

## Drivers of Crime

### HE MIHI

Well here we all are. You have been invited here because you are deemed to be someone who could contribute to our Wananga to determine the drivers of crime. You have, or have had, some experience some role with crime in this country. You are policy makers, participants in the justice system, family members, victims, politicians and the representatives of a whole range of experiences related to crime.

I ask you not to bring your wheelbarrows inside the house today, but to participate, and to listen – and remember our goal – the ‘drivers of crime’. Let your experience inform your contribution but remember this is not a soap box occasion, or a platform for political parties so nau mai haere mai.

We are a small country – but our crime figures are abominable. Our incidence of violence – shoplifting is absolutely rife! Our drinking drivers convictions have gone through the roof. Maori convictions are totally out of proportion.

These are the reasons why we have called you here today. How come godzone is so out of control? What has happened to our beautiful Aotearoa?

Why is alcohol related crime out of control? Why is there so much anger in our communities, in our homes, in the street? Why are there dysfunctional family groups living right under our noses?

Why is there so much youth crime, and conflict and cyber bullying?

Have we lost sight of the old neighbourhood concept where we know each other, cared about each other, and sought to help-out with each other? Does the concept of community no longer embrace the spirit of caring and sharing?

And have we widened the gap between the haves and the have nots – between those in positions of power and the powerless?

Have we embarked on a path of substance abuse, of drug and alcohol abuse? Have we normalised these conditions?

Do you open the newspaper in them morning and say “My gosh – another murder – another rape” or do you just turn the page to the editorial, the sports or whatever? Are you still shocked? Or do you say something like - “what do you expect from these people” or “there they go again” and disassociate yourself from – that

group – those kind of people, and in your mind you manage to locate yourself in the “good guys team”.

Today’s your day – and yours and yours. Today you contribute to a very important discussion. You listen, you talk and you share.

And it’s my hope that you will also own. That you will step up and say I’m involved in this. I will stand up for a beautiful New Zealand and beautiful non-violent, low crime, caring and sharing New Zealand. Because if you don’t who will?

It’s not the role of the police, or the politicians or the jails. Its not the job for the churches, the army or the rotary clubs. It’s our role – yours and mine – to get involved in transforming our society.

And we can point to educational outcomes, school retention rates, socio economic factors, employment issues and cultural identity and say these are the social determinants of crime. Or to say “poverty and alienation” are the key drivers of crime.

We could say crime will reduce when families are empowered to look after one another and contribute to the wider community.

We could say these things and then go home feeling ok at the end of the day.

Or if we are so worried about the high rate of Maori offending we could point to the statistics which say:

- More Maori are apprehended (53% of Police apprehensions of children and young are Maori)
- A higher proportion are prosecuted (Maori get fewer warnings or diversions)
- Once before the courts, Maori are more often convicted)
- Sentences for Maori offenders are more often custodial (11 times more likely to remanded in custody; 50% higher chance of prison sentence; leading to five times the rate of imprisonment).

Or we could say –

Government must support whanau-led responses. Maori providers, practitioners, offenders and whanau should contribute to policy discussions.

Maybe that's what we are doing right now at this hui.

So there are some here who might attribute our crime rates to the breakdown of families, liquor consumption, drugs, Maori's, poor education etc.

Some who might even link criminal behaviour to genes! Heaven forbid – to cultural norms -

Some would explain crime based on individual behaviour in isolation of social context, - and propose solutions that are about "fixing" individuals.

My friends, whatever are the thoughts in your head; today you will participate and contribute. And I thank you for that.

But remember when you have left this room what next. - For Maori criminal offences will you lwi get involved – have you a crime

prevention plan for your iwi. Perhaps that's the level from which we must tackle part of this problem.

You who are adjudicating on crime, policing, crime – have you tried all your options – exercised the discretion that you have, to keep offenders out of the rollercoaster of incarceration and reoffending!

And what of the rest of us – when our day here is done is that it for you. Have you done your dash – Is it now someone else's problem.

If we are truly to be effective in transforming our beautiful country into a place of peace and goodwill for all, then we must each step up.

And so, having harangued your ears for the past few minutes, the reality is it really doesn't matter what I say – or what Minister Power has said – or even the views of our guest speaker who will present shortly.

What matters is you are here - each with your kete matauranga (your kits of knowledge) and you will participate – thank you and I wish you well with your contribution – and I leave you with the words of a famous Maori philosopher Lao Tse of 2 BC (Maori or maybe he was Chinese).