hui

The Te Kotahitanga leader who had earlier in the day asked the question about my submission on the Tuhoronuku mandating strategy asked it again. This time I got to answer.

I commenced by asking the Te Kotahitanga leader if it would be fair to say that the things I wrote in my submission accord closely with his own thinking. He confirmed that it did. I said that, since he knows my submission so well, he will know that I made it clear in that submission that I spoke only for myself - and on no one's behalf. Some three months after that, however, Te Whiu Hapu met to - amongst other things - consider the Tuhoronuku mandating strategy. At that meeting, my submission - which had been pre circulated - was discussed at length. The issues therein were discussed, and debated robustly (given the presence at the hui of key Te Kotahitanga personalities). At the end of the day, Te Whiu Hapu - not Sam Napia as an individual - put some ticks in some important boxes. And here they are:

One: My submission said that the Tuhoronuku strategy needed to provide for hapu involvement and perspective. The hui determined that such is indeed provided for - by providing for hapu kaikorero and then those kaikorero electing amongst themselves representatives onto Te Ropu o Tuhoronuku. So, tick in that box.

Two: My submission said that claimants have a right to be heard. The hui found that Tuhoronuku does indeed support the hearing of claimants. So, tick in that box.

Three: My submission did not express full confidence in the current structure of Te Runanga a Iwi o Ngapuhi (TRAION) to be the post-settlement governance body. This was not an expression of a lack of confidence in individuals associated with TRAION, but with the structure; in fact, my submission expressly stated that I hold a measure of respect for TRAION's aims and its leadership. The hui found that TRAION will not and cannot be the body that receives and manages settlement. But that a new body, the construction of which will involve korero amongst all of Ngapuhi, will be created to receive and manage settlement assets and outcomes. So, tick in that box.

Four: My submission said that I, if given the opportunity, would work with Tuhoronuku to become part of the solution rather than only point out problems. In appointing me as hapu kaikorero, Te Whiu asked that I do just that. I was true to my submission korero and accepted that responsibility.

So my response to the Te Kotahitanga leader was, I am doing the bidding of my hapu, I am happy to do so, I am committed to continue to do so, and I make no apology for any of that.

The Wellington Hui

Down, then to the Wellington hui: as you can imagine, no one from Te Kotahitanga was about to ask me that submission question again. But I took the opportunity to reinforce such messages in any case.

Post-Wellington

I wasn't able to go the South Island, and the next hui I can attend will probably be in Kaeo.

But before I finish my report to you, I want to answer that lawyer's question - even though I may never get to do so in open hui, which is a pity because he took delight in sowing the thought and the as yet unanswered challenge, "...is Sam Napia a liar?"

The lawyer's question was, "If Sam Napia doesn't know how much he's being paid, is he disconnected; or is he a liar?"

The answer is, I am neither disconnected nor a liar; rather, I am disinterested. I am disinterested in how much Tuhoronuku will pay me. I am more interested in what value I can add to the kaupapa, more than I am interested in how much money I can suck out of it. Yes, one day I'll invoice Tuhoronuku for my work on this round of hui. I still don't know the details around that, but I'm not much interested in that right now. I remain interested in being true to the faith that you have placed in me and doing the best I can as a hapu representative on Te Ropu o Tuhoronuku.

Na reira, e Te Whiu, ka nui taku mihi ki a koutou. Te tumanako, ma tenei ripoata ki a koutou ka mohio ai kotuou te tika me te pono o waku korero i roto i nga hui nei.

Kia tu tika ai Te Whare Tapu o Ngapuhi.

Sam Napia

Te Whiu Hapu Kaikorero