

Fishing Interests and Representation

Raniera T (Sonny) Tau, Accord co-chairman

Raniera (Sonny) Tau gave a brief overview of several issues that had been addressed since the previous hui in June 2009. This included the proposal to create an over-arching body to represent recreational fishing interests, his involvement as a commissioner for Te Ohu Kaimoana and various fisheries management initiatives.

Prior to the hui there was a series of torrid emails between the organisers of an Auckland-based meeting to discuss the creation of an over-arching body to speak on behalf of all recreational fishing interests. The three organisers, Nelson Cross, Alan Key and Laurel Tierney were all from the South Island.

Ngapuhi and Ngati Whatua representatives were specifically excluded from the meeting on the basis that only national organisations were invited, and conversation with Maori would occur later in the process. As a consequence, accusations of racism had emerged because Maori were tired of being treated as second-rate cousins. Other developments would be discussed later in the hui.

It was concerning that so much energy was going into a process to try and herd numerous organisations and interest groups into one representative body. Historically this had proven to be an impossible task so there were questions about the motivation of those promoting this initiative.

Iwi Leaders Group

The Government has tried to establish a one-stop representative organisation for the 57 iwi leaders. In response, the iwi representatives agreed they would work together as a loose collective of individual leaders. That is, they would continue to strive for their own iwi's interests, as they had been tasked by their people to do, but they would co-operate on the major issues that affected them all and those that required a collective response.

Ngapuhi and Ngati Whatua are united on the issue that their collective interests is in maintaining the ongoing right to feed their tamariki [children] and mokopuna [descendants] from a pool of fish that belongs to everyone. It was a major concern that the government seemed determine to sell off the rights to the fisheries as it sees fit.

Te Ohu Kaimoana

Sonny was grateful for having the support of Northland people to become a Commissioner for Te Ohu Kaimoana (TOKM). Being a Commissioner has given him the opportunity to highlight to other Maori leaders the significance of the 'recreational' fishing right as compared to their statutory, customary right.

Customary vs. recreational fishing

Fishing with a permit represents a small fraction of the amount of fishing that Maori do. *"99.9 percent of the time Ngapuhi fish to feed our babies we are categorised as recreational fishers"*. This harvest is not recorded or reported as being customary take.

There was some support for Maori reporting their every-day catch as customary harvest to ensure there was a record of that catch, and to make sure it was taken into account when the Minister makes an allowance for customary interests when managing particular fish stocks.

Fishing industry representatives have recently approached TOKM to discuss the concept of using the "uncaught" portion of the customary allowances and transferring them into commercial fishing rights. This was an offensive suggestion given that there were many groups, including the Hokianga Accord, that were striving to have more fish left in the water for future generations. This industry proposal would only benefit the quota owners.

Ngapuhi's position is clear and Ngati Whatua has supported this view, "*When there is tension between commercial and our non-commercial take, [that is] our customary rights, our commercial machine will give way to our customary machine*".

Other iwi have not been so quick to accept this stance for a variety of reasons, one is that many iwi are still focused on organising their commercial interests. Also, many Maori are oblivious to the importance of their 'recreational' fishing right as compared to their customary fishing right, which requires a permit.

Hokianga Accord chairmanship

Sonny confirmed his intention to step down from chairing the Hokianga Accord on a day-to-day basis and running the hui. It was time to encourage others to step into that role. His workload was increasing and Ngapuhi's Treaty claims process was underway. Runanga representatives Paul Haddon and Joe Bristowe were at the hui and they would be addressing this issue later. George Riley from the Runanga's operations unit was also at the hui so he too would contribute to that discussion.

The recent passing away of co-chairman Judah Heihei had a profound effect on both the Hokianga Accord and Te Runanga A Iwi O Ngapuhi. It has taken a while to realise the extent of Judah's influence and the roles that now needed to be filled by someone else.

Paul Haddon expressed regret, but understanding, on why Sonny needed to step aside as chairman of the Hokianga Accord. He also confirmed that earlier discussions had identified two competent people, from within the Ngapuhi Runanga that could fill the role of 'designated chair'. If Sonny was available he would be chairman. If unavailable then either George Riley or Allen Wihongi could be chair.

Tepania Kingi and John Retimana from Ngati Whatua were other possibilities for the chair's role. However, Ngati Whatua would have to make that decision themselves.

In the ensuing discussion some concerns were expressed at losing Sonny's participation and more specifically his unambiguous, truthful and humorous manner in which he manages the conversations throughout the hui.

Sonny confirmed he would remain engaged in the Accord's proceedings; he merely needed to allocate some responsibilities to other people. This would help Sonny to balance his work and home-life needs.

Irrespective of who took over the chairman's role, both option4 and the NZ Sport Fishing teams remained committed to the Hokianga Accord. The kotahitanga [unity] that had developed in the forum over the past five years, between tangata whenua and non-Maori, remained strong.

This relationship was recently tested during the preliminary organisation of the Buckland's Beach meeting to discuss the creation of an over-arching body to represent all amateur fishing interests. The management committee of NZ Sport Fishing unanimously decided not to participate in that meeting because both Ngapuhi and Ngati Whatua were denied entry. Trish Rea and Jason Foord attended the meeting as observers and worked with Kim Walshe to develop a report for the combined interest groups.

This was a clear demonstration of the resolve to stand together and work through the Accord to achieve abundance and good fisheries management for the benefit of everyone's mokopuna [descendants]. At this stage there was strength in diversity and having different groups advocating for their own issues, but working collectively to address the concerns that impacted on all interest groups.

Only the meeting organisers could confirm if they were motivated by the government's purported offer of \$3 million to establish a single representative body for amateur interests.

Due to flight schedules the four Ministry of Fisheries officials were not due to arrive at the hui for another hour so the hui would proceed with other agenda items until MFish arrived at Oturei Marae.