

Connecting into the Power of Pūrakau & Prophecies at Waitangi

Ancestral wisdom shared by mana whenua metres away from the historic signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi was a powerful memory for [Te Pūkotahitanga](#) after visiting the rohe recently.

Hapū leaders, Isaiah Apiata and Ngāti Kawa Taituha shared Ngāpuhi pūrakau and kōrero about local whakapapa pre-1880 and post-1880 while standing on Rua Rangi, the sacred Pa site at the upper Waitangi grounds where Te Whare Rūnangā is situated.

Both are descendants of the Apiata whānau, one of the 10 original families from the area. Isaiah, born and bred at Waitangi was raised by his kaumātua from the age of 2.

“Soak in all the mauri of the place and the magic that’s here,” said Ngāti Kawa. The rōpū looked to the enormous pine tree planted 24 paces to the left of the flagstaff by James Busby’s wife at the signing.



[Isaiah Apiata sharing pūrakau]

“Our people followed the lunar calendar, the Maramataka. In summer Rua Rangi was a dwelling place for a lot of our people - in particular Uenuku,” Isaiah said.

Uenuku was the son of their founding ancestor, Rāhiri. “According to our narrative, if you don’t come through Rāhiri you must have come from a horse.”

Rāhiri married Āhuaiti but left her alone to raise their son. Her pēpi, Uenuku was named after the rainbow God when his Māmā was reminded about ancient incantation and how to grow kai in the natural world. Wisdom that feeds our people to this very day.

Isaiah noted that to Ngāpuhi the names of ancestors encapsulated the medicinal remedies that can help in the healing of our people. Celestial knowledge was another core theme to his korero and how it provides insights into leadership and restorative processes for us in these modern times.

He spoke of an “ancient school of learning that pulled together the many of the ancestral chiefs throughout Te Tai Tokerau from the East Coast to the West Coast.”

“It’s not dopamine. It’s not medication. It’s wānanga and mātauranga Māori and kōrero Māori. That is our medicine that heals”.

“Our celestial Māori should be fed to our tamariki because it is that celestial knowledge that their wairua has a hunger for, a thirst for and dying for,” he said.

“They come to wānanga with a sense of arrogance or unwillingness to be there but then they leave fed.”

His insights came from eight years and many different roles starting in alternative education, then the Department of Corrections, Oranga Tamariki and two years with his iwi.

“I was introduced to intergenerational trauma not just introduced but I worked at the frontline with it. The kids would come in the same clothes as the day before without any pride in themselves.”

“They leave you at four o'clock in the afternoon and they come back the next day but it’s like I didn't teach them anything, so I'd have to start all over again.”

Wrapping solutions around the whare, the place of protection is where Isaiah believes the solutions lie.

“That's where the assistance is needed. Not on this short term and problem solving basis because once they leave your care, and they going back into those environments.”

The former rehabilitation and reintegration manager shared invaluable insights on his lived experience assisting individual whānau from tapu to the state of noa.

Indigenous knowledge from a te ao Māori lens that Te Pūkotahitanga believes is one of the valuable characteristics and enduring strengths of kaimahi and kaupapa Māori workforce.

“Once we support our Māori people, it's only going to be a rippling effect that every other culture in New Zealand would benefit from it. This is not racist. This is a reality,” Isaiah said.



[Treaty Grounds]



[Ngāti Kawa sharing pūrakau in Rua Rangi]

Ngāti Kawa delved into the local history of the bustling Pre-European Māori economy that generated wealth from trade and export due to the abundant resources of the rohe.

“They traded kumara from some of the richest volcanic soil in the world and exported to Australia and over to Britain.”

“Then in 1835 there was the signing of the Declaration of Independence - it was another Pou in the ground for Tino Rangatiratanga. Māori were innovative and intellectual entrepreneurs.”

“With all the gifts manaakitanga, rangatiratanga, kaitiakitanga and well-endowed with spirituality. Now it’s coming back hard and fast.”

He also spoke of the prophecies of local tupuna, Hone Heke who Ngāpuhi considered a tohunga.

“1840 was interesting. The original flagstaff was here flying our flag representing Māori sovereignty and then the Governor moved it,” Ngāti Kawa said.

“We had the monopoly. We were too sharp and too fast. The Governor couldn't get a piece of the pie so moved to Tāmaki.” Then there were those battles.

Hone Heke spoke of Māori being “being stuck in a whirlpool” lasting 200 years.

“It represented chaos, turmoil, conflict, problems, and trauma issues. Then the truth will prevail. That prophecy has come to fruition right now.”

“We've got now until 2040 for change transformation and reconciliation. Mana Māori is coming up now and influencing everything. It's going to help people see value in ourselves now. The value of reo tikanga, and mātauranga Māori – the things that will bring about change and transformation.”

The kōrero on the whenua was followed by a full-day business hui briefing Te Pūkotahitanga and members of He Rōpū Manaaki on its work programme, governance and agreed outputs.

Maramataka ‘Queen’, Heeni Hoterene joined everyone for kai and generously shared her kōrero on the star Puanga, which means something to blossom, or to come into abundance.

“It's part of reclaiming and revitalising our traditions around Matariki,” Heeni said. “We all came here by way of the stars and celestial navigation.”

The following day at Te Tii Marae the hui continued with kaimahi and Te Tai Tokerau kaupapa Māori whānau and sexual violence service providers and a Zoom kōrero with Minister Davidson.



[Te Pūkotahitanga, kaimahi and Māori providers at Te Tii Marae]

Reflecting on the whakaaro of Heeni's tūpuna, Tā James Henare the evening prior was the perfect ending to two rich days of exchange in the North with iwi, hapū, hapori whānau, kaimahi and providers.

“Kua tawhiti kē tō haerenga mai, kia kore e haere tonu. He nui rawa ō mahi kia kore e mahi tonu” – “We have come too far not to go further. We have done too much not to do more.”