

Tena koutou the people of Whangaruru, Whananaki and surrounding communities.

Mimiwhangata - nurtured by kaitiakitanga for the benefit of all

I have read with interest, the recent exchange in the Pothole between Vern Tonks of Oakura, vice-chairman and spokesperson for Guardians of Mimiwhangata Fisheries and Marine Environment Inc. and Chris Moretti, the park ranger at Mimiwhangata on behalf of the Department of Conservation (DoC).

As kaumatua of Te Whanau Whero, hapu at Whananaki, I welcome the opportunity to tell readers that we see all of our fisheries, including Mimiwhangata, being managed by the tikanga - principle of kaitiakitanga (guardianship or stewardship).

For hundreds of years Maori have provided for their kai (food) from both land and sea by the practice of kaitiakitanga and so provide abundance for present and future generations.

In addition to being a tried and true way of nurturing our resources, including fisheries, in New Zealand and throughout Polynesia, the advantages of kaitiakitanga are:

- it's inbuilt flexibility, e.g., if a fish stock in a particular area needs to recover and multiply, then a rahui (temporary ban) and/or a tapu (spiritual ban) can be imposed until there is sufficient abundance again
- it's inclusiveness by encouraging communities - both Maori and non-Maori - to work together
- it focuses on both the social and cultural needs of our communities
- in recent times it's enabling of the Crown to fulfil the Crown's Treaty obligation
- rather than confiscation of our fisheries, its conservation and nurturing of them. In this way we live as one in and with our environment.

In contrast, a marine reserve:

- takes or confiscates, and sets apart the affected area of our fisheries in the name of scientific study
- is not a fisheries or marine management tool, but a blunt instrument, which excludes active local guardianship and stewardship by communities

- denies both tangata whenua and community the opportunity to practice kaitiakitanga and enjoy and take pride in the results
- does not deal with the threat to our coastal waters, fisheries and environment from land based effects like run-off and sediment

DoC is not involved in and has no responsibility for fisheries management. In the absence of hands-on nurturing and management of Mimiwhangata's fishery and surrounding fisheries, DoC's claim of saving our fishery by wanting to confiscate it from us and local communities for scientific study simply does not ring true.

Mimiwhangata is of cultural, spiritual, and historical significance to us and is an important food basket. We have told DoC and they know that a marine reserve at Mimiwhangata would be confiscation from our local communities.

With the practice of kaitiakitanga at Mimiwhangata and surrounding waters our fisheries, the marine environment and our communities will all be the winners.

We have worked hard getting to grips with the fisheries management puzzle. What we have learned is that we do not have to go along with what the authorities tell us is best for us without knowing the full story. When we know the different pieces of the puzzle we can then make informed choices.

Let's get on and work together as one community to have kaitiakitanga in place and working for Mimiwhangata's fisheries. I ask for your support to make this happen.

My warmest personal regards and best wishes to you all.

Nupere Ngawaka (Jiggs Walker), Kaumatua
Te Whanau Whero, Whananaki.