

Taumata inauguration 9 August 201 – Dr Robin Peace

E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e rau rangatira mā o ngā hau e whā, tēnā koutou katoa. Te whare tipuna e tu nei, te marae e takoto nei, tēnā korua. Laurie, me ngā tangata whenua hoki, tēnā koutou. Te Tumatakuru, tēnā koe. Ngā hoa, me ngā ākonga o mua, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa. Ko tēnei te wā i noho ora mātou ko lan i roto i tēnei taumata: te taumata o tātou nei mahi mō te rōpū arotaki o Aotearoa. Kia ora koutou.

Colleagues, friends, visitors from the four winds, the community of evaluators in Aotearoa who are represented here, my greetings to you all. I am honoured by this appointment, and humbled.

He aha te mea nei – te Taumata? What is this hill that we have been invited to? To a Pākehā geographer, a hill is a piece of the natural world. It has a rich interior life, driven by tectonic forces, that have cast shape and form across millennia. It has a rich exterior life, carved by wind and water, that have recast its shape and form across millennia. It has a character and a beauty that is the sum of all these ‘forces’ and can be ‘understood’, in the English language, to lie within the conceptual realm of ‘hills, mountains, and ranges’, orographies, contours, and relief. It is seen as a thing to be climbed, to be conquered and as a place that affords a great view.

In te ao Māori, however, I believe the concept of Taumata entails something other than this quotidian anglo-geographical view of ‘hillness’. My sense is that this particular hill, this taumata, entails identity, relationship and responsibility, and stands as a metaphor for a gathering place, an aspiration, and obligation.

I have been thinking about what this role will entail, for me, for us both, in the inaugural encounter with this space, and for those who will join us this year and in years to come.

The identity of this Council will be defined by its kaupapa – but that is not fully established here beyond the principles the underpin *anzea* as an organisation, and I believe it will be part of our job to initiate a footing for the development of the Taumata roles and responsibilities.

What has been in my mind is three images, that to me signify a starting point for our thinking about what this Taumata, this Council, might be and become.

The first of the images that came to my mind when I started to think about this council was of a mantle - a cloak. Something that protects the identity of what is embodied by the cloak. Just as a fine cloak - a korowai or kaitaka - may be bestowed on a person to signify status and authority – so too, such a cloak signifies that responsibility has also been bestowed and undertaken.

A second image I have of the Taumata is that it may be the resting place for three particular baskets of knowledge.

The first basket belongs to / represents the role, importance, and work of tangata whenua in the evaluation field in Aotearoa and internationally. The Taumata, in my view, will need to accept a responsibility toward this taonga – to be *he ngakau toitoi* – to carry the wisdom of age and experience – to serve and uphold the mana of Māori evaluation and kaupapa Māori wisdom. And while this clearly means that Māori need to stand in the Taumata, Pākehā also have a serious and challenging responsibility here.

The second basket, as I see it, belongs to / represents the work of the practitioner community of evaluators in Aotearoa – women, men, Maori, Pacific peoples, new settlers, older settlers, independent contractors, government employees, novice and experienced – who engage in evaluation practices wilfully and wittingly in their working lives. In my view, the Council's role here is to contribute to the development of evaluation – through participating in talk about standards and competencies for evaluation practice, to uphold the mana of *anzea*, and to act as an advocate for ethical evaluation practice.

The third basket, in my view, belongs to / represents the work of those who develop and disseminate knowledge about evaluation – its intellectual foundations, its critiques, the theories and approaches that inform practice, and the methodologies and methods that facilitate the gathering and interpretation of data. Here, in my view, the Taumata has a role in supporting the development of professional training and qualifications, seeking opportunities for evaluators to share knowledge internationally, and developing a clear and well articulated view of what is required for the ako of evaluation in Aotearoa.

These baskets are all related to each other: *E raka te mauī, e raka te katau* .[A community can use all the skills of its people]. Whatever the evaluation community comprises, it is very diverse: it embodies many different people with many different skills. The role of the Council is, wherever possible, to support these differences, nourish them, and ensure an inclusive community of practice and scholarship comes to thrive in Aotearoa.

My final image returns me to the idea that a hill is also a rock. The field of evaluation is not a simple place to be, to work in, to understand, and perhaps the Taumata sometimes just needs to be something that stands firm – ka tū, ka tū, ka tū.

No reira, He kura te tangata.

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

Robin Peace