

THE RIVER TALKS

ko au te awa ko te awa ko au

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O.R.A REPORT 2016

A REPORT OUTLINING DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ORA
PROGRAMME.

MAD AVE COMMUNITY TRUST

NARRATIVE REPORT:

Included in this first milestone report is a summary of our progress. The following kaupapa will be included in this report:

- *Tuāpapa*
- *The River Talks Summary*
- *Presenters*
- *Conclusions*

TUĀPAPA: Background

Since 2013 Mad Ave has managed annual awareness and education programs integrating the kaupapa of restorative action within Council plans, local organisations and schools. The engagement portion is aptly named The River Talks.

The celebrated engagement event typically happens in February and has done so since its 2013 inception.



Coordinated and Facilitated by Mad Ave Navigator Tāmāti Patuwai, Artists; from poets, dancers, graphic artists and musicians together with Iwi historians, researchers, botanists and scientists gather by the banks of the Ōmaru itself to give a full exposé based on the theme of Ōmaru River.

The audience is made up of schools, local residents, business owners, Council and Government representatives and the occasional overseas guest.

This entire process has been documented to ensure the kōrero can be clearly understood by all who have a stake in the health of the community and River.

Schools in particular are tasked with 'in class' work to assist their learning around the Ōmaru ecology. Local school teachers are particular generous with their efforts to integrate the River Talks impetus into their curriculums which is in fact one of the most significant impacts from our mahi to date. They can create art work based on their views of the River and they will have opportunities to study the flora and fauna of the area. Since 2013 approximately 2500 students and 1000 other participants have engaged in some way with The River Talks.



This summer format has had some very successful influence on community awareness building local engagements and education. The River Talks has additionally impacted Council planning and implementation and was the catalyst of the developing O.R.A initiative that is made up of Riparian projects, spray free maintenance work and curriculum support for local schools.

THE RIVER TALKS CONFERENCE

In February 2016 Mad Ave convened the 4th River Talks event.

The timing and format took was adjusted to allow for two elements:

1. *The attendance of Dan Baron Cohen*

Lead Navigator from Mad Ave Tamati Patuwai met with Cohen in 2011 with a cultural exchange arranged by the Auckland University. From this exchange Patuwai committed an intensive engagement process that would partner cultural and community action around the Amazon and global water systems. The River Talks is the outcome of this commitment.



Dan Baron Cohen, a prominent community-based art educator and cultural activist based in the Amazon, Brazil, was the keynote speaker at the River Talks.

Cohen toured from Brazil to speak about the Amazon river system and the current ecological and industrial pressures it is under.

River Talks is part of an global network with similar festivals being held in countries all over the world, including Brazil, China, India, Colombia and Peru.

"The idea of these festivals is to build a collaboration of people to protect and restore river systems all over the world," Baron Cohen says.

Cohen states that the Amazon is now suffering a state-led programme to turn it into an "industrial highway".

"The Amazon in the northern state of Para is going to receive so many hydroelectric dams in the next five to 10 years; it will consequently destabilise the ecosystem and have a catastrophic impact on the world," he says. Cohen goes on to say that this impact needs to be stopped and alternative energy methods, such as wind turbines, need to be investigated by the Brazilian government.



2. *To allow for a deeper inquiry to into the current state and work on the Omaru Awa.*

The format with the summer River Talks series will continue to occur. However the opportunity to convene with a wide range of stakeholders with our manuhiri from the Amazon was obviously to be an important one.

Following in this document is a summary of the activities and speakers of the conference.

CONFERENCE SUMMARY

On the 18th of April 2016, Mad Ave convened the River Talks conference – a meeting, to deliberate on the different views and interests that motivate how individuals and organisations are working with the Ōmaru River.

Over the course of three days in Glen Innes wā kainga Ruapōtaka Marae over three hundred people attended and heard from 30 speakers' and presentations on how Ōmaru restoration might be achieved, research on the current status of the river and what is currently being done about it. This document is a summary of the main kōrero what was shared and some post-event feedback. These reflections show some ways that theory may inform our practice of change.



Countless assertions from the three full days were entrenched in an understanding that the status of the Ōmaru is complex and canvasses the key features of the Conference:

- Environmental neglect & damage
- Social disparity and injustice
- Colonisation

The conference highlights the fact that there isn't one track alone that will alleviate these matters. Most noticeable in the Conference was an interest to working together to do what we are able to do. One of the karanga that the Mad Ave team have established is that we must stand together inside of the collection of methods to restore Mana to the awa and the community as a whole.



The wananga really consolidates the founding principles of O.R.A, which are:

- *Aroha – Compassion for the community, Papatuānuku and her uri included*
- *Courage – Boldness to take a stand and commit*
- *Integrity – Doing what we say*
- *Ako – Being teachable and learning along the way*
- *Whakamana – Respect given is respect received*

Several presenters, particularly from Mana Whenua, promote direct remedial mahi. There was a clear agreement from a majority of the attendees for such initiative and

that the degree of paru needs to be met with an immediate and high level of intervention. Making this happen in reality, given the various levels of negligence and displacement of the source issues, to engage people in lasting and sustainable ways is the challenge. The River Talks as a 'whole of community' platform was consistently celebrated and acknowledged as having this approach as its premise. Challenges of working together come forward in this type of engagement; as people and groups feel the contentions between each other. So again The River Talks as a medium of pulling forward the binding principles and that the 'big mahi' will come down to ordinary people, doing small and meaningful things to make a difference. Again to a large degree the wananga calls for integrity; as individuals, as organisations, as community.

Feedback from Council workers attending the Conference was that they were unsettled at the level of antagonism toward Council. So the wero here is that in order for the "whole of community" approach to work there must be a real choice to come together as mutual contributors. O.R.A as an initiative must be the prime driver to articulating the commonalities, the shared interests and benefits of building a collective restorative action.

In general there was a very wide range of perspective around relationship and care for the waterway. It is crucial to add that The Kura Kaupapa o Puau Moananui a Kiwa presented. The children showed their school studies around monitoring waters, developing recycling initiatives and gardening projects all inspired from their direct experience with Mad Ave and the past River Talks kaupapa. This is an ongoing mahi that will ensure Kaitiakitanga is well established in our rangatahi.

AUTHENTIC VOICE

The wānanga was held on Ruapōtaka Marae as an intentional cultural expression. The intent was to remain in Glen Innes, to be positioned near the Ōmaru River so that participants can access, to view the river and to ensure Māori protocols encompass the engagement process for the kaupapa.



Ngāti Whātua kaikōrero Ken Kerehoma proclaimed the statement:

"This is Papatuānuku, our mother, she is connected to Tangaroa, our brother"

Kerehoma insists, with support from many of the attendee's, that we must go back to how our tūpuna viewed the lands and the waters.

In this very direct and simple statement lies a fundamental urge, that was carried out consistently in the wananga, that we must foster our authentic voice, as Maori, as Indigenous communities, as carers and lovers of the environment, as Kaitiaki and workers of eco maintenance. The vision to care for and to support the initiatives to regenerate must be held at the forefront of any mahi undertaken.

Council and Local Board workers were confident enough to admit that there is a great lacking when it comes to the cultural frameworks of 'care' in the Council space. Additionally these workers commit their efforts to learning and doing what they can to influence positive changes that might bring about effective practice and guidance moving forward.

CONFERENCE PRESENTERS

At the outset, and in line with a real intent to honour our kawa and Tikanga, it is important to state here that the Pōhiri process that began the proceedings was given a good amount of time to happen. The lead team from Mad Ave determined that in order to give full light to our Ao Māori as an influential practice and tāonga, we must allow for full cultural expression and not squeeze our practices to fit.

Ongoing feedback from many of the 250 Pōhiri attendees was that there was a very clearly established process from the beginning (in the Pōhiri) given the warmth of the kōrero and robust waiata. The 'whānau feelings' were set and according to the feedback this was maintained throughout the entire wānanga.



Video documentation of all panels was taken and interviews of some of the key speakers are included in this. The footage will be edited for the final O.R.A report to Ohu Kaimoana at the completion of this contract agreement.

The following summary includes the various presentations that occurred over the three days of the River Talks wananga/conference.

NOTE: The Kinaki is a creative performance that is presented as a Kinaki to the panel presentation.

Monday 18th April

CREATED CONVERSATIONS

Tāmāti Pātūwai led a workshop discussion with participants around high level conversation pieces:

- Leadership
- Kaitiakitanga
- Collaboration

SPACE AND TIME

- Pita Turei - Kaikorero Purakau
- Molly Mullen – Auckland University
- Lyndsey Ula - Baha'i COMMUNITY
- Caroline Robinson - CABAL
- Kinaki: Nisyola Fifita



WHAKANGAHAU

- Te Wananga O Aotearoa

Maori theatre students will deliver their theatrical presentation based on the whakatauki:

- "Ko Au Te Awa, Ko Te Awa Ko Au"

Tuesday 19th April

KEY NOTE SPEECH:

- Dan Baron Cohen
- Kinaki: Camylla Alves

MANA WHENUA

- Lucy Tūkua: Ngāti Paoa
- Grayam Tipene: Ngāti Whatua
- Emily Karaka: Ngai Tai ki Tamaki
- Kinaki: Nisyola Fifita

RINGAWERA

- Stacey Bethesmen: Waicare
- Ruby Moore: Waicare
- Josephine Bartley:
Maungakiekie/Tamaki Local Board
- Mark Izard: Auckland Council
- Adam Johnstone: Tamaki Regeneration Company



- Kinaki: Antonio Te Maioha

GREEN THUMBS

- Te Kura Kaupapa o Puau Te Moananui a Kiwa
- Nerissa Henry: W.R.A.P
- Oliver Vetter: Sustainable Coastlines
- Eruini Hawke: Parakore ki Tamaki
- Kinaki: Hana Tawhai

TOI O RONGO

- Bernadette Papa: Kahui Kairaranga o Tamaki
- Cathy Livermore: Choreographer and Dancer for Taharangi
- Albert Refiti: Professor of Art and Design A.U.T
- Kinaki: Rewa Worley



WAIKUA, WAIORA, WAIATA

- Karl Bailey: Eastern Native
- Vava'u Environmental Protection Association
- Milly Grant with Ngapaki and Teina Moetara
- Kinaki: Milly Grant



WHAKANGAHAU

- Nisyola Fifita
- Ken Arkind
- Te Kura Kaupapa O Puau Te Moananui A Kiwa
- Camylla Alves
- Antonio Te Maioha
- East Cook Islands Community Culture Group

CONCLUSIONS

The River Talks, though infused with ancient protocol and guided by Tikanga mai ra ano, is an innovation in the environmental and community engagement space. So, generally as an unprecedented venture with only a few years under its belt it is important to inquire into the next steps.

The feedback we received indicates from the attendees and presenters, that there is absolutely a welcome future for The River Talks to continue to create a connecting and learning from a “whole of community” approach. Hui that are facilitated with such clear values at the base can step forward in confidence to inspire new ways of working and thinking that can nurture difference and foster meaningful collaboration. This is at the heart of what The River Talks has always attempted to create and it will always maintain this deep level of engagement integrity.

Some of the participants felt that the presentations were at times too short and that there was not enough time to have robust question and answer sessions. Other attendees' wanted also to have more time and space given to the gathering itself. Discussions were effective with moments of reflection but some felt they could have had more space to challenge and to explore what was being presented. Mad Ave attempted to provide as much information and engagement as possible in the time that we could afford. We will look to mitigate these constraints in the future.

Generally the participants responded very positively; that the accommodation at the Marae was warm and safe, the kai was nutritious and that the welcome of the home people and the coordination from Mad Ave was well done.

What is also prevalent in the respectful and emboldening responses is that Mad Ave, being a community group, led by local residents who have whanaungatanga with Iwi is also a key strength to the River mahi.

There is a clear mandate to convene another River Talks. Mad Ave will, with Te Ohu Kaimoana support, create the kinds of evidence base that will allow the mahi to continue and to grow in a sustainable and effective manner. So with that we look forward to the next iterations of The River Talks and with this kind of start to the O.R.A year's program the rest of the O.R.A mahi is an exciting prospect.

APPENDICES:

Radio Waatea Interview:

https://secure.zeald.com/uma/play_podcast/x_podlink/NDlwODk=/

Conference Poster



MAD AVE PRESENTS
A FREE 3 DAY CONFERENCE

THE RIVER TALKS

*Ko au te awa,
ko te awa ko au*

**HEALING ECOLOGIES:
OUR CREATIVE MIND AND MEDICINES**

PRESENTATIONS BY
Keynote DAN BARON COHEN – FROM THE AMAZON, BRASIL
ALSO - EMILY KARAKA, GRAYHAM TĪPENE – KAITIAKI O NGĀTI WHĀTUA,
ANATONIO TE MAIOHA, CAROLINE ROBINSON, TE KURA KAUPAPA O PUAU
TE MOANANUI A KIWA, PITA TŪREI, SEFA ENARI, TOIORA, MAUNGAKIEKIE/
TĀMAKI LOCAL BOARD, GARY SILIPA, TĀMATI PATUWAI, MILLY GRANT
LUCY TUKUA – KAITIAKI O NGATI PAOA, ALBERT REFITI + *More...*

MONDAY, APRIL 18 CONFERENCE POHIRI 10:30 AM
EVENING PERFORMANCE
TUESDAY, APRIL 19 CONFERENCE CONTINUES 9:30 AM
EVENING PERFORMANCE
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 20 CONFERENCE CONTINUES 9:30 AM

RUAPOTAKA MARAE 106 LINE ROAD, GLEN INNES
ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN 5-12 PROVIDED ON ALL THREE DAYS.
YOU ARE WELCOME TO STAY WITH US AT THE MARAE FOR MONDAY AND TUESDAY.

PLEASE RSVP TO TAMATI: MADAVESTUDIOS@GMAIL.COM

