

**EXTRACTS FROM A TRANSCRIPT OF A RECORDING OF AN
INTERVIEW BETWEEN DR PETER SHARPLES AND COUNCIL STAFF
(GEORGINA PARATA)
ON 5 JULY 2001**

What started it all?

That's a good point. Did it start from Harry's (O'Rourke) time? Or before him?

I'm not sure Matua.

I'm not sure in terms of who was in, but in as far as I can recall, it was a general feeling in the West that Maori weren't getting any or very little service from Council and it was thought that perhaps we should boycott them and contest Council funding and just do it ourselves. Now this was viewed particularly by Te Whenua O Waipareira Trust when John Tamihere was the Chairperson, and as a result the Whanau O Waipareira (refers to sectors of the Maori Community) virtually shut down any cooperation negotiation with the Trust.

Where as the Marae who has had a history of cooperation with Council, from the very, very beginning and I'm talking about the 60's, the late 60's, from Colonel Hughes who was the Chairman of the "County Council." I think that's what we were called then, and Jack Colvin, the other Chairman County Councillor, and 1st Chairman of the City Council. Right from these days, with all those Mayors; Ian McHardy, Covic, our Tim, right through, we have had excellent service from the Politicians and Councillors.

And even way back in those days of New Lynn, Glen Eden when they were separate Boroughs, we had very, very good service, people Jack McCorquindale and what's the person from Glen Eden? Who was the Mayor? Janet Clews.

Janet Clews - an excellent person, and so on. So we have a history of real cooperation and service and walking together.

Um, but also with the staff, there has been no doubt about it. The consecutive General Managers and their staff have given us real, real service.

And when I say that developing a Marae hasn't been easy, we have had to revoke status of the land, and that was a Mayor thing the first time up. When we had to go down to Wellington and Colonel Hughes came with us as Acting Chairman of the Borough of our City at that time. And Jack Colvic supported that, so the Marae has had this real one-on-one partnership with Council. So, we were unable to bring ourselves to take a stance outside of cooperating with Council.

When the idea was mooted a Taumata Runanga should be established. I personally got involved in a big way and was one of the main instigators of it, along with Bob Harvey and the Executive Officer at the time - CEO Mark Dacombe. The four of us - Ngati Whatua – Haahi Walker - basically

set it up and we had a number of meetings and discussions with Council. Councillors opposed it and especially its status as a Standing Committee.

Te Whanau O Waipareira ignored it and said no, don't give into them and that's what it will be, but to stand outside it and contest. So Waipareira, actually stood back and contested, a lot of their (Council) funding and got funding for Waipareira Whanau.

So our role - and mine in particular - was to set it up and we chose certain Marae and areas to have representation. And I think we have since reviewed that representation in the areas, I don't know. But at that time it was pretty loose when we first set it up and I became the inaugural Chairperson and said I would get it up and running and then I would resign – which I did after 1 year of being up in running. I resigned and stepped down. But, I thought it had in that it provided a Committee of some status within Council which if they felt very strongly about issues the Council would be unable to fob them off or bypass them.

So, I think there is merit in the stand that the Trust took as well as to say no, you're them, you're you and we are us, Te Whanau O Waipareira, and we will beg to differ over issues and we will confront you when those issues arise.

Whereas, the idea of Te Taumata Runanga was that the Policy Dept, on all controversial matters affecting, would signal these issues Maori and they would have a chance to react at the very early stages and be actually proactive in swotting negative things. Or things that might be viewed as negative to Maori aspirations and so it was valued both sides and because of our relationship with Council. And I guess the Marae's attitude generally is that we get along with everybody and was that we would do battle in meetings, in the formal structure and so we supported it. And as I said I had a major role. I can't report personally on the success or non-success of it (Taumata).

There is always a danger on what I call "Committee People" and that's people who just enjoy the outing, are very good on procedures and learn the tricks of talking at a meeting without really dealing with the reason why you were established which was to ensure that Maori aspirations and cultural values were expressed in Council business in every way and the Maori ratepayer was represented in Mayoral issues in the City. That was what I considered the main reasons for having such a thing. So I know at times the group has spoken out about stuff and we have used our delegates in that we have to not be happy with some issues we have asked the delegate to bring it up with Te Taumata Runanga and discuss it. So that's that for now. So, what else?

Why was the Maori Issues Unit set up? Were you a part of that?

Yes, it was set up at the same time as Maori Issues Unit, you're talking about Wallace, Tuini, yeh Taotahi. That was seen as an aim, a direct aim within Council that could have a hands-on expression of things Maori within Council on the floor if you like, the workshop floor. So that it could take care of those cultural manifestations within Council as they happen. I'm sure that was the idea we had when we set it up. It needed to be a visual and audible Maori presence within Council to, if you like, focus the whole Council on the fact that there are differences, and Maori do have a different style of doing things. But also that there are certain etiquettes that need to be followed in some circumstances when dealing with Maori, but there are some etiquettes which are good to follow when dealing with anybody in other Wards. The possibility of Council adopting

some Maori cultural procedures as their own, as authentic NZ procedures like a Powhiri for overseas visitors. And perhaps the other reason was an awareness of the workers within Council of “things Maori” and some training programmes and talks because following the setting up of the Unit, there were a number of workshops and training sessions started by Tuini, others and myself went along and spoke to all Council staff in different shifts. So we were able to sort of describe how it is in terms of Maori cultural norms and their aspirations for the future. So yep, there was definitely “hand-in-hand” with Te Taumata Runanga and both Maori Issues Unit and Te Taumata Runanga were expected to be working together, “hand-in-hand”.

The idea of the Te Taumata Runanga was to allow for Maori participation throughout the City. To allow for representation from the various Marae from the various areas to have a say at top level on issues on Council that affected Maori, or on issues on Maori Issues themselves which affect Council and the people. The idea of the focus (Maori Issues Unit) group was to actually deal with some of the “hand-to-hand”, “mouth-to-mouth” “day-to-day” things within Council, and to provide a cultural expression within Council and, if you like, to bring training and other aspects so that the Councillors and staff can be sensitised to the “bicultural nature” of our society. And if necessary do back up walk with Te Taumata Runanga, but basically their (Maori issues Unit) job was within Council in terms of Maori Cultural training and so on. And the Te Taumata Runanga was political.

So I think it did realise its potential and it could have. It is a question of getting the right people in their for the right job, and some people are just good and at writing stuff and others are good at actually standing up on issues. And I think for that unit (Maori Issues unit) you really need people like Tuini, who were prepared and knew their culture inside and outside – there were no bones about it. This is the way, this is the way – and we will do it this way. If things were picked up or not happening, they would highlight that and say make it happen. So in some ways, it was a question of the right people for the right job.

Yes, I do – I really do, but it needs a very strong Chairperson and a very strong united group. There is only one kind of power that Maori have and that’s “PEOPLE POWER”. And if Te Taumata Runanga was truly representative and they made a strong stand on some issues, they would realise that a program or decision with Council because of the natural power that we have in numbers.

If I could give an example, Kohanga Reo was a Maori idea, which was developed by Maori for Maori, and there was absolutely no way anybody could have opposed it. Furthermore, they had to come, so it was a way of making Government take congruence of things Maori and fund it. Kure Kaupapa followed and so on. So this is what I meant about “PEOPLE POWER”. When we just do our thing and we so committed to the project, we have real power and we can create change. The only other way you can create change is by having a monopoly in the political positions and we will never have that. So I think we have to use positions like Te Taumata Runanga as a door in and apply “PEOPLE POWER”. That’s my view.

Do you have any advice on how the relationships between iwi, Maori and WCC can be strengthened?

I just – this is probably we talking – but I just feel that recognition of all the parties in the City is essential and I think that City Council has to have a balance between mana whenua and taurahere

and other iwi that live here. I mean the Treaty of Waitangi has acknowledged this W414 in the claim by Waipareira Trust, for urban whanau and this Marae is an example of cross tribal living and cooperation. So that we have actually operated like tribe - we actually operate like a hapu here and there is pecking orders and all that sort of stuff in our existence. And we are like a little hapu with branches that go out and there is a kura branch, woman's branch, te reo branch, and the older members branch and all sorts of things. Branches exist just like they do in a hapu and the hapu – has now been going for 30 years and it is pretty entrenched.

For example, in our committee meeting, you could bring a busload of people and out-vote everything that's decided. But no one would do that because it's a hapu and there would be all sorts of whaikorero, debates and stuff to stop and things would happen. And because kaupapa Maori is finally entrenched in this place so for Council it's a difficult thing.

There seems to be two main calls on the west here, one is the Tainui call, basically through Kawerau and the other is Ngati Whatua. History shows there were a lot of iwi and hapu passing through this district, settling here and moving on, and so on and so forth. Even Ngati Kahuhanungu settled in the Waitakere Ranges at some time or another, and has a history of being through here.

At the end of the day it really doesn't matter, it's a question of how well Council handles the debate without getting involved. It is not Council's job to sort out who is the mana whenua and they shouldn't make major decisions, but they should keep the options open for mana whenua to participate if they wish to. So what happens is that conquest was the rule of tribal areas, so the kaupapa of "ahi ka", keeping fires burning is how we lived in this country and so you took over an area and lit your own fires and you occupied it.

The trouble is when Pakeha come and stopped all that. The boundaries became fixed and that was the first time boundaries became fixed. So the only way you've really got of having a tribal map is to look at the marae and what kawa exist on that marae and who supports that marae. And that way you can get a sort of a picture of a tribal map and how they exist they exist and so on. So you're not allowed to go and knock off the tribe once over the hill and take their land, so it has become polarised if you like. This left all most recent conquest and disputes in jeopardy in this no mans land, because the tribe that has just been conquered haven't had the chance to regain the land. So emotionally all land, most of the land, especially in the boundary areas, belongs to both tribes. According to the last conquest, it probably belongs to one or the other. But now there is no conquest and we look at place names. You finding that the names, place names we've named by the tribe before and tribe before that or the tribe before that, like Auckland is a really good example of Te Arawa names in the City. So it becomes a "woolley" area about who's tangata whenua and so on like that, so most tribes are standing by their last conquest as being that. Those who would dispute that are standing by – are usually the tribe that was before the conquest and are saying that well we named all this place, these parts are all ours, we lived here longer than you, so we are mana whenua as much as you, and without the option to conquer again there has been a sort of acceptance of dual or triple xxx so that's how its come about, so its only proper that Council should just go along with this and allow the mana whenua claims to exist in this City and honour them as best they can.

I think its pretty simple out West here, what isn't simple is how handle Whanau Waipareira or other urban Maori units like Hoani Waititi Marae and balance that with the other tribal things, but I still think it enriches the area and it gives Council more options. So I notice for cultural things Bob Harvey has a relationship with a marae, so he generally uses Manutaki and the marae and so on, and that's good because this is the xxx of this City and we have the group and the relationship with him so its very easy for him to do that, but there's no way he would regard us as mana whenua or anything like that, so I think it sort of works, its not a easy situation, but it wasn't meant to be easy,

I think Waitakere City generally do a reasonable job

Have you had any thoughts on the process the Central Government is involved in at the moment in review of the Local Government Act, and as I said earlier in the beginning, there's opportunity for Maori to comment and there's been some strong reaction to that legislation in terms of increasing Maori participation formally, do you have any comments about that process?

Yes, I'll be honest, I haven't kept up with that play, I've been quite submerged in our own marae's development, but if I had a comment to make it would be that I just feel, like with the fisheries, that urban Maori voice needs to be strengthened and realised by authorities, whether its central or local government, I think they have got to start realising that 30-40 years living in a place is kind of tangata whenua status, and certainly is an operational group, and if a group has been operating in a City for 30 years then the City kind of owes them because they've been able to create avenues for service deliveries, one way or the other, and regardless of the tribal origins as being paramount to identity to Maori, I don't think that's the issue, the issue is servicing your community and the community of Waitakere City comprises of many, many, many imported Maori or Maori who's descent come from other tribal areas, but you've only just got to take my own family some of my kids were born at home, but they were born while we were living here, so basically my kids are Aucklanders, but with very, very strong tribal ties back to their home iwi. For cultural and identity purposes and so on, they tied home, but for daily living and manifesting Maori culture in daily life, its about Waitakere City, its about Auckland, Henderson, New Lynn, Waipareira, that's our life, and I think we underplay this, you know, certainly the rural people do and I'm disturbed to hear that the fisheries thing can't be resolved.

The latest news item, my cousin Robert Hapi is just going to go on and on and deliver to the tribes, and that's so stupid, it's a threat to them, its like it's a threat and undermining, its also a bit of greed I mean this whole thing mana moana, good god, they haven't a clue what mana moana means – mana moana means knowing your fishing grounds, means knowing about the tides, and how fish run and how to distribute your fish, its not about owning a coastline and therefore you get more fish, it just makes me so disgusted, you know, mana whenua's fine because we still operate in tribal areas with our marae and tikanga and so on, but mana moana is strong, and to pretend that it still exists and use it as the xxx, and all those other big coastlines (end of side one of tape)

Thank you Peter, for your time.