

24 Partnership in museums: a tribal Maori response to repatriation

PAUL TAPSELL

This chapter provides a perspective for international museums and repositories of cultural material to better understand the advantages of forming long-term relationships with the local indigenous kin groups, upon whose ancestral lands their institutions stand.

I normally circumvent the subject of repatriation because, in my experience as a curator, most elders consider the majority of 'Maori' demands for the return of ancestral treasures, or *taonga*¹ and human remains² a red herring that distracts from the need to address other partnership initiatives. During the many returns of museum-held *taonga* to my tribal homelands (I am a descendant of the Arawa tribes of Aotearoa New Zealand) the word 'repatriation' was rarely used. Many elders enter into negotiations seeking pathways of mutual benefit for all involved, and for them, the concept 'repatriation' seldom finds context or currency as it can invoke reactive rather than proactive interactions. This chapter, therefore, is not about repatriation but instead about partnership. To demonstrate the benefits of such an approach I will use the Auckland Museum's 1997 unencumbered return of the great cultural artefact Pukaki as my example. This unprecedented gesture of institutional goodwill sets an example for other museums worldwide. Pukaki's homecoming heralded the beginnings for Auckland Museum and its tribal partners, Ngati Whatua O Orakei, of an exciting new journey down a pathway of partnership regarding long-term management of all things indigenous within its four walls.

Pukaki is a very large wood carving of a famous Ngati Whakaue – Te Arawa ancestor, named Pukaki, who lived some ten generations ago in the central North Island's geothermal district of Waiariki (see Figure 24.1). He was carved in 1835 as a protecting gateway to the main village (Ohinemutu) on the shores of Lake Rotorua before being modified in the 1850s to resemble the present statue-like figure recognized today as Pukaki. In 1877 certain Crown agents somehow acquired Pukaki and then presented him to the Auckland Museum as their own personal gift, where he resided for the next 120 years. Pukaki gained international recognition when he became one of the most popular attractions of the 'Te Maori' exhibition which toured the United States and New Zealand from 1984 to 1987. Not surprisingly, when he returned home he was greeted as a national icon and has since featured in numerous



Figure 24.1 Pukaki just after arriving in the Auckland Museum c. 1878

Image courtesy of the author

publications, upon thousands of posters and was even reproduced upon New Zealand's 1990 commemorative twenty-cent coin.

Absent from all the publicity, however, was any account of the actual events which allowed Pukaki to leave Rotorua in the first place. This omission was discovered by Hamuera Taiporutu Mitchell, who was part of the large elders' contingent (comprised of representatives from the tribes of Te Arawa, Mataatua, Tuwharetoa and Taitokerau) invited by the Crown to participate as spiritual specialists, helping open 'Te Maori' while in the United States. When Hamuera and other Ngati Whakaue elders ritually greeted Pukaki in St. Louis, it represented the first time ancestor and descendants had been formally reunited since 1877. But their happiness was soon replaced by confusion because the associated label made no mention of why Pukaki left home. Instead it stated that the carving was a personal gift to the Auckland Museum by a famous

nineteenth-century Auckland Judge, Mr Justice Gillies. This caused great consternation amongst my elders, especially Hamuera, who had no knowledge of such a person. He was taught by his old people that Pukaki had been presented to the Crown as a seal of trust after it promised ownership of the planned township lands would remain with Ngati Whakaue in perpetuity. Unfortunately the resulting 1880 treaty (Fenton Agreement – later enacted as the 1881 Geothermal Springs Act) collapsed in 1893 when the Crown compulsorily purchased Ngati Whakaue's township shares. It was no coincidence that my people soon after suffered poverty and hardship. It was not until 23 September 1993 that the Crown finally acknowledged its breached promises and delivered a full and final settlement to Ngati Whakaue ('Agreement ...' 23.9.93). The 1993 compensation package included land and other measures, but the direct association of Pukaki to the township formation remained obscured.

After the signing of the 1993 Agreement, while I was still the curator of the Rotorua Museum, Hamuera asked if I would research the full history of Pukaki. Sixteen months later I was able to report back to him and the tribe the actualities surrounding Pukaki's 1877 acquisition. This I later presented as an M.A. thesis titled 'Pukaki: *Te Taonga o Ngati Whakaue ki Rotorua*' (Tapsell 1995). In it I demonstrated the political manoeuvres associated with Pukaki's collection by one particular Auckland Museum official, Judge F.D. Fenton, who was conducting land negotiations throughout the Rotorua District in 1877. During one of these negotiations he ceremonially received Pukaki from Ngati Whakaue in his capacity as representative of the Crown. However, rather than shipping the carving to his political masters in Wellington, Fenton instead arranged for Pukaki to be personally gifted to the new Auckland Museum by his colleague and president of the Auckland Institute and Museum, Mr Justice Gillies. Thereafter, the details of the acquisition were hidden so as to prevent Wellington rivals from learning otherwise. It appears that the motivation of these Auckland judges was personal – they did not want to surrender such a museum prize to their southern political adversaries – and by obscuring Pukaki's acquisition, not only Ngati Whakaue but the rest of New Zealand remained ignorant of the true circumstances. That was until the 'Te Maori' exhibition finally brought descendant elders face to face with their ancestor, Pukaki, after a century of separation.

In 1996 my thesis was given to the Auckland Museum to inform them of these historical facts. On 4 April 1997 a delegation of Ngati Whakaue elders met with the Auckland Museum. As the result of the meeting, the museum not only accepted and agreed with the research findings but, after consultation with its home tribe – *tangata uhemua*³ – advisors (Ngati Whatua O Orakei), took the initiative by acknowledging Ngati Whakaue as still the 'owners' of Pukaki. The meeting, which was held under the customary authority – *mana*¹ – of Ngati Whatua O Orakei, concluded with both sides expressing a strong desire to meet again and work towards forming a long-term partnership. In effect, the museum was offering to present Pukaki back to his original custodians.

On 15 June Ngati Whakaue met amongst themselves to discuss the situation. The elders consequently issued an invitation to the museum to visit Te Papa-i-Ouru Marae⁵ – ritual courtyard – in Rotorua, on 2 October 1997: the 120th anniversary of Pukaki's original presentation to the Crown (Judge Fenton). Upon receiving

confirmation that the Auckland Museum would be presenting Pukaki back to Ngati Whakaue on 2 October 1997, the elders decided that what was begun in 1877 could now finally be completed: i.e. the original gifting of Pukaki to the Crown as the paramount *taonga* associated with the original formation of Rotorua Township.

Pukaki's homecoming was a memorable all-day occasion. It began at dawn in the Auckland Museum when Ngati Whatua O Orakei, Auckland Museum officials and Auckland-dwelling Ngati Whakaue descendants met with Pukaki to escort him home to Rotorua. The early rituals were interrupted for half an hour by an urban Maori protester who tried to physically prevent Pukaki's removal from the museum. He was under the impression that Pukaki was in fact someone else and should not be removed. After some earnest discussion the protester finally stepped aside and allowed Pukaki's trip home to proceed. Three hours later Pukaki arrived at Te Papa-i-Ouru Marae, the exact place he had originally departed from 120 years earlier, and about 2,000 people gathered to welcome him. With due ritual he was escorted up to the *marae* entrance by Ngati Whatua O Orakei and then passed into the care of his descendants, Ngati Whakaue. The following ceremonial speeches, conducted between the hosts and visitors sitting on opposing sides of the *marae*, allowed the Auckland Museum Trust Board Chairman to officially present Pukaki back to Ngati Whakaue (see Figure 24.2). Thereafter, both sides of the *marae* joined as one in the ritual of the *hongi* – pressing of noses so as to share the breath of life – which symbolically ended the ceremony and allowed his many waiting descendants to flock around their ancestor to greet him in person.

A short while later the Governor General of New Zealand arrived upon the *marae* and his visit climaxed when Ngati Whakaue presented Pukaki to him along with the signed memorandum of understanding. Thereafter, in his capacity as the foremost representative of the Crown in New Zealand, His Excellency declared, 'I have great pride and great joy in accepting this gift on behalf of the nation' (Tapsell 1998: 332). Pukaki was then escorted by Ngati Whakaue warriors from Te Papa-i-Ouru Marae in Ohinemutu along the main road of Rotorua named Fenton Street, across Pukaki Street and into the Rotorua District Council buildings. Upon arrival he was ritually placed on display in the Council's upstairs gallery from where he can once more oversee his customary lands and descendants (see Figure 24.3).

As the result of a meeting between the Crown Minister in Charge of Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations and the elders of Ngati Whakaue, a memorandum of understanding was drafted and later ratified by the New Zealand Government. The Auckland Museum had also demonstrated partnership qualities in moving towards fulfilling its 'core mission – to represent what is correct in history, and correct in culture and science' (Chairman, Auckland Museum Trust Board, Television Three News Item, 2 October 1997). Ngati Whakaue's elders persuaded the Crown that it was only right to also include the museum as a signatory to the memorandum alongside the Crown, the Rotorua District Council and Ngati Whakaue. The memorandum details the reasons behind the gifting of Pukaki, future guardianship on behalf of the nation and outlines the formation of the Pukaki Trust.

Today, Pukaki is revered as a *taonga* who belongs to all the people of New Zealand. Accordingly, he is now managed by the Pukaki Trust – representing the nation – on



Figure 24.2 Pukaki finally home upon his *marae*, 'Te Papa-i-Ouru', after a 120-year absence

Photograph: Hamish MacDonald

which sits a representative from Ngati Whakauc, the City of Rotorua, the Auckland Museum Trust Board and is chaired by the Minister for Culture and Heritage, who happens to be the Prime Minister of New Zealand.

The Pukaki example aptly demonstrates a positive outcome when museums are proactive regarding the future management of items in their collections, especially those which may have arrived via dubious circumstances. In the future, however, commitment by museums to proper research and scholarship of their indigenous collections will allow them to take similar initiatives where *taonga* ought to be returned. If negotiations of any potentially contestable items originate from museums, rather than tribes, it will undoubtedly foster a sense of goodwill, trust and partnership. It will also ensure inappropriate repatriation demands by non-mandated persons are dealt with accordingly.

In New Zealand, it is protocol for tribes visiting museums beyond their territory (to discuss museum-related issues) to establish contact with the *tangata whenua* (home people) in order to give appropriate recognition to their customary authority over the land upon which the museum stands (*mana o te whenua*). Generally, *tangata whenua* ritually receive their guests, or *manuhiri*,⁶ onto their *marae*. Central to such meetings are genealogical ties, past interactions and the reason for visiting: certain *taonga* held within the local museum. The *tangata whenua* carry the responsibility of being spiritual and customary guardians – *hunga tiaki*⁷ – of the land and all that dwells upon it,

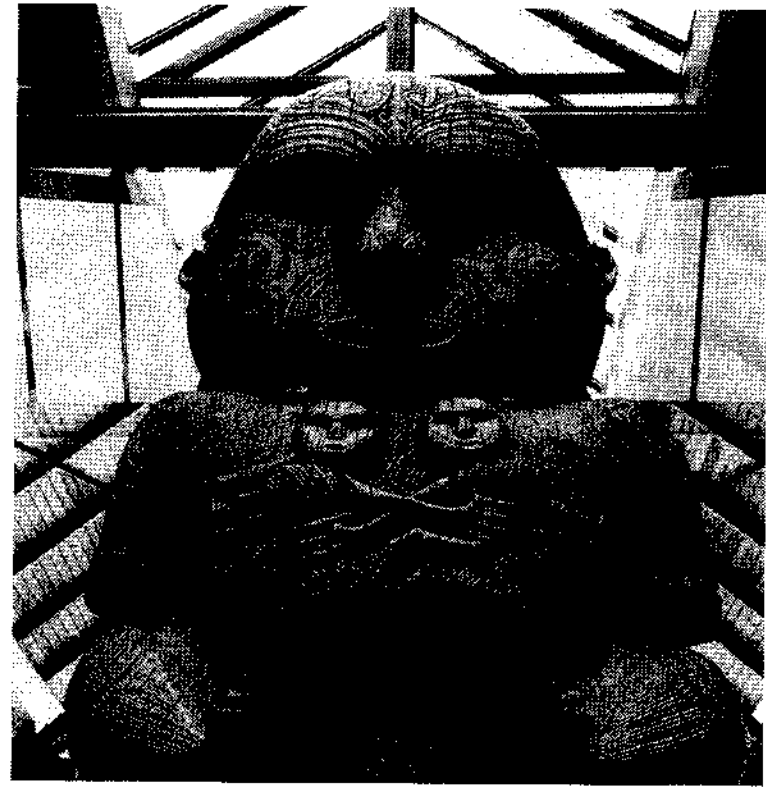


Figure 24.3 Pukaki today watching out over his lands and descendants of Rotorua

Photograph: Hamish MacDonald

including *taonga* that rest in a metropolitan museum. Thus, where *manuhiri* learn that the local museum is obstructing the *tangata whenua's* *hunga tiaki* role, there are also implications for the *manuhiri* whose particular customary responsibilities lie in respect of individual artefacts. Given the interconnected guardianship obligations of both groups, the *manuhiri* inevitably supports the *tangata whenua* to seek resolution where trusteeship accountabilities are threatened.

Tribal elders throughout the country consider it highly important to focus upon museum – *taonga* issues in terms of forming partnerships through the museums' home tribes. This was aptly demonstrated during Pukaki's return. They recognize that since the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi (1840), tribes and the Crown have become inescapably entangled in the development of New Zealand as a nation. Only since Te Maori, however, have museums sought to include nationhood narratives and *taonga* interpretation from Maori perspectives. It appears that the museums which have been most successful in achieving this have begun from the ground up – *mana o te whenua*⁸, namely, developing working partnerships with their home tribes as opposed to any 'Maori' who are not necessarily from the local group. Transferring responsibility for

all things Maori back to the *tangata whenua* allows them to invoke an appropriate customary platform (*marae* space) upon which all outside kin groups can interact with the museum.

In 1996–7 the Auckland Museum considered wider issues than the politically emotive repatriation threats of the time (see Tapsell 1998: Section III for examples) and recognized the positive long-term implications of developing and maintaining a partnership with the home tribe, Ngati Whatua O Orakei. The acclaimed 1997 presentation of Pukaki back to Ngati Whakaue verified the wisdom of this decision.

In other circumstances, some young urban-based Maori have differing opinions on process, policy and practice regarding Maori involvement in museums. These younger leaders are financially winning urban Maori support, through Crown-sourced funding, and in the process convincing many of them that tribally ordered knowledge, and all it represents, no longer has any context in urbanized Maori New Zealand (see, for example, John Tamihere's comments in Melbourne 1995: 109–18). Skilled in using the media, these individuals are attempting to redefine *taonga* and human remains as pan-Maori identity markers in an emotionally charged political game of gaining wider access to Crown-controlled resources. Consequently, kin-based partnership initiatives regarding metropolitan museum-held *taonga* (like the Pukaki example) are being overshadowed, and not surprisingly the word 'repatriation' dominates the media. Unfortunately, some New Zealand museums continue to negotiate with non-tribal urban authorities/individuals in reaction to this urban-driven political rhetoric of repatriation. Consequently, *tangata whenua* upon whose land these institutions stand are often excluded from such discussions, inevitably leading to non-customary actions being endorsed by museums at the home tribe's expense. The end result is an increase in repatriation demands, withholding of customary knowledge by tribes, community division and non-cooperation from *tangata whenua* – all of which museums can no longer afford to ignore if they wish to remain vital.

If, however, home tribes (*tangata whenua*) are awarded proper recognition at museum governance level, the future vitality of museums across the planet should flourish. By laying down a firm policy foundation of partnership that is appropriately managed and resourced, and by facilitating collaborative research of indigenous collections under the customary authority of the home kin groups, there is no reason why museums, with urban descendants beside them, could not embark upon proactive journeys of meeting and engaging with elders upon their homelands – perhaps on the other side of the world – from where ancestral items held within their collections originated. Thereafter, so long as all parties – the museum, its local kin group and the outside kin group genealogically associated with the ancestral treasure in question – have the same common goal: the dynamic perpetuation of culture and identity, then options regarding the future of such items can be properly negotiated at the required kinship-office leadership level that ancestral items symbolically represent. As long as policy is firmly in place and goodwill continues to exist on both sides, the likely result will be sustainable development of long-term partnerships through collaborative research, conservation, collection, exhibition, presentation and storage of tribes' most valuable items by which everyone – ancestors, urban-based descendants, unborn generations and non-Maori – can prosper.

Since Pukaki's return in 1997 the Auckland Museum has not only consolidated its Maori advisory committee of *tangata whenua* representatives (*Taumata-a-Iwi*), adopted a guiding Maori charter (*Kaupapa*) and hired specialist Maori staff in upper and middle management, it has also embarked upon a proactive pathway of developing Maori policy and procedure throughout the whole organization. Indeed, by adhering to the traditional values of its local kin group the Auckland Museum has maintained the intercultural momentum set by Pukaki's auspicious return and continues to grow – from the ground up – as an international institution committed to forming sustainable long-term partnerships with indigenous peoples.

NOTES

- 1 *taonga*: any tangible or intangible item, object or thing that represents a Maori kin group's genealogical identity in relation to its estates and resources and is passed down through generations (see Tapsell 1997 for a detailed discussion concerning *taonga* and associated kin group values).
- 2 Human remains: *whakapakoko* (mummified bodies), *uru-moko* (cured heads) and *koiwi* (scraped bones adorned with red ochre). Apart from some flutes, ancestral remains are never referred to as *taonga*. Up until the acceptance of Christian burial practices, these remains and the most restricted *taonga* were either secured in *whare koiwi* (special store houses) or hidden upon the kin group's land. The term *moko mokai* refers to preserved heads of enemies captured in battle who were thereafter used as objects of degradation.
- 3 *tangata whenua*: people of the land; home tribe; local people; descendants of a specific Maori kin group organized according to a common ancestor. Kin group which holds exclusive customary authority over specifically defined estates.
- 4 *mana*: authority; power; prestige; status; integrity; self-esteem; source of energy from the gods transmitted through ancestors; ancestral power embracing people and their estates.
- 5 *marae*: meeting ground; central courtyard; plaza; communal meeting place in front of an ancestral house; three-dimensional space extending beyond a tribal meeting house or a war canoe prow; political, social and economic focus of tribal lands; a place where kin group elders receive visitors, perform ritual and conduct oratory.
- 6 *manuhiri*: visitors; outsider; guests welcomed onto *marae* by home people (*tangata whenua*). Any person(s) visiting/living/dwelling upon a home kin group's ancestral land (*mana o te whenua*) to which they have no direct genealogical connection.
- 7 *hunga tiaki*: (Te Arawa dialect for *kaitiaki-kaitiakitanga*) guardian – spiritual and physical – who acts under the authority of the *tangata whenua*; trustee; manager of *taonga* (and estates) on behalf of wider kin group; protector; custodian (male or female); a customary role fulfilled by or delegated by members of the *tangata whenua* tribe's senior family, i.e. elders (*rangatira*) and their priests (*tohunga*). Term may be applied to wider kin group.
- 8 *mana o te whenua*: authority from the land, authority of the land; exclusively exercised by the *tangata whenua*.

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25 *Indigenous governance in museums: a case study, the Auckland War Memorial Museum*

MERATA KAWHARU

Customary Maori principles of trusteeship and resource management encapsulated by the term *kaitiakitanga* find relevance widely in tribal development in New Zealand. In the context of museums, *kaitiakitanga* is no less important. It is a principle exercised by tribal groups who maintain customary authority (*mana whenua*) over a specified geo-political territory. Such groups or *tangata whenua* have inherent responsibilities associated with the region - with lands and environmental resources, as well as material treasures, many of which are housed in museums located upon these lands.¹ In recognizing the importance of local groups exercising their particular *kaitiakitanga* responsibilities, the Auckland Museum has, through its Act (The Auckland War Memorial Museum Act 1996) established a forum called the *Taumata-a-Iwi* (The *Taumata*). The *Taumata* provides advice to the governing Trust Board regarding management of the treasures (*taonga*) held within the Museum. This chapter explores the Auckland Museum's governance structures and the strengths and weaknesses of policy and practice in order to understand the range of museum-related issues with which Maori are primarily concerned. In particular, it focuses on the *Taumata* and the exercise of *kaitiakitanga*. The context out of which the *Taumata* has arisen is also discussed. While the museum's governance model is unique nationwide, if not internationally as well, it nevertheless follows similar joint partnership trends elsewhere in New Zealand, developed particularly since the mid-1970s as a result of the Treaty of Waitangi claim process and legislation protecting Treaty guarantees.

KAITIAKITANGA

Preliminary comments about the meanings of *kaitiakitanga* are provided as background for understanding the relevance of the principle to Maori. *Kaitiakitanga* is not an old word, but the values it represents have found centrality in customary life since time immemorial (see Kawharu 1998). *Kaitiakitanga* literally means guardianship and trusteeship but also has broad interpretations including resource management or sustainable development. Shades of meaning vary depending on occasion and purpose. However, a common element is that all resources - human, material and