

By Māori, For Māori
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A Discussion Paper

(A mihi should be inserted here)

E te Rangatira, te Kingi, Tuheitia, thank you for bringing us altogether. This is a momentous occasion for te ao Māori. We are from many different places, different Iwi, different vocations, different politics, different ages – kaumatua, wahine, tane, rangatahi, tamariki - and different religions. But with your support, today brings with it the prospect of us standing tall as one people.

Bringing us together from a wide range of interests and connections, carries with it the prospect of a more integrated approach to Māori development in the 21st century. It does not necessarily mean abandoning our current efforts but it does add a new dimension that, over time, could evolve into a Māori centred system based on collective wisdom and the aspirations of our people.

Ka Mua Ka Muri

However, establishing a kaupapa Māori approach to modern times recognises that there is also much to be learned from earlier generations and their initiatives. In that sense our future lies behind us.

A hundred and thirty-two years ago in 1892, a Hui to establish the Kotahitanga movement was held at Waitangi. It was part of a national Maori effort to establish a Paremata Māori and reflected a lack of confidence in the Parliament of those times to address Māori concerns and priorities. But the Government was concerned about the movement and established Māori Councils accountable to the Government. In 1902 the final Paremata meeting at Waiomatatini, signaled the end of the Paremata.

A hundred years ago in 1924, Dr Peter Buck (Te Rangihiroa) was establishing a Māori Health Council to advise the Department of Health. Appointments from a number of regions included Iwi leaders. But before the process was complete Dr Buck was advised to discontinue appointments and to disestablish the Council. He subsequently resigned his position and left the Department. A few years before in **1922**, Te Puea Herangi had advocated for a hospital to be built on her marae. She argued that Māori would be more likely to go to a hospital if it was on familiar territory and close to whānau. But that option was not seriously considered by the Government.

Fifty Years ago in 1974, Māori students at the University of Auckland led a protest march to Parliament to advocate for the recognition of te reo Māori as a national language. The following year **in 1975** Whina

Cooper led a march from Northland to Parliament, advocating for Māori rights and land. Over 5000 people joined her. “Not one acre more” was the cry.

Sixty years ago the 1980s saw the emergence of a raft of innovations that reflected Māori aspirations for tikanga and te reo as well as for greater independence. At the **1984 Hui Whakaoranga** two Māori health frameworks were discussed – Te Wheke and Whare Tapa Wha. At the same hui Raiha Mahuta outlined the mission and impact of the first Māori health service, Te Raukura Hauora o Tainui. Within a decade more than twenty other Maori health services had been established across the country. And at the same 1984 hui there was a clear call to the Government Agencies to “give us the money and we will do the job”.

Thirty-four years ago in 1990, the National Maori Congress was established. The leaders were Te Atairangikaahu, Hepi Te Heuheu and Te Reo Hura (leader of te Hahi Ratana). Congress was independent of Government controls and had representatives from 37 iwi though did not speak on behalf of iwi. Instead it represented Māori views on matters relevant to all Māori, including economic, social, cultural, environmental and political issues, and to advance a unified national Māori position on significant policy matters both nationally and internationally.

The possibility of a united approach to Māori leadership led the Congress to meet with the New Zealand Māori Council and the Māori Womens Welfare League but after two meetings the idea was put on hold. In any case, following divided opinions about the Government's intentions for the Sealords deal, the Congress ceased to exist after 1996.

Fourteen years ago in 2010, and after a widespread consultation. Whānau Ora was established. It was a new step for three main reasons. First it recognised that whānau were key to Māori wellbeing. Second, rather reporting to a Government Department it was to report directly to the newly appointed Minister Whānau Ora. Third, Commissioning Agencies were established to manage and fund whānau services in communities.

Two years ago in 2022, and along with other major changes to the health system, a Māori Health Authority was established. In one sense the Authority provided a vehicle to relay Māori health needs and priorities and to bring together Maori health agencies . But it was not accountable to Māori. Instead, as a government agency, it reported to the Minister of Health. In any case, in 2023 the new National government made it clear that central to their policy, a Maori centred government agency would be disestablished. So the Māori Health Authority will cease to operate.

Ma whero ma pango ka oti ai te mahi

There are many more examples of situations where Māori participation and Māori leadership have been subject to political whim. While the emphasis on the Treaty of Waitangi has been critical for Māori participation within Aotearoa, it does not necessarily guarantee Māori aspirations within te ao Māori. The Treaty is not an endpoint. Nor is a relationship with the Government necessarily the overall aim for Māori. A Māori led option – based on indigeneity – could enable continuity that goes beyond three year political terms to recognise centuries of leadership, and to provide greater certainty for our current lives and our future aspirations.

An independent Māori voice is needed so that our future is not entirely dependent on Government. The independent voice could have multiple relationships – with Pacific nations, with world-wide indigenous peoples, with the WHO, with overseas trade partners – and with the NZ Government.

The question is what would an independent Aotearoa-wide Māori voice look like?

It would recognise existing Māori authorities such as Iwi Leaders, Kaupapa Māori health and education authorities, Whānau Ora, the Māori Womens Welfare League, the Māori Council, Kaumatua, Rangatahi, and

leaders in other fields and it will also reflect a national contemporary Māori reality. It will not usurp current Māori voices in health or education or housing or in other fields but it will provide a forum where Māori voices in a changing world can come together and plan for a coordinated future.

When considering the years ahead five broad aims will be paramount:

- our people will be healthy and well,
- our people will be grounded in te ao Māori,
- our people will be part of whānau who are linked to marae, hapu and iwi, and are innovative and aspirational
- our people will live in environments where waters are safe to drink, lands are fertile and productive, and the sky is safe to breathe.
- our people will have leaders who are connected and united in a common purpose.

Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini

A stepping stone towards an independent Maori voice could be the establishment of 7 or 8 **Regional Runanga** where leaders would meet to cement relationships within them and to see how cross-sectoral approaches, rather than sectoral isolation, could make for better outcomes. And the Runanga would also provide a forum for considering the future and the ways in which

collective leadership could bring shifts not achievable by a single sector alone.

A further step could be the establishment of a **Taumata**, a forum where Māori leaders meet and plan for the future. The forum could include representatives from Kingitanga, from the regional Runanga, Iwi Leaders Forum, from the Māori Womens Welfare League, from the NZ Māori Council, from Whānau Ora, from organisations such as Te ORA (Māori doctors), Māori nurses and teachers and other health and education workers, from people with lived experience, and from other community organisations. It will be an independent body within Aotearoa and will foster a Māori led journey that reflects contemporary Māori society in a global context.

A **Taumata** Board could provide direction and management and seek funding from Iwi, Māori KMOs, the World Health Organisation, and the United Nations Indigenous Committee, the private sector ... and the NZ Government.

In summary, much can be learned from the past but our future will be stronger when we speak with a united voice that is independent of the Crown, and reflective of the aspirations of our people.

As an independent body, it will be instrumental in constructing a system where Māori can be healthy and

well, can be grounded in te ao Māori, can have whanau who are aspirational, can live in healthy environments and can be led by connected inspirational Māori leaders.

Together we can take inspiring steps where we will be able to focus on what will give our children, our mokopuna and our whanau a future where they can flourish as Māori.

Kingi Tuheitia, we thank you for bringing us together so that we can plan for our collective future.

And thank you all for being at part of this transformational journey.

**Kia kaha
Kia maia
Kia ORA**

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