

TE WAIORA

Paparangi Reid

Kei te whaea - tena koe
 Mate mate - tena koe
 Kei te kui ma, e koro ma, rau rangatira ma,
 tena kutai, tena kutai
 Kia ora koutou katoa!

When studying medicine, I learnt the most important thing in order to treat a patient effectively, and not just treat the symptoms, was to take an adequate history.

Both Mason Durie and Elizabeth Murchie mentioned the importance of our history to our present state of health. If we don't examine our history and only treat the surface, we're in danger of treating the symptoms and not the real problems, the causes of the problems.

You've had a fairly comprehensive afternoon as far as the history of Maori health is concerned.

In the beginning our tupunas (ancestors), according to the records of the first visitors, were fine and healthy people. Then something happened. We had more visitors, and suddenly by the turn of the century, there were only 40,000 of us left. Approximately one tenth of our original population, and we weren't doing too well. In fact, there is a monument on Maungakiekie, One Tree Hill, in Auckland, which was for us when we died out.

But we didn't die out. Now there are approximately 400,000 of us again.

As Mason Durie was saying, a great many of us are young people. Have we regained that strength that we had prior to contact? Not really. We are urban-based. We are a high risk group as far as our culture is concerned.

While we have regained numerically, we are not back to where we were 150 years ago in terms of our total wellbeing.

We have been talking about deinstitutionalisation at this hui, and one of the things that Pat Ngata and a number of Maori people have brought up, is the fact that institutions mean different things in different cultures. We talk about institutions in terms of concepts, as opposed to the 'bricks and mortar' type. So we have to be careful that we do not confuse the two.

I'm in favour of institutions in the terms of whanau, and in the terms of marae. I think these are fine institutions. But in the terms of Carrington and Oakley...! We also have to look at our past in terms of our concept of wellbeing. Recently the Department of Health organised a hui 'Hui Whakaoranga'. It brought together a number of people in the Maori community to talk about what our health needs are, to identify the needs, what our goals are, and what our visions are, in terms of health.

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There was a brilliant Maori woman there, Rose Pere, who gave a group of us who were there an idea. She described the model of 'Te Wheke', the octopus, whose eight tentacles were the various dimensions of wellbeing. When all of those were in harmony, then, in the eyes of the octopus, total wellbeing was reflected. She called that concept of total wellbeing 'Waiora'. A group of us there, young, keen, half crazy people in Tamakimakaurau, saw this as our dream, a dream we could identify and make a step, one of those stepping stones on the journey, towards Waiora (total wellbeing).

We had a hui in Parliament once and John Tahu was there and I'm sure he was asleep like Pat this afternoon. He was asked a question, and he of course woke up. It was obvious to him that he had been asked a question and that he had to say something quite prophetic. So what he said was "The secret of walking on water is knowing where the stones are". That was quite brilliant. Waiora seems like an impossible vision, dream. Unreachable. But really we have to identify where the stepping stones are, just beneath the surface of the water.

We heard from the people from Tokanui today. They had identified a stone in their community and it is beautiful. Kohanga Reo is another stone. The Maori Women's Welfare League has identified several stones, both in the national movement and in all the local objectives that are coming through.

So these stones that John Tahu talks about and dreams about when he is asleep, are really important.

We actually did some work with this vision based in Maori concepts. Being mainly academics, we used the preceding model to try to marry the two, to get a strategy by which we could make another stone, or another step, for all our people, towards wellbeing.

We identified a population at risk, and like Elizabeth Murchie, we were concerned with the young people, with our own young people under the age of 25, the 63% that Mason Durie talked about.

The League report showed us that these people were dislocated from their whanau, dislocated from these very healthy institutions in Maori society. They did not know who they were, or where they had come from. They had very poor self esteem, and a poor identity as Maori.

For those of us who have a strong identity as Maori, this is the very strength that gives us the courage to get up and speak at these crazy hui. We really feel archa for our whanau and for our mates who maybe are looking for that aspect. So we identified that this was probably a really good starting point. It also happened to be the International Year of Youth and so we thought "Oh well, the whole world's into it too"! We felt there were really good things happening in terms of timing.

We had to look at the major health problems. We read all these reports which were all based on physical things. We felt it was getting a bit boring, because for example, smoking, our primary health problem for young people, we feel is a symptom. Another issue that came up was nutrition. I went back home and talked to some kuias on the marae about nutrition. One of them said something that stuck in my mind. She said that we have many parts to ourself and all of them need nurturing. The problem is we've forgotten where all the other mouths are. We only know where one mouth is. So although we can hear all our other parts crying out for nurturing, we've lost all but one way of nurturing ourself as a person. That put the whole nutrition issue into a different perspective for me. What we've got to do, instead of shutting this mouth, is to find where all the other mouths are and make sure they work

fully.

This whole concept of self esteem and whanau strengthening, restrengthening, reinforcing and in some cases, rebuilding, became a major objective of the Waiora project. The Waiora project is a strategy to get to one of those stepping stones, and it is primarily, but not exclusively, aimed at Maori people. The major problem we wish to address is the lack of self esteem, or poor self image, and the lack of identity, of the young people in our community.

We had some really amazing think tanks and workshops with a number of people and came up with three themes.

(You have to sit through a whole lot more stories of me and my nannies to get to these three themes and I feel sorry for those who have heard these stories before, but never mind, you'll hear them again!)

The first theme was 'Te Whanau me te Ao turoa'. This is about the Whanau and the world about us. It is very easy for us to translate "te whanau" as family, but it is not a static thing. There's your whanau, your immediate family and your extended family. It's not a static thing. You can move. There might be someone 'Whangai-ed in', or married in, and it can also go out further and further. It can go out to times past and times to come, and it can go into our environment and the world around us.

Someone was speaking this morning about Papatuanuku, Rangiui and the birth of mankind and womankind. That is the linking back to that force and having respect for that whanau, in the total sense, right out to our environment, that we really want to hook into.

Recently I returned to Northland to the Waipaua forest where there are two great Kauri trees, "Tane Mahuta" and "Matua Ngahere". When I saw those trees, I understood the lesson that people had been trying to teach, of "Whakaiti", to understand how small you are in terms of the world, in terms of everything. When I looked up at that tree that's been there for a thousand years, it's very easy to recognise what an insignificant little glip we are on the face of the world.

The second theme we thought important was "Puawaitanga o te taha hinegaro", which translates as "the blossoming of the mind".

Our education system churns us out, usually as failures, failures of a system that tries to narrow our mind. As Mason Durie was saying earlier, it is an analytical system, instead of one that teaches us to think laterally and outwards. I believe in the powers of creative thinking, and to illustrate the point, here's my favourite nanny's story.

We were talking about stiltwalking. One of the nannies said, "When I was little, the kuia in Mangamuku was growing maternelons. All the kids could see the watermelons getting riper, going round tapping them and saying 'another couple of weeks, we'll be having a big feed'. The nanny knew they were going to rip off her watermelons so she said to them, 'if anyone steals these watermelons I'm going to makutu the footsteps and you'll get sick'. So the kids had a problem, they wanted to steal the watermelons but they didn't want to get sick. So they built themselves some stilts. They got in there and stole the watermelons and had a big feed. Unfortunately their creative thinking was not as creatively developed. They got caught with the skins and pips and still got a hiding".

What this story illustrates is the fearful creativity of children. They can often find a solution to a problem that adults are stuck with. There is something about the way that kids look at the world that is really precious.

Once on a marae in Rotorua, I was playing "I Spy", with a little seven-year old who was bilingual. We were playing in Maori and he was beating me hands down. On one of his turns he chose the letter k. I was going "kowhaiwhai, kakahu...." and rapidly running out of words. I had to give in and the answer was "korero" (say, speak, talk). The very fact that to him "talk" was as real as kowhaiwhai, that you can play I Spy with, showed a way of looking at the world which I thought was very beautiful and precious. We shouldn't put that mind through the "munching machine" of an education system (which at the end of it may not give them School Certificate), which sacrifices the creativity of the mind. That is basically why we stressed the importance of creativity, creative thinking and creative problem solving, as the theme.

The third theme was "Taha Tinana". I have to admit we put in this physical health theme so that the Health Department would recognise it as a health project. We didn't want this theme to be taken in isolation but to be developed around the first two themes. One of the most interesting things about this theme was the development of our own models. How many times do we see John Walker (or someone similar) as the model? But there's no Maori model up there for us or our kids. We see this as a major problem. We see this as being part of our development, ourselves as models.

The other part is the role of women. The sanctity of women is a key part in whanau.

Those are the themes of the project.

The project has two arms. The first one is community, based on regional or tribally based communities. I can give you some examples. What we plan to do next summer up North is have a mouth in the long Tongiroa Tohi (Ninety Mile Beach). We want to get back onto our beach again (and get it back from the Government). We want to identify with our kaimoana, to take our families onto the beach. Seventy buses of tourists a day go driving up and down that beach ruining our tuatua and toheroa beds. We want to put it into positive terms.

There is a legend about a person from Te Kao who used to run to Ahipara and sell our tribes kumara and then run back again, until finally we caught him.

I was part of a group of young people who went around a number of maraes in late January, early February. We came to Te Kao and decided that now was the time to return that part of our history to our people. We crept out in the middle of the night and stole two kumaras from their kits from Te Kao. We were staying on the marae so everyone knew what we were doing. We made some toheroa soup because we thought we'd better have some spiritual kai to get us on our way. At 4am we started a 40 mile run down the beach to Ahipara. We did it in a relay with three people. At the completion of the run we took these kumaras in their little kit and presented them back to Te Rarawa, the tribe from whom the kumaras had been stolen.

It is amazing what happens when you spark history again. What has happened since, is that a person from Te Kao, was cheesed off with us doing that, and ran down, stole two kumeras and ran back again. We have a dynamic situation starting again, where not only do the traditions and old stories come alive, but young people participate in them, participating in physically, mentally and spiritually healthy activities. We have many other things planned for up North too.

The other arm that we think is really important, and Elizabeth Murchie has highlighted it this afternoon, is the arm of broadcasting.

We have a large number of our population who are isolated within their very homes, within cities. They have very little social contact. There is one thing that reaches them every day. It is a little box in their living room. It gives them messages about The Young Doctors, it gives them messages about all sorts of things. But basically when it comes to Maori things, it doesn't give them very many warm fuzzies. It tells us that we are only worth ten minutes a day, and that is after 25 years. It tells us that even Koha as a programme has been cut from 30 minutes to 15. Te Reo is squeezed in just before the news on Friday.

Apart from one coffee advertisement, Maori faces appear on television in terms of a wanted list on Police Five, or a front or side view flashed on the screen in the news. It doesn't give us very many good pictures about "It's neat to be Maori". We feel very strong about it - it's fabulous to be Maori. What we want that little box to do is to churn out warm fuzzie messages instead of the cold pricklies that it normally churns out.

There is a little limb bud coming out, that is education. We want to make full use of the resources within the education system and put in some positive programmes. In some areas schools are making full use of the resources of the Maori and Pacific Island Resource Unit, within the Education Department.

I would like to throw out a challenge. If the theme of this conference is prevention and promotion, we have one model, which is struggling to survive and refuses to die, within this country which works on the whole concept of promotion and prevention in terms of health as far as the Maori is concerned. That is Kohanga Reo. I would like to challenge the Mental Health Foundation and any other Foundation with money (The Mental Health Foundation has lead the way in assisting groups like Rape Crisis and the Women's Refuges, even though they should have been funded by other agencies). I would like these funding organisations to give half of the funding in one year to the Kohanga Reo Trust.

Kia Ora