

A sense of kaitiakitanga:

connectedness, responsibility, people and the environment



A CONVERSATION ABOUT THE FUTURE WITH /
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Shaun, thanks very much for the opportunity to talk to you today about climate change, resilience and managing for the long term. You've done a lot of work over the years bringing mātauranga Māori and tikanga values and principles into the environmental management and urban planning spaces. What shifts are you trying to create? What does a good outcome look like?

Kia ora, Tim, good to talk with you today. It's always good to identify the principles, and it's real cool to see the number of Government policies and strategic documents now that are underpinned by a core set of values. What's encouraging is the coupling of dual ideologies – identifying the New Zealand core values and identifying the Māori values, and then looking at how you actually bring in work plans that will achieve outcomes that align to those principles.

Over the past 20 years there's been quite a lot of work identifying what Māori value with respect to the natural environment. Probably, the need to respond and adapt to the core drivers in the Resource Management Act has forced Māori to identify what's at stake, which in general terms is kaitiakitanga – closely equivalent to that core ethic or principle of sustainable resource management.

Except that kaitiakitanga goes a bit deeper. Kaitiakitanga deals with issues of connectedness between people and the environment and people to each other, and the responsibility

that people have to look after the environment. There is a very strong core ethic there that natural resource management is about ensuring the sustainability and the livelihoods of your children, of your mokopuna and their children. It's probably the antithesis to the individualistic profit maximisation approach.

The other concept connected to kaitiakitanga is whakapapa. The ability to carry out kaitiakitanga is very much dependent on whether you have that genealogical connection to an area or you've been living there for a certain amount of time. This can be contentious. I know there are those folks who claim that they are kaitiaki, but don't necessarily have any whakapapa. Kaitiakitanga is borne out of ideology that has a connection to identity as well.

People can still claim that they have close connections to an area but that's different from kaitiakitanga, which is a Māori ideology. What I've noticed within public policy, particularly environmental policy, is that New Zealand is still struggling to identify those core concepts that really define New Zealand identity, particularly with connection to place. The debate around such concepts and ideology is still very much up in the air. Sometimes things get lifted from the UK or the US, probably the US because they are more proficient at pumping out literature that influences academics, and then the academics say, "These are our values here that we should buy into."



What we're starting to see now is greater discussion, which is real neat to see, around bringing together those dual world views to inform natural resource management policy. What's been quite effective is having really good governance structures to promote and support those dual world views. Governance structures that bring in people much more broadly than just the farming community or the business community. You have folks who might be involved with the environment, they might be involved in the social arena, along with iwi and hapū. As a result, you have more diverse and holistic ways of knowing the world, so that those whakaaro or ideologies help influence the outcomes in terms of the policy.

What we've also noticed is that when you get a diverse group of people involved, they think about outcomes that are much more long-term and intergenerational, as well as diverse. When you have only certain business interests around the table, it becomes all about shareholder value and export-led growth.

It's very important to have that holism within the governance structures for natural resource management, but probably in other domains as well. Natural resource management in New Zealand is really leading the way in terms of inclusion and diversity. There are really good examples in the co-governance of our rivers and natural assets like maunga, as well as forestry assets. What collaborative, co-governance types of arrangements do is bring people together who wouldn't necessarily be in the same space otherwise, to begin to have those conversations.

I've noticed this in a couple of instances. One was in Auckland roading. I was part of a committee with some Auckland folks interested in funding mechanisms for revenue shortfalls in the regional transport strategy. The process was a collaborative one with certain ground rules about what the process needed to achieve. It required people to come in and not have a fixed position, where you're actually learning from those around you. Over time they will shift or mitigate your position somewhat to ensure that you're working towards the common outcome. In those situations, you need a really good facilitator and a strong leader that's actually gonna help remind people what the desired outcome is, and also to provide space for other voices that are not necessarily always heard and may be dominated by the louder voices or stronger lobby groups.



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The other process I was involved in was Tai Timu Tai Pari, the Hauraki Gulf Marine Spatial Plan. That brought together folks from the farming community, commercial fishing, aquaculture, iwi and hapū, some other land management folks, local Government folks. Quite a diverse group. Very long process,

took over a couple of years, but eventually the Plan was created, and had shared outcomes, shared objectives.

Sometimes those shared community or collaborative approaches can get overridden by political directives. Unfortunately, I saw that occur in both situations. The community had come up with solutions – boom – this is where we want to go, where we want to head. Then some officials said it wasn't in sync with their economic approach and they would take it in a different direction. I saw these collaborative approaches get undermined by various political agendas and initiatives. That's probably a key risk in those collaborative spaces – you can get people working together and then for whatever reason, you will see one person or group of people just get lobbied and overturn the whole collaborative process.

That's a really important risk when you're trying to think decades ahead and create plans that will be durable. There are a couple of interesting planning scenarios in the environmental area – one is restoration or remediating things that have been degraded, to where they were before, some time in the past. But if we think about climate change 50 or a hundred years ahead with sea level rise, more extreme rainfall and so on, that's adapting to some uncertain future. What have you heard about what's most important, whether from a community point of view or a te ao Māori point of view?

Just tying into that idea of collaborative spaces, it's probably key to ensure that you've got those underlying principles and priorities clearly identified. They'll provide you with your roadmap, your guidance for the implementation plan based upon those core priorities. If your core priorities are around profit maximisation then your strategy will be aligned to that, but if your core priorities are about kaitiakitanga and intergenerational equity then you'll seek more of a balanced approach. It's not about going full-on into restoration; it's about realising that you need to provide wellbeing for the community in the short to medium term, which means we need jobs, we need training. That might mean looking at how we will actually transition to alternative forms of doing things, in order to earn our livelihoods. So what are the priorities that we might need now, in order also to mitigate some of the impacts from climate change?

A good example was our work with the Waiapu Kōkā Huhua, the Waiapu collaborative governance group for the Waiapu River on the east coast. The project was about identifying approaches for making Māori land more climate resilient. Currently the area is primarily sheep and beef, and it's very susceptible to erosion and drought. With climate change, the frequency and intensity of tropical cyclones is likely to increase, increasing the likelihood of heavy rainfall events that will cause erosion. That will then impact on the livelihoods, as well as lives, of the people in the area, whether from flooding or from landslides. The risks to human health and livelihoods is quite significant.

When we worked in the area, some of the people were thinking very much more long-term and about transitioning from sheep and beef into more forestry-based production.

We were initially going to do some farm modelling to look at the impact on sheep and beef continuing on – status quo, business as usual. But after engaging with people and their strong beliefs, in order to achieve kaitiakitanga of the rohe and restoration of the mauri or the lifeforce back into the area, we had to introduce, on a smaller scale, forestry aspects into a mosaic of land use and production.

So you're mixing it up – a bit of sheep and beef, a bit of forestry. For the high erosion risk areas – the very steep, hills and gullies type of country – you're probably looking at keeping that as forest long term – permanent forests. For other areas less susceptible to erosion, you want to transition into more production-type forestry, whether it's pines or mānuka or a mix of species.

There's quite large resistance to pine plantations in the area, given the impact that the Tolaga Bay floods had on the area and the slash that came down. That was probably due to poor forestry management – the lag in the enforcement of policy and monitoring of poor forestry management harvesting practices. So, the community is quite resistant to pine. Plus, they see it's just a monocultural type of forestry production that is not in line with the diversity of indigenous species that they would like to see in the area. Pine does bring in employment, so that's a good case for not actually reverting the whole landscape back into indigenous forestry, but some areas should be good for indigenous forestry. It needs a bit of mānuka, kānuka, honey and oil in some areas and then you might also let some of those areas revert.

So that's probably the message we've been promoting nowadays. But there's misinformation going around that doesn't help. There's extreme climate change scenarios that people latch onto, like RCP8 where the trees die out anyway because they can't handle the drought. So people are saying, "why plant trees?" I think we have to work on our messaging. If we do [mitigation] right, we might be looking at RCP2, which is a positive. Hopefully, fingers crossed, be optimistic about what we're heading towards. In order to get to that, you've still got to mitigate our carbon emissions through planting trees – so it's still essential.

I think some people get it, some people don't. Some people have this kind of nihilistic thinking, but others are like – no, we've got to get our own nurseries into the areas to support the afforestation programmes that are being promoted in the area. One Billion Trees is quite active, the Erosion Control Funding Programme is quite active in the area, to encourage the reversion of some of the areas or the active planting of some of the sheep and beef farms back into indigenous forestry or into pine plantations.

One of the encouraging factors is that the Forestry Council in the area supports a mosaic approach to land use and production in the area. I don't think the negative attitudes towards forestry are as predominant in the East Coast area as they are in some areas. I know that a lot of people are scared about transitioning over to forestry – they are like, "sheep and beef is the lifeblood of our country." Some Māori buy into that type of thinking, but other Māori, who are more connected to their identity and who also understand the implications of kaitiakitanga and the impacts of climate change, are more likely to transition to alternative forms of economic production.

It all depends on the messaging. And you've got to have the right people going around and encouraging people to make those transitions. You've got to be part of the local group, part of the iwi, part of the community. Listening to them, providing good quality information, giving good quality advice. Then they can say, "These are our core values – kaitiakitanga and manaakitanga and the like – and these are the approaches that we're gonna take in order to get there." If you have an approach which is a one size fits all, heavy handed type of approach, as you see with certain lobby groups, you just switch people off.

When I worked with the Kaipara Harbour Catchment Management Group, they were successful in bringing farmers along in a more collectively-focused community to improve the mauri and the wellbeing of the Kaipara Harbour. That's now been identified as a priority catchment and the Government has provided it with quite a lot of support. The way they did that is to help the farmers get access to good quality advice through support from MPI and MfE and the various grants that they offer. They brought in the right people, the right professionals, who were able to provide the messaging to that particular group in a way that resonated.

It's been real cool to see a number of flagship sites around the catchment become examples to the other farmers in the area about how to do it better, more joined up and working towards those key aspirations or outcomes that are for the benefit of all the community as well as for the harbour. It's been awesome being involved with that.

Probably one of the lessons that I've learned from it all is that you've got to have good leadership at the community level in order to get people on board with the vision that the group has come up with, or to actually help create the vision for the collective. If you don't have any good leadership, strong leadership or collective leadership, things can get a bit chaotic. I've seen it in all the collaborative exercises that I've been involved with. In the Waiapu case, what has also been key is to have people from the community properly helping those other voices that aren't heard that much to be brought to the fore, and to ensure that they're encouraged to offer up their vision or their way of achieving the outcome.



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In some cases, this comes back to adaptive capacity. When there is a lack of leadership capacity, what tends to happen is you lump everything on to one or two people and that can be quite taxing for them because they're spread across a number of issues and kaupapa. One of the issues with having a more engaged public sector with iwi and hapū is that those folks that do get engaged tend to be a bit more overworked

and in demand. I had some good discussions with Johnnie Freeland when he was at Auckland Council and he was working on a centralised approach. It didn't work, but the aim was to have a centralised approach where there was a conduit between the policy officials and iwi and hapū in order to get a holistic or some type of joined-up approach developed so that you didn't have folks from various groups going off and asking for this and that with overlaps of information. So we haven't really solved that particular issue, because you can't curb people's enthusiasm and say, no, you can't talk to those people, you've got to come through me.

At the least, you risk creating bottlenecks. The Waiapu case of understanding and managing erosion with strong community involvement is a really interesting one, for a bunch of reasons. Western science has a lot to say about ecology and biophysical processes and so on, and a bunch of familiar tools for that. If I understand your work in the mātauranga Māori area, including in the Waiapu case, you're trying to help people take a dual approach – mātauranga and Western science – to understanding the evidence and issues. What insights and progress have you been able to achieve through that kind of dual approach?

I started off on this particular journey with Garth Harmsworth, who's my mentor in this space. I've been really guided by his whakaaro on the kaupapa or ideas here.

The values and the principles that derive from the Māori world view inform the outcomes, the objectives and the tikanga or the approaches that you take to any particular issue. A lot of the time when working with scientists or economists, a modeller will go, "OK, I've taken into account the behavioural aspects from this perspective, and agent-based theory for farmers – now how do I get that Māori stuff into my model? Then I'll have mātauranga Māori in the model". We've really encouraged people to think about and take a different approach, which is more about, what do you think Māori might want – what are their aspirations and incentives around a particular resource management activity, whether it's climate resilience or energy management?



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And if you don't really know what people are going to be thinking about in this space, you probably have to actively engage with them in order to get a sense of their priorities. Once you've identified the priorities, then figure out how you might change the model's input parameters or get it to produce particular outputs in order to meet their needs. So at the end of the process, you have some type of multi

criteria analysis, or multiple data sets, to inform the decision that you're trying to make.

The trap that a lot of decision makers fall into is to think that you've got to have one number like a magical NPV or net present value number to make that assessment. What we're trying to say is that NPVs and so on are incredibly helpful and important, but they need to be brought alongside what the ecological data and models are saying and what the tikanga Māori and mātauranga Māori information are saying. While Garth and I advocate a principles-based approach, there's also quantitative aspects to mātauranga Māori that are really useful. There are also qualitative things like narratives, whakataukī, proverbs, histories and conversations around particular events that relate lessons for a particular area.

A classic case is one that Garth raised about Meremere. There was a taniwha in a particular area, like a tipua, a deity, a spiritual being or a guardian in a particular area that was close to the road. The iwi and hapū said, "Don't build the road there. There's a tipua there, a taniwha. The road is not going to work." The engineers said, "What are you on about? I don't believe in that mumbo jumbo!" They built the road, and I think what happened is that because the area was quite boggy and unstable, it sunk. They had to widen the berm out to improve the stability, and in the end I think they had to shift the road.

Those types of stories are supernatural stories. I grew up with them. If they're not in your culture then you're less likely to be open to them. It's tricky to bring the spiritual element into New Zealand planning, because planning is very much "efficiency" oriented. But I think people are starting to be a bit more open to narratives and stories and they're not so much taking them literally, but more open to what the actual lessons might be.

What are the reasons why people might tell these stories or frame them in a particular way?

The stories are some metaphorical representation of an inherent risk in a particular area. With engineers or planners – particularly the students – I try to encourage them not to just write the stories off. You have to listen to those stories. They are there for a particular reason. Dan Hikuroa writes about the Matatā, Bay of Plenty floods in 2005, where there was significant damage to the houses that were close to the lagoon or close to a stream that was coming off the hills. The old stories go that there's a mokomoko, a lizard, that lives in the area and when it rains, it lashes its tail. That references the fact that there's a lot of instability of that creek or stream in the area. When there's flash floods or a heavy inundation, the stream will change its course over that flat lagoon area where you built your houses, so look out!

So now the Government is looking at the relocation of those houses from that big site. It's costing the Western Bay of Plenty millions of dollars. If they looked at what the resource consent submissions were from iwi and hapū back in the day, they might've said, "Don't build in that area."

One aspect of coastal retreat is about the importance of place and ideas of permanence. What conversations that people are having about that? On the one hand, in New Zealand we value an attachment to place, but with the reality of rising sea level and extreme weather, we probably have to think about moving from some places.

I've done a little bit of thinking about that. Colonisation has had a lot of impact on Māori in terms of the idea of permanence. In earlier days, there was more transition from one particular area during a season to another area. During the warmer summer months you would go down to your summer location down by the coastal areas in order to fish. Then when the seasons got cooler you went back inland. I know the stories from my own hapū around the East Coast – we used to go into those coastal settlements and then back up into the hill country during the winter areas.

I also heard stories from Ngarimu Blair, Ngāti Whātua. He's got his map of where they used to traverse around the Kaipara, as well as through the Waitematā, and so on. I think that was quite common for hapū back in those days, but due to land loss and colonisation, people became more fixed. With the land tenure system that we have now, you couldn't necessarily go to particular areas. I think the property rights and tenure system has had an impact on the way that people live their lives. For Māori in the early days, the property rights regime was more a collective-rights based approach, which was administered by a regional official – a rangatira, and a local official – a kaumātua or an elder. So the rights were delegated from the rangatira down to the kaumātua for them to manage. They knew best who were the ones most skilled to go out fishing, collecting fruits and berries, or birding – and where the best areas were for birding. That meant that you had to have a more mobile population in order to access those resources.



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When our property rights regime was changed into the tenure system that we have now, it created more of that concept of permanence. We still had the tūrangawaewae concept of the place where you can stand, but it meant that there were multiple places where you could stand. At the same time, people had a number of affiliations to different tribes because of intermarriage. This sense of permanence has been due to a number of complex issues. People nowadays generally affiliate to one tribe, whereas back in the day, you could affiliate to a number of tribes depending on the situation. Nowadays we pick one and we just hang out with those people!

With the Māori land tenure system, generally what happened is that your grandparents or great grandparents went to the court and said, "I want land interests in this area," and, as a result, that locked you into a particular area for perpetuity. So people my age or younger think, we're only affiliated to that area because that's where our land interests are.

When it comes to sea level rise, that complexity will raise a number of issues in terms of identity and connection to place. Identity in terms of Māori culture is caught up with your connection to a maunga, your connection to a river, your connection to a tūrangawaewae. If the tūrangawaewae is under threat then that draws into contention where our new, next standing place is going to be. That's hard for people to get their heads around. Some people resist it, but then others, quite practically minded, go "I know of stories where our whareniui, our meeting house was going to be impacted and the old people decided, let's just move it."

So it was quite flexible back in those days in terms of tikanga – what the acceptable practices were. The complexity now with the loss of language, the loss of a strong identity and being grounded, rooted in who you are and where you're from, actually prevents people from making hard decisions about where they can relocate to. They feel, no, this is where it's always been and this is always where it's going to stay. But if you're strong in your identity, it's about thinking about future wellbeing for the children and the mokopuna and then making the decision to align to that principle. So it comes back again to the leadership qualities that we need in order to help bring people along, to make the transition of the whare, of the marae, to a new location.

We've been fortunate that Mike Smith, from the Climate Change Iwi Leaders, has been going around socialising the sea level rise data with a lot of communities. A number of iwi and hapū are having their own climate change meetings and Mike has been really active going around and presenting his mahi showing that with an X metre level of sea level rise, this will be the impact on your areas and, as you can see, this is where a marae is located, this is where your papakāinga, your housing collective is located. They're all going to be impacted so you need to start thinking about making a transition to alternative areas.

That can be quite difficult for some iwi and hapū who don't have access to land in another area. That raises Treaty of Waitangi rights and principles – if you have sea level rise, what is the right of recourse for those folks to get compensation for the whenua that goes under, so that they're able to relocate? Catherine Iorns did a large paper for the Deep South National Science Challenge identifying the potential impacts from a legal perspective, from a Treaty of Waitangi perspective around the impact of sea level rise on Māori communities, whether marae or papakāinga.

The other issue is the impact of coastal erosion on significant sites of interest. There may be stories and narratives tied to a particular place during the early days of exploration, or a rock or a coastal hill or a dune hill where a particular historical event occurred, or a metaphorical representation of the journey that an early explorer took. With sea level rise

and coastal erosion occurring there's the potential for that historical narrative to be lost. Those stories have to be collected to ensure that that history is not lost. Adequate resourcing is required for iwi and hapū to start collecting those stories now and ensuring their survival.

Then there's the usual issues around equal access to good quality services, because the vulnerability of populations to climate change varies and depends on socioeconomic status. Māori in more urban areas with low socioeconomic status will be very vulnerable to various pathogens that may be more prevalent in the environment, or to heat-related illnesses that will be all too common with climate change. Another health-related issue is around mosquitoes and the like in rural areas. Climate change might also impact on our tikanga, on our cultural practices, particularly if we get more active pathogens in our environment, whether from mosquitoes or from human sources.

It will have a significant impact, I think, on our festivals, Te Matatini, Māori cultural arts and sporting events, Māori touch, Iron Māori. We are already seeing increasing algae blooms creating toxicity in water, caused by drought or a heavy rainfall event. In Iron Man and Iron Māori events the swim leg is getting shut down.

To manage heat-related illnesses, a more well-off community might have access to water, shade and so on but if you have fewer resources then you'll see more negative health impacts. My thinking now is about lack of access to good quality air conditioning in the future, and while we might be talking about warming our houses in winter, there's also the summer to think about. For a couple of months of the year we're going to have more heat-related illnesses. We're seeing it now with record temperatures being broken just in the last month – Gisborne got to 40 degrees; Whangarei, Bay of Plenty 33 degrees. If you don't have access to the beach or water and if our waterways are polluted then you can't go and cool down. Equality and a fair and just transition are key issues.

To close off and finish, climate change is obviously a topic that makes people stressed and anxious, but from all that you've seen and heard and worked on, what makes you hopeful?

What drives me really is the children, our mokopuna. The core concept of kaitiakitanga has kept me grounded and aligned to those aspirations about intergenerational sustainability and intergenerational equity. It was a bit negative for a few years

when the focus of so much activity in our society was around consumerism and profit maximisation. But it does give me hope to see the general political narrative and strategies and conversations about being more responsive to the needs of the community, iwi and hapū – and about addressing big issues like climate change.

While that provides me with hope, there's still a kind of nagging doubt about how some sectors within our society are just dragging their feet with respect to mitigating or adapting towards climate change. You just have to keep ensuring that you are aligned to achieving something that will be of benefit for the wider collective, for the wider community as well as for your children, in order to give yourself hope. Otherwise, you're just going to give up in despair and become nihilistic.



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Being engaged in the science sector gives you access to information that is quite doom and gloom, but then you're also hearing messages of hope. If we get our act together within the next few years, particularly on mitigation and adaptation, then we can change the future.

I've seen a number of folks in the business sector or the social enterprise sector really making good efforts to change up their behaviour. Just hearing the kōrero, the narratives coming from certain sectors at the Climate Change and Business Conference that Gary Taylor and co hosted in October last year was really encouraging. It wasn't encouraging hearing some farming sector interests – it was very much heads in the sand. But not all of farming, because there are people wanting to take a more holistic approach towards how they're managing their assets, that aligns to the interests of future generations as well.

You've probably just got to work on the louder voices that tend to dominate our discourse and say, "Hold on, here's some examples from other folks in this sector – they are doing stuff as well."