

MINUTE 16 OF THE EXPERT PANEL

Record of Hui at Aaruka Marae

Central and Southern Block Mining Project [FTAA-2512-1153]

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY:	TASMAN TRANSCRIPTION
CLIENT:	ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AUTHORITY
DATE OF HUI:	17 JUNE 2026
AUDIO NAME:	TE RUUNANGA O NGAATI MAHUTA KI TE HAUAURU
TOTAL LENGTH OF AUDIO:	41:46
TOTAL PAGES:	12

[Start of Recorded Material: 0:00].

JOHN KANAWA: Kia ora taatou te whaanau. Ngaa mih nui. Kia koutou. Ngaa mihi nui ki ngaa panel. Nau mai haere mai.

Ko John Kanawa ahau. Maketu tooku marae. Noo Kawhia e noho ana. I am the Chairperson for the Maketu Marae Committee as well as the chairperson for the runanga.

Firstly, I wish to acknowledge the speakers that have come prior to us and also the koorero that you've given. I'm not here to speak over your koorero because the richness has come out of what you have talked about today and I acknowledge you all for that. Nga mihi.

I've just got a couple of notes and then I've taken some notes from today as well. From a strategic perspective, I suppose, is where I'm coming from and concern really about the ongoing consequences for the whenua, the wai, the wetlands, the ecosystems and the cultural relationships is a concern for the runanga.

Secondly, the future generations should not have to inherit degraded environments or unresolved environmental liabilities. There remains uncertainty around the long-term cumulative effects on the coastal and marine environment. Our concern is not only what Taharoa looks like today but the future generations, what it's going to inherit for them.

Just some main points I brought out today to acknowledge the speakers. Firstly, it's around the cultural significance of Taharoa and the koorero that's happened today. Kaitiakitanga, that in my view has been restricted. Engagement or the lack of to our whaanau in Taharoa, and not only to our whaanau in Taharoa, but the groups that have spoken and the health concerns that have been raised about the dust and finally the rehabilitation, which needs to be adhered to.

Those are the main points I brought out today. On behalf of the runanga, I want to give our position.

[off topic chat – technical issues].

Do you want to carry on while I have a look for it, and I'll finish off with our position at the end.

VERNA TUTEAO: Can you bring it up?

Teenaa taatou katoa te whaanau. Raatou kua noho mai koorero i a raatou koorero. Raatou kua hoki atu ki o raatou kainga. Teenaa hoki kootou te panel. Te kaikoomihana ko Verna Tuteao taku ingoa.

I am a founding member of the Runanga o Ngaati Mahuta, including Missy over here. Oh, Jason was also. Taitu was also an original member.

I just want to quickly go over what I know personally as Taharoa. I was here the majority of the time until I had to go to school, so five or six years old, I started school. Before that, I was here with my grandparents just up on a the hill over there across from the kura. To me, it was like Disneyland to be here. You had teeming waterways, you had bush, you had the black sand, and I love the winds. I'm a child of the wild wind, so it was a joy to be here.

When I went back to town, I thought I was going overseas. Every time I came back here, I'd tell my friends, 'Yeah, I'm going overseas', because I was going on a boat. That's how you got here. You had to come on a boat, and a long wait, so it was an exciting place to be as a child.

And then come the early mining era, it was exciting again because it was different. Masses of people arrived. Whaanau came back. The whenua was being warmed again because prior to that, there were very few homes here in Taharoa. Heaps of land, hardly any people. When the mining started, there were heaps of people and enough room for everyone. It was exciting because life changed and it was great for a time.

Oh, can we just go back to my prompts? A significant experience at the 20th celebration, 20th year (1992), I was becoming conscientised to ways of the world, politics and all of that and tinorangatiratanga. Jim Bolger was here. I don't know if he was the Prime Minister in 1992. I think he might've been, but he was here, and he was a speaker, and something that has never left my mind because it saddened me. He shared a question from one of the Japanese men, owners of the boats, I guess, or the people who were buying the exports. He was puzzled and he said, 'Why is it that the landowners are the ones wearing the hard hats and overalls?' I have never forgotten that, so that's driven me a lot, like why are we not in charge?

In 2020, the last resource consent time, my father had become quite active because he had noticed things had happened. Again, when you hear things like what Jim Bolger was asked, you start to wonder. There's something wrong with this picture. That was a sociopolitical thing and then there was the environment starting to make signs to us, so we engaged again as our whaanau trust in the 2024 resource consents as well and also as the runanga, we put in a submission to the environment hearings.

That's me, Verna Tuteao. I'm a sixth generation/seventh generation on this whenua, and I have great grandchildren. I am a member of the Tu Kotahi Tu Te A Whaanau Trust. My grandfather, after whom that is named, is on the back wall, and my father and uncles and others. I'm also a named claimant along with our cousin, Georgeous, Tauri King [? 8:20] down the other side there, named claimant for Ngaati Mahuta claims. I'm also on the Waikato Tainui remaining claims negotiation team, and I acknowledge Tremaine, who was here from Nehenehenui because she's part of their group in the claims, so we have worked together in recent years. I'm also, as I said, a founding member of Te Runanga o Ngaati Mahuta.

So, just a few shots, I'm not this old, but this is here. This is here is Te Taharoa, this whare here is what we're sitting in. I think it was the 1930s or '40s. My mother and father were married here in front of this whare. Kia ora. This is what it looked like when I was a child. Everything was on horses or walk, and we went over these humongous sand dunes. To me, I felt like Lawrence of Arabia. And then here was our vehicle to get across the lake to here, and then we'd get on a, if we were lucky, a sled pulled by the horse, or we had to walk. We could probably get a ride on a horse, but maybe there were only two horses that came. Often it was run, run from there to up here to the house. Kia ora.

And then this is our palace. This is our palace. It gave way to the moana before 1990 because we were already in another whare, in another place just around along the coast a little bit, but plenty of memories in this place. In our absence, the surfers loved to set up camp outside. I had a photo of you two, Meno [? 10:25], sitting outside there, and Bowie. Kia ora.

And then this is one of the photos about Duncan McIntyre there about discussions about the mining. Kia ora.

This is our flash way of getting to the beach. After the mining people, roads went in and we were able to find vehicles that could get us out to the beach from here. Everyone piled on the waka, and these are some of our whaanau enjoying Albatross Point. There's my dad and his mokopuna down to my children, our children. Our children's children haven't come along yet. This is the 1990s. Kia ora.

Yes, there's the remnants of our little bach and here's where we moved the first bach on this side further back from the sea. While we started to recognise changes, identify changes and physical changes and social structure and things like that, we had to recognise who was in charge and it wasn't us. It's nature, because she took our whare, and we had to rebuild. Kia ora.

I'll just go back to some things because as I said, we were involved in things in 2000 with the company of that time. We really came to know the lease, and these are things that have been coming out in recent months. I thought I would just share them for our whaanau, that we understand what our tupuna had agreed to at that time. 1st of March 1971, the lease between New Zealand Steel Mining Limited and Taharoa C, this was signed. These are excerpts from that. I've heard today about damage to our wahi tapu, our significant sites. Any company, and the current company holds to this lease, which I think is amazing all these years on, and they're still following the condition. Well, they're still bound to the same terms of that lease - 1971. You see there, prevent damage, safeguard fishing and associated rights, and then I had to notice, 'As far as practicable', because I have been saying to people, like I said on Sunday last week, 'The committee of Taharoa C have to ensure that the companies abide by these clauses, abide by these rules in the lease'. They need to remind them, you have to still give us access. We take it anyway, but we shouldn't have to fight for access. It's in there as part of it. We shouldn't have to remind people to stay away from wahi tapu because that's part of it.

And then there's the other thing there, we've been hearing about employment and you've heard that this morning as well. Again, it's that, 'As far as possible'. When we've gone on thinking for years by right, entitlement, Ngaati Mahuta uri have a right to have a job down there, but then when I reread that, 'As far as possible,' and it says the population of the Taharoa District. We know people who weren't of us here, local people, who worked here for a long time, so sometimes we only see what we want to see, so I had to relook at those things so that we are informed when we want to address things as far as possible, as far as is practical. Kia ora.

This is us in 2000s. Dad found problems. I don't know if that's my hand, I forget.

FEMALE VOICE: That's my hand.

VERNA TUTEAO: Oh, well, I did take the photo. That's a glass eel and we were doing some investigations with NIWA at that time. You don't have to read it and I'm not going to read it, my father just explaining, just describing his memories of fishing in one of the first casualties of mining, which was Turanga's crossing.

That's the beginning of us getting to be a pain in the backside of the council and Taharoa C at the time. I'll come back to this a little bit later. There's a map of ... and I think that did come from a NIWA report. This big picture here is this little lake here. It's not adjoined to the system. It is an artificial lake that was created for the mining operation, and with the help of the DOC

fisheries and NIWA, we were able to get the ear of the company that they had agreed to leave like a lake, leave it as it was and not backfill it, which were the terms of their consents because it was rich. That was rich, teeming with fish, species and plants, and just everything was amazing according to the scientists. Where it stopped was C Block couldn't make the decision, the C Block of that time, but I am pleased to say that the lake is still there. I don't know what condition it's in, but it is still there. It's still showing up on all of their maps, all of their application stuff. Kia ora.

So, just onto the runanga, which is what I'm here for. You know a little bit about me and my experience here, but the runanga, I became aware of our people, our old people talking about a runanga. That was before the 1995 Settlement Act for Waikato Tainui Raupatu. I thought then why do they think we need a runanga? They talked about it. That was 1995 when I first became aware because I had to take minutes at some hui. I still have those minutes.

And then 1998 I started to get involved and I started to get the heckles up, and this was the Taharoa C Committee, not the committee in total. Some members were promoting the idea of selling water from our lakes. That didn't go down well at all. I remember that meeting here and there it was an all-day meeting. It didn't go down well. I think they were selling it to the Arabs if people remember.

And then come 2003, the Foreshore and Seabed Bill, all of that was topical at the time. We were told that the runanga was the vehicle to carry claims - all claims. It still took us 10 years after that before we actually registered it, but we moved in that space preparing submissions and speaking to them, to the select committees and that. We prepared those things. The whaanau all came up to the oral submissions up in Tamaki, and that was our first experience. These are all evolving things that gave rise to the runanga.

The runanga was a vehicle. I came to understand it was seen to be a vehicle that a marae committee, a land committee cannot do. They can do it, but will someone listen to them because a land trust or landowner has a finite geographical area of responsibility. Nobody was handling the moana, so I realised, yeah, they're right, we need something who can address the foreshore and seabed.

And then cranked it up because they've gone now, Te Rohe Pootae claim to the Waitangi Tribunal. We participated in that, and thanks to our cousin down there, I call him Georgeous and he's gorgeous in every way, especially in bringing us numbers to be able to take a claim. That's George, Tauri [? 20:28] Philip King. We wouldn't have been able to step into that arena without him.

We participated in that 2010 right up to the final rounding off in 2016, and then shortly after that, we became aware that ... and we had already, so through the process of the wai ... what is it? 808 claims inquiry. We became aware that moves were being made on what we consider to be our rohe, on our identity, Ngaati Mahuta. That was Ngaati Maniapoto, so we went to high tail it to our big brothers, Waikato Tainui, because we are the southernmost boundary for Waikato. We are the southernmost boundary, the southernmost hapu of Waikato. We got involved with speaking with Maniapoto during that time in defense of our whenua with the support of Waikato Tainui.

Through that, we came up with an agreement called an oati, oath of blood or whatever, but it's an oati, an oath between the Runanga o Ngaati Mahuta and Waikato Tainui to do all things in support of each other to progress our claims. By and large, it's a shifting space, but without them, we have no say, so we need them. We have to keep those relationships going.

Likewise, keep the relationship going with Maniapoto. From the oati, then the claims process for Waikato was able to be kicked off because they had two of us, us and Ngaati Te Wehi engaging with them to be able to start the mandating process to get to the point where we are now, negotiations with the Crown.

And then all around the same time, you'll see, Macca [? 23:02], we had to file March 3rd, I think it was, 2017. We had a meeting here. There might've been about 12 of us. We didn't know what we were doing, but we knew we had to do it because Waikato told us. A whole lot of us along the coast, we all put in our applications for recognition of customary marine title and protection of customary rights. We all put it in on the same day, the last day. So, it's not Ngaati Mahuta, it's Takaroa, all of us were last day submitters. Kia ora.

This is just a map to show the broader area, but here we are here, this is us. Here's our boundary and over here Te Maketu. You'll have maps in the paperwork that you've got. I can also give you this presentation if you think it will be beneficial, but this is our area. This block here was Taharoa A. Initially there was a Taharoa Block and then our people went back and forth to court and it was partitioned into Taharoa A for us and Taharoa B south of Harihari, this area here for Ngaati Maniapoto. Kia ora.

These are just the hearings, the investigations of title over the years. This was the initial one where we got the Taharoa Block. 1892 was us pulling in Te Maika, and then this one here was the rehearing where Taharoa Block was divided into two blocks, one for Mahuta and a smaller part for Maniapoto.

And then the last one was the Maketu Block. That's how we get ... can you flick it there? That's how we get this, what I call in the claims, this is how we get this area.

This map here, and I did tell her that this was the map that I used for discussions with Maniapoto to say, 'Hey, this is us. This is not you, this is us.' Anyway, I also use it because it shows also our Macca [? 25:40] area. The purple within here is what we were awarded through the Land Court. That's what I deem to be our legal exclusive rights to this area; however, when we filed or when I filed erroneously, the application, it went this far south and it went that far north, so I had to have discussions and it still sits there like that because the lawyers say Taihoa, but letters have been sent to Marokopa, to Mirumuru Marae and to Ngaati Hikairo because even though we have a relationship with Kaarewa and we have a relationship with Motunau, it's not ours, and we should not prevent them, these two groups from being able to be recognised for the customary marine title we were imposing on their capacity because we said we came here.

My father always said, 'Motunau rocks'. No Dad, it's Anaputa, which is by Harihari Lake. We go there because of the relationship that Tash, our whaanau from Mirumuru spoke about. We go there because we are one people, so we go there by virtue of those relationships. Here to Hikairo, we go there, but they're the ones who own the motu, not us. Some of our whaanau do, but not Ngaati Mahuta. That's Hikairo.

Hence the two boundaries. The red is the greater area. It enables us to still ask for non-exclusive protection of customary rights, but this one here is all that we can say with a straight face convincingly to anyone including the High Court that this is ours. Having said that, you will have heard that Maniapoto did get a statutory acknowledgement alongside this, so we did have a battle. We did have a battle for a while, but this is what no one can deny. This is Ngaati Mahuta. There is what Tash was talking about, Te Ihu Ke Kawhia, the front of the waka. Is the K the front? No, ihu. Taharoa is in between and Jason loves to sing. Taituwha loves to sing this song. *Te Kei ki Marokopa*.

That's the boundary, and I don't know how many times, because Tash comes to the negotiation table because she helps with the Macca [? 28:53] as well. As well as carrying the Marokopa line, she's constantly encouraged to encourage her people to come with Waikato Tainui. That's their decision to make, not for Waikato to say, 'Come to us, we'll look after you'.

That's I guess a short story about how the runanga came to be and its purpose. Its purpose was for global things because otherwise we're

dependent on Waikato to fight the global battle for us, so we needed one closer to home. We needed another vehicle.

I just want to go back to this. So, opportunities, and I did hear you ask questions about opportunities and I think I did hear some people mention it. In those days, as I said, with the previous company and the previous committee of C Block, we were really excited that we might get the opportunity to have a nursery here, a fishery nursery. The idea was a fishery's nursery in this pond because it was so pure and vibrant, vital and everything about it. Caught lots of eels in there. And then move the juveniles into the lakes. However, you've heard that our lakes are not in a good state so if that was ever to happen, there's work to do for any species that might go from here.

For me, and I'm a dreamer and when people don't engage, that doesn't stop me. I'm a pest. I would think we can't give up and we just have to keep going back, knocking down the door cos one day that door will open. I have suggested, and I suggested this to Taharoa Sea the other day, I referred to this again. At the moment, it's one industry here on the whenua, and it's an extractive industry that damages the whenua and the moana and the waterways and the air. This is me blue sky streaming, what if we could convince Till [31:40] there's a potential for a second industry here, breeding something, but you'll have to look after the whenua around it. In my mind, I think of those possibilities. Not this one, but I dream of possibilities. For me, it's what can we do? I've challenged the C Block often like, 'What have you got on board for the future?' I don't mean the future post mining, but the future now.

Just before the hearings here in 2024, we went down to check out Wainui, cos it was in a bad state, and I saw all of these mullet swimming around like crazy like they didn't have enough room to move. Back in 2009, my father was told, 'Forget about the mullet. They're not there. Forget about them. Just worry, focus on what's there, which was the tuna and the whitebait.' Small numbers, small sizes, but they were there. There was no mullet seen for years. Our father died a few months later and almost immediately we get pictures from cousins working down there. 'Auntie, look. Look at all these mullet babies.'

So, my question, and I have asked people who I think would have an answer, maybe they don't have an appetite to look into it. I asked them, why have they come back? What has drawn them back to this congested space? The habitat is not good. Why have they come back? Why are they still here, and are they going to be here for years and years and years because mullet was a staple? It was a staple food to our people. Mullet, mussels, shark, fish,

ocean ones. Mullet was a staple, and are they here for good? Can we develop something from this? I know that in order to do that, we have to make some changes. Would Till [?: 34:05] be receptive to looking at something else?

No, for me, I've been in positions where people compel other people to do something. I know that when you encourage people and you love them into doing what you think is a good idea, they come to actually see that. You encourage them by saying, 'Oh, well, that's better than it was last year. Great.' You just encourage them a little bit. Like I said, I don't give up and I don't think we should give up. I think the onus is on us as uri of Ngaati Mahuta to ... here's an example.

We brought a fisherman, a renowned customary fisherman out here to help us because we had western science and then we wanted this Maatauranga Maaori expert to come. So, we brought a man from Murupara out here, and our people came to some wananga that he was running here. He gave us hope, and then he said to us one day, he said ... I was asked ... oh no, and this is how we've been.

We are dependent. We have been dependent on Taharoa C, my father included. I remember him standing in meetings at Maketu and saying to his cousins, 'You should finance machinery so that we can grow gardens again'. That's a dependence on one entity. That's not their job and that's not their whenua, but that's how we've seen Taharoa C. We've seen them as the deliverer of everything.

Now I've forgotten where I'm going, but there are opportunities. Yeah, that man, he's passed now, but he was a renowned ... did trap and transfer of tuna. He was all around the place and he would go over to Alaska or Canada with the salmon running. He was involved in that as well, and he said to us one day, 'People are waiting for the mine or for Taharoa C Block to clean up the mess.' He was told by some of our dad's cousins, 'We got all of this weed growing, we can't even get our boat in the lake'. His response was, 'Get in the water and pull the weeds out'. That's what our people did before mining when everything they had was done because they had to do it. He said, 'Get in the water. If you want to get on the lake, get in the water and pull the weeds out. Don't wait for someone to do it for you or pay someone else to do it.' That's our responsibility.

For me, kaitiakitanga doesn't have a limit. You do it, you are it or you're not. The outcome of that was this man came from Murupara. He brought his moko, a young girl, 13 years old, and Erin who was just buried today, they came out here and they cleaned up the lake. For me, it was how do we get

our people to get involved? We know, we see it, just do it like our old people did.

I think that's it from me. I'm always looking for answers and I believe that every problem hides 100 arm solutions and that's how I go about things. If I'm a pain to people because I pester them to talk about these dreams, then so be it. I think that's the attitude that I've inherited from my nanny, from my father, and I think that's something I can't stop. Kia ora.

JOHN KANAWA: Kia ora. So, just to the panel, Te Runanga O Ngaati Mahuta Ki Te Hauaauru, our position is we do not support the substantive application in its current form, and recommend that the panel decline the application. The proposal is not consistent with the Ngaati Mahuta Ki Te Hauaauru environmental management plan and does not adequately recognise or provide for meaningful engagement with mana whenua through mandated marae representatives or the exercise of kaitiakitanga.

The character, intensity and scale of the proposal when assessed on a precautionary and ki uta, ki tai basis gives rise to significant actual and potential adverse effects. So, nga mihi nui. Kia koutou to the panel, and thank you for your time today. Thank you, Verna and Ware [? 39:17]. Kia ora taatou. No questions? Ka pai, I can sit down.

DAVE: Thank you very much both. Thank you for your rundown on the history of the runanga and it's an obvious importance for the iwi and the local area and representing all those interests complicated as they are for me to understand, but important.

John, your summary was brief, but that was based on the written submission as well and really hits the high points for you in terms of what's important. Panel, any questions?

Speaker 4: No, I was just going to make a general reflection, but I can probably wait 'til the end, Dave, but again, very, very grateful. I'll get to it, but essentially there is so much of the fast track process that is all about words on paper. The Applicant's spoken to us through an enormous amount of words on paper and we need to read and carefully digest that as we do these words on paper, but tikanga Maaori is an oral tradition, and this for us has been a way to bring what we've seen on paper to life and to see your wonderful, te aataahua o too kanohi, when we hear these words. We just thought this was a really good, efficient and helpful way to get better informed about what you told us in your comments. That really has proven itself I think today to be well worth the investment that everyone's made in this day, so thank you. That's all I really wanted to say as a reflection. Thank you.

DAVE: Well, that's probably a reasonably good chunk of our closing comments.

Speaker 4: Sorry.

DAVE: That's all right.

Speaker 4: It wasn't a question as it turned out.

DAVE: No, Melana [?: 41:35], did you have anything you were going to insert in there before you came back to us for our wrap up?

[End of Recorded Material: 41:46]