

**Korero for Tautoko FM**  
**By Sonny Tau**  
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**Inaugural Meeting of Ngapuhi and Recreational Fishers**

This historical hui was held at Whitiara Marae, Te Tii over the last weekend. The meeting was attended by representatives of Ngapuhi, Whangaroa, Te Rarawa, Ngati Whatua, New Zealand Big Game Fishing Council, New Zealand Recreational Fishing Council and option4. It was a hui of huge significance as the Ministry Of Fish have done an excellent job of fooling us into thinking that our rights to fish have been catered for under the customary fisheries regulations.

This is as far from the truth as one can get, the fact of the matter is, Mfish have created, in law, three categories of fishers. Customary fishers, recreational fishers and Commercial fishers. Customary fishers are those who collect seafood for a hui mate or an occasion of significance. When we fish to feed our babies, Mfish has categorised that as recreational fishing. So it was natural for Ngapuhi to host this meeting of fishers with a common interest, to have more fish in the sea.

All who attended this hui were adamant that we must work together to achieve the objective of more fish in the water.

The other part of that is what is termed, the preference debate. This is quite a complex issue however what the people who attended that hui said was this: Because the fish in this country are subject to the quota management system, if there needs to be a reduction in the amount of fish allowed to be caught, this reduction must be to the commercial take and not customary or recreational catch.

99.999% of the time Maori are fishing they are categorised as recreational fishers. It is my contention that the customary allowance for hui is ours as of right. The area then where we catch most of our fish for kai is recreational, so we must join forces with Tauwiwi to fight for our share. Although we hold commercial quota on behalf of Ngapuhi, it is the ability to have kai, fish, on our tables for our babies and mokopuna to come that matters most. Consequently, our biggest quota is deepwater and not really affected by this debate. We will be bringing this message out to the Takiwa in the near future.