

Notes for CED Workshop Presentation
Arihia Tuoro, Whakatohea Maori Trust Board member

This session focus is headed “Think Globally Act Locally”

Pre 1865 my tribe did “thinking globally and acting locally”

..... they were a highly successful commercially active Iwi

We were fully integrated, from the farming of the land to the trading of the produce, to owning the ships that shipped the produce to Auckland.

We were an Upwardly Mobile Iwi UMI

The invasion of 1865 and subsequent confiscation of land took away the means to exist even at a subsistence level

These events ripped and tore at the social fabric that was Whakatohea .. and at how we were recognized as a nation within Aotearoa

And more importantly...at how we recognized and knew ourselves

The tribe collected money (2 shillings and 6d for every Iwi member - even babies still in the womb). This was to raise money to take their case for compensation to the Crown.

As a result of that the tribe was given some land back in the 1950’s. This has been farmed as a dairy farm ever since.

Needless to say a major dream and theme of all things Whakatohea is about taking back more of the land that was lost in 1865.....and we are prepared to pay for it.

Scroll forward

And it’s now the late 1990’s and the Trustees of the Whakatohea Maori Trust Board are on the look out to purchase some land. This is the first commercial acquisition of land by Whakatohea since the confiscation.

The Manager of the Trust receives a phone call from a Director from New Zealand Sea Farms. The Director talks and shares the vision of the mussel farming industry and the opportunities within our water space.

The Manager’s actual words to the person on the other end of the phone were “ you gotta be joking... but hey... happy to talk.”

We *ate* mussels, we knew nothing about farming them,

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We knew lots about farming the land though - that's what we were looking for - more land

This approach from Sealords was a slight distraction..... at the time!

In those days and in many cases still today the people we select to these governance structures within the western culture paradigm are those that have recognition within our Maori leadership paradigm. They were not so much selected. But appointed

They were appointed by the rights of their blood line, leadership and mana at hapu level

These were more often than not men, and older than 60+ . These men sat as the governance of our Maori Trust Board

These men were introduced to this idea

These men somehow ...grasped the idea,
It was easy for them to see 50 years on
It was easy for them to see what it might do for their mokopuna

Those men
Kept the dream alive....
Kept the torch burning....
Kept speaking it into existence.

There was lots of talk,
There were workshops held to bring the Trustees up to speed on the concept,

There was even a field trip,a busload of tribal members traveled by bus to Nelson ... that would have been a 12 hour journey.

There they observed the mussel business in operation.

There was more talk, and more talk. I remember my cousin (one of the governors) always talking about it at Hapu meetings and Iwi meetings.

His audiences at the time were not so convinced
Many of us could not see the dream
It was too far out there "touch" and to "see"

But like the others of the day my cousin kept speaking it into existence.

The journey to date has been fraught with working with objectors within our tribe first, and then with objectors outside the tribe through the resource management process.

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This resource management process has been financially draining

It could have also drained the souls
and stolen the dreams of our men, our governors of the day
..... those early adaptors.

Maybe it didnone of those leaders are alive today with all of them bar one passing away before the average life expectancy age for European men in this country

But they left the dream behind and intact, and the next lot of governors just picked it up and kept chipping away.

We just kept keeping on

The financial commitment to the dream has met with the conflicting obligations that entities such as the Trust Board face.

The Trust can and often face objections from within the tribe, because it cannot provide the level of social distributions expected of it.....

We stopped paying the insurance for Marae
We stopped paying grants to marae for their upkeep
We reduced the quantum that was being paid out for education grants

Instead the money has been channeled into the long term dream, the research and legislative and litigation processes of the Resource Management Act.

... over \$1million and still rising.

I often wonder how the Trust has kept this alive.

I look at the men of the day,

They kept talking about it, they kept sharing it,

They saw something else with this opportunity

Another dream started to develop for Whakatohea

We still have, and will always have the dream to regain our land,

But this new dream was about jobs

The governors started to talk about this project in terms of jobs
They started to talk about the project by saying

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“ it is only worth pursuing further if we can guarantee jobs here in Opotiki”
 “And guarantee jobs for our people”

It had to be the reason to get into this

To provide work for our people.

It is this new dream that has caught on

Now, it is one of, if not *the* major driver for the whole Opotiki community ...not just Maori

The helplessness and hopelessness that comes with inability to provide for yourself and your family touches our whole community, it is not just the domain of our people ...

Although the toll has been greater for Whakatohea simply because we had not been able regroup from the last event that took away our livelihoods.

We as a community have a common enemy... a common malady...

“ Hopelessness”

How do you rally a country find a common enemy ,

Some countries go as far as finding a war

How do you rally a people... a community find a common enemy

Well.....

Opotiki Community have a common enemy

Opotiki Community has a war on its hands

Opotiki Community are ready to fight

and that is what brings us together.....

And this mussel project is our amo!

The thinking is local, not global

We are very selfish in what we want out of this project and it has nothing to do with the world.....

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BUT

How we will achieve it will have everything to do with the world

By nature of our history we are risk averse we are not prepared to lose anything,

We are not prepared to put any thing we own at risk

We do not want to lose anything ever again

But here we are still not even through the end of a business case, we are still spending money on research to see if this things has got legs

It seems odd

But I think it is because at the same time of being protective of our commercial assets (the farm business) and the understanding that the land is never up for discussion or trade

Maybe it's within a greater mindset of

What have we got to lose as a people?

We have suffered the greatest loss a people could ever endure.....

Nothing will be as bad as that

This project is about hope

Our people saw the dream and the dream provides us with **HOPE**

Hope that things can change.

Hope that my neighbour's children (she has 2 and she is not quite 18) will grow up with high expectations of themselves and what they can achieve.

Hope that they finish school and have the delightful predicament of choices what line of study , training or work they may go into,

Choices about whether they stay in Opotiki to pursue their career or study

Hope that my 18 year old neighbour's father who has done time for selling drugs, sees another chance and choices for himself

Hope that the other neighbour can afford a place to live that does not make them sick with the cold and the rain and the mould.

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Hope that the other neighbour's cycle is finally broken... she never went to school ..
much and now she is bringing up a mokopuna who is not going to school much either.

Hope that the young men who live on the corner can find better things to do with their
day then walk to the wholesaler at 11 and return with their first box of beer,

drink till 3

voices raised by 4

fight by 5

cops in at 6

Hope that the next day when I go for my bike ride I can bike around that corner without
getting a puncture from the broken glass that is laying smashed all over the road.

There is nothing in those statements about mussels, farms business and money

It is about hope

Hope that our people will again be a UMI – an upwardly mobile Iwi

Hope that we will be a proud Tribe again