Summary

Subject: Pukekohe Cemetery Memorial whaanau and hapori engagement summary

For: Pukekohe Cemetery Committee

Executive Summary

1. A number of whaanau and hapori engagement hui were hosted by the Pukekohe Cemetery Committee held in February and April 2025.
2. Whaanau and hapori engagement hui were promoted in a number of ways – a digital poster on social media, paanui to all mana whenua iwi with interests in Pukekohe, meetings with key stakeholder groups asking them to share information with their networks, and Ngaa Hau E Whaa marae/committee representatives reaching out to whaanau and hapori to spread the word about memorial engagement hui.
3. There were three whaanau and hapori engagement hui held throughout February 2025, on 8th, 15th and 27th. Two planned online hui were cancelled due to lack of registrations. A further whaanau engagement hui was held on Sunday 27 April 2025.
4. Each engagement hui was hosted and delivered in a consistent way, with tikanga led by kaumatua and the introductory presentation anchored by the Chair of the committee.
5. During the whaanau and hapori koorero, a facilitator from the committee joined each table and discussion was prompted with two main paatai (questions):
   (i) What are your stories, your histories, your memories, your whakaaro, about our whaanau resting in the Pukekohe urupaa?
   (ii) When you go to the urupaa, how do you want to reflect on and connect with those you are remembering?
6. Themes from whaanau engagement on a memorial emphasise the pain and grief associated with this kaupapa, and a strong interrelationship of whaanau stories with the market gardens. Also that there are still many unknowns and unanswered questions, and that a memorial must be inclusive and should seek to be transformative. There are requests that the committee indicate to the public that there is a memorial project occurring at the urupaa, by placing temporary signage/information there. Many ideas were expressed about creation of a memorial to connect and reflect. Differing perspectives have been expressed on whether to individually name those who rest there, or rather to collectively acknowledge them.
7. Themes from community and stakeholder engagement are similar to whaanau in many respects. There has been consensus that there should be a memorial. Aspirations for a memorial to connect and reflect include many common threads. Stakeholders have also shared views and made requests that presentation of data and historical information related to this kaupapa is accurate and reliable, as well as asking the committee to consider representation and process improvements.

Whaanau and hapori engagement hui held

8. There were three whaanau and hapori engagement hui held throughout February and one in April as follows:

Date	Hui / engagement session	Who was involved	How many people participated
Sat 8 Feb 2025 10am – 1pm	Whaanau engagement hui in the Franklin Room	Whaanau, memorial committee and engagement group members	21

Sat 15 Feb 2025 10am – 1pm	Whaanau engagement hui at Ngaa Hau E Whaa Marae	Whaanau, memorial committee and engagement group members	23
Thu 27 Feb 2025 6pm – 8pm	Whaanau and hapori engagement hui in the Franklin Room – *organised at the request of Franklin Branch of the Genealogy Society of NZ*	Whaanau, memorial committee members, Franklin Genealogy Society members, and engagement group	18
Sun 27 April 2025 1pm – 4pm	Whaanau engagement hui at Ngaa Hau E Whaa Marae	Whaanau, hapori, memorial committee, and engagement group members	17

9. Online hui were also scheduled for 22 February and 26 February 2025. Promotion of these online hui asked participants to register for the sessions. Both online hui were cancelled due to a lack of registrations.

10. Whaanau feedback was that a kanohi ki te kanohi/face to face engagement approach is preferred for this kaupapa. However, the Pukekohe Cemetery Committee is aware that as this project evolves, and as information and promotion improves with the development of a website and Facebook page, there may be whaanau and hapori living in other parts of New Zealand and overseas who may wish to participate and engage online. The committee has discussed making online hui available for whaanau and hapori if required.

Summary of feedback

Themes from whaanau engagement on a memorial

11. Painful memories

- Many whaanau spoke about the mamae / the pain.
- Whaanau shared experiences about the loss of loved ones and how they only heard snippets from their parents and elders, because it was too painful for them to talk about. Parents and grandparents that had experienced racism often did not share too much with their children, as their way of protecting the next generation from what happened. They wanted their children and grandchildren to dream big, do anything they wanted to, and live their lives without being burdened by the past. Sometimes this manifested as wanting their children to speak English, rather than prioritising te reo Māori / te ao Māori.
- There are still feelings of intergenerational trauma, intergenerational harm, intergenerational damage.
- Memories were shared of when the urupaa was a playground for children, of the names of different roads and streets, of the people who lived there and the whaanau names. And there is also guilt in the painful memories – reflections about playing on the urupaa as children, and as children not knowing it was an urupaa with all its grief and loss. It became clear later that it was an urupaa and that hurt.
- There is pain in still seeing the unmarked graves. The urupaa feels like an ongoing expression of discrimination.
- A memory was shared about a whaanau making multiple small coffins for babies and delivering these to other whanau who had need of them.

Quotes:

- “So much mamae. It was hard to find urupaa for whaanau. There were no vehicles to transport whaanau back home.”
- “It is a pōuri place.”
- “We need to acknowledge the trauma.”
- “We were separated people in Pukekohe. Whaanau is important. We are one people, regardless of race.”

- “No segregation ever again.”

12. The market gardens

- Pukekohe market gardens are connected to many memories.

Quotes:

- “I worked the gardens to make ends meet, right up to my labour, having a 6 pound 10 oz baby, and then I had to go back to work after I delivered or not get paid.”
- “I have memories of working in the market gardens as a child – under car headlights and washing in the trough afterwards.”
- “Everyone was a breadwinner in the market gardens and there was loss of traditional ways. It was a lost generation.”
- “The market gardens brought whaanau and hapori together, and they came from all over”
- “Fridays were shopping days for Māori working in the market gardens. That is when we went to town”

13. Not knowing / unanswered questions

- Some want to know where their whaanau are resting.
- Make sure it is a project for everyone and think about ways we can provide more information for whaanau – as some people want to know where their whaanau are in the urupaa.
- There are requests for the committee to provide evidence of who rests there, to seek to resolve conflicting accounts of who rests there, and to be clear on where there is missing information.

  Quotes:
- “The unknown is sad.”
- “I want a tool that helps me find my parents graves.” “I want to find and discover my connections.”
- “I want to know where my grandparents are. They have been lost for 70 years and buried somewhere there.”
- “We have heard different perspectives. One person’s experience is not everyone’s experience. We need to be as accurate and truthful as possible, as if our generation perpetuates something that is not accurate, then the next generation will believe it as truth.”

  Questions:
- How can we access information? Will we ever know where to find our whaanau there? Flu epidemic – are there mass graves in the urupaa?
- What about the houses that border the urupaa? Are they built on unmarked graves?

14. A memorial must be inclusive

- A strong theme is that the urupaa is for everyone, no matter who they are.
- A place for everyone. Acknowledge the diversity of backgrounds and cultures in the urupaa.

  Quotes:
- “Those buried, whoever they are, they join up – all races”
- “This memorial is a community project. People were from all over the place in the true sense of ngaa hau e whaa, from the four winds – north, south, east, and west. So we need to be inclusive of all of them.”
- “It is not about the book - it is about the people who are there. One memorial for all who are there.”
- “We want an inclusive memorial – like ANZAC Day.”

- “It makes us better people when we treat everybody ‘as one’ - even our dead.”

15. Transformation

- The urupaa is a sad place, and we want to transform from such a pōuri (sad, mournful) place into a different āhua (form, nature, condition).
- Participants identified that there is an ongoing feeling of deficit. They discussed whether this mahi can acknowledge the pain and hurt? Whether this mahi can help us move forward? Whether this mahi can contribute to a better, more uplifting energy for our whaanau and hapori in Pukekohe? There is a need for optimism and a hope that sharing of history, and a visible acknowledgement will assist in restoration, will enable our young people to know and understand, and to come through with mana, being confident in who they are, and with high expectations for their futures.
  Quotes:
- “We need to show that there are people there in the urupaa and acknowledge that they have a story and that they are remembered. We need to maintain the mana of the people who are there.”
- “We need to visualise and remember who they used to be. Bring honour to their memory”
- “We need to acknowledge the past and the present, and look to the future”
- “I would like the memorial to tell an optimistic story.”
- “Education of wider community to respect the memorial should occur too.”

16. A need to do something soon

- In recent times we see people walking their dogs there at the urupaa. People do not know what it is and who is there.
- It would be good to get some signage up soon at the urupaa. Let people in the community know that something is happening. It could be temporary signage to let people know what is going on and to let people know that there are people buried in unmarked graves. This will help everyone know what this place is and so we can better respect the urupaa and the whaanau who rest there.

17. A memorial - creating a place to reflect and connect

- We need to make it into a place to be able to go and talk to loved ones.
- Gardens and gardening - a recurring theme
- River is a source of healing - think about Waikato River.
- Make a place with a sense of peace
- Pou at the entrances?
- Want a place to sit and reflect
- A place with trees for shade and gardens for beauty
- A place that can be used in a formal way or an informal way
- A place of reflection, healing, and forgiveness
- A memorial should be vandal-proof and easy to protect from vandalism. There is a concern that a memorial will not be respected and might be defaced, and that would be very painful and re-traumatise some of our whaanau.
- Epitaph: include words written in memory of those who rest in the urupaa. This can be in both Māori and English. i.e., inclusive.
- Use of kohatu, stone or rock: has significant cultural and spiritual meaning in Māoridom but is not exclusively Māori, i.e., can be inclusive.
- Kawakawa leaves and plant (as used on the website): associated with mourning and funeral rites of Māori, also a rongoā Māori, a plant associated with medicine and healing, but once again is not exclusively Māori – so can be inclusive.

- Pathways symbolised as a river: significant to Māori and other cultures too.
- A wall – to add shape, to include an epitaph, to consider marking the names that are known, but not naming everyone as some are missing.
- Consider colours of nature and the whenua: greens, browns.
  Quotes:
- "There are babies there. The ones who are there need to rest in love."
- "I want somewhere to grieve, feel kotahitanga, and bring us back together. To feel wairua"
- "Think about the elements – earth, water, wind, fire. Earth and water are a source of life. Availability of water is important - water fountains."

18. Naming those who rest there

- Some whaanau wish to see names of those resting in the urupaa.
- There is also acknowledgement from some whaanau that naming is not always appropriate, as some whaanau were buried without names.
  Quotes:
- "I want to see their names recognised. Bring them into focus"
- "Some names are missing, and we can't miss anyone out."
- "The young generation want to know their names, we want to know more about what happened, we want to recognise and honour them"
- "Can we have a *Know your whaanau day?* Paanui out to the whaanau names and come together to share all that is known about where these whaanau rest."
- "Can this mahi help us whakapapa / connect? Can this mahi help us to find more of our people? Can this mahi help us find out more about other places where our whaanau may rest e.g., Māngere?"

19. Other whaanau whakaaro

Quotes:

- "We need to acknowledge what our Kuia and Kaumātua have done for us, and how we can get behind this kaupapa and support."
- "Today we heard about some of the things that will help our whaanau heal:
  - Taking back our stories
  - Reconnecting with each others' stories
  - Reconnecting with each other – a lot of that happened today."
- "Is there a place for teaching and learning about the history, alongside putting up a memorial?"
- "The youth of today are tomorrows leaders."
- "We could embrace technology. Use QR codes and digital technology to provide information."
- "Enable whaanau in Australia, UK, USA and elsewhere to participate and find out more about their whaanau."
- "Give whaanau the option to participate online and come up with ways to pass on and share information online."
- "Can you proactively connect with whaanau? Reach out, let whaanau know, find ways to get them involved."
- "Can we digitise the map that shows where whaanau members are?"

Themes from community and stakeholder engagement on a memorial

20. Agreement that there should be a memorial

- There is consensus about having a memorial.
- A memorial will help us all move forward and focus on what the future might be.
- A memorial needs to be for everyone.

Quotes:

- "People are still hurting, but let's make progress on being united"
- "It is too hard to hold on to the sad and hurtful feelings, as it influences the next generation"
- "We won't forget them, let's honour them all"

21. A memorial – creating a place to reflect and connect

- A place to sit, reflect, heal, and forgive
- A place for contemplation
- A peaceful place, respectful and proud of those who rest there
- A place of inclusion and melding, where all ethnicities are celebrated
- Somewhere to love the people in the urupaa
- Seating, hedges, trees, water
- Make it a welcoming and inclusive place to be
- We want it to be a safe place
- An archway?
- Black obsidian?
- Natural materials?
- Not a gravestone for each person resting there

  Quotes:
- "A place of unification, where some of the hurts can go away."
- "We don't want it to be a memorial of shame and guilt."
- "We don't have all the names, so it may need to be a place for collective remembrance."

22. Seeking improvements / providing advice to the memorial development process

- Accuracy of information is important. There is some disagreement by members of the Franklin Branch of the Genealogy Society with committee promotion of numbers and ethnicity of people interred in the unmarked graves. Society members would like acknowledgement that some of the data that has been promoted is incorrect.
- Society members are concerned that not all aspects of the documentary (No Māori Allowed) were correct, and feel there was misrepresentation of Pukekohe and the community
- Genealogy Society members would like more involvement. Members feel their prior work to have a memorial developed (in 2015) was not acknowledged. Members believe that their knowledge and expertise has not been recognised.
- European history is important to that area too. In 1864 Europeans settled on that piece of land. The memorial should include a narrative about the history of the place.
- The budget is substantial, the society wants good value for money and accountability.
- There needs to be better communications, promotion, and advertising
- Involve the wider community
- Poster needs to be explicit about how to get links for online meetings
- Organise some shorter drop-in sessions

Presentation and feedback on proposed Pukekohe Cemetery Memorial website

23. Purpose of a website

At the whanau and hapori engagement hui held in April, the website lead presented on the proposed website and outlined the purpose as follows:

- To let people know what is going on, as some people cannot attend the face-to-face hui and meetings
- To provide a starting point with information for people who are just commencing their discovery about connection to the unmarked graves at Pukekohe Cemetery

- To allow people to share stories - if they want to
- To provide regular updates about progress of this mahi
- To make the kaupapa accessible for people who do not live in Pukekohe
- To be accessible for young people.
- To compile history and information about the unmarked graves, the people, and the whenua, for those who do not live here and for those who come after.
- To be inclusive – presenting different voices and perspectives.
- To be enabling - with a confidential portal for whanau information
- To be interactive – answering questions or referring people for more information.

24. Discussion and feedback on the proposed website

Whaanau and hapori members gave some feedback on the proposed website:

- A QR code could be located at the urupaa. A QR code is a Quick Response code, which is a barcode that can be scanned by a smartphone or other device to access digital information. A QR code could direct people to the website to hear and see the story about the urupaa. There was feedback on this suggestion about making sure that the urupaa is a place that retains its tapu.
- The kawakawa imagery for the website was commended. Such imagery does not exclude anyone, but the imagery respects the Māori worldview with the kawakawa plant associated with death and mourning, but also with rongoā and healing.
- There was feedback that it would be positive to have a summary of the status of information, the timeline, and the history of the journey about the urupaa and this project, on the website.
- Some concerns were expressed about online material, as this inevitably receives negative comments and interactions, especially when putting something from whaanau hearts online. A response to this concern was that there would be strict controls around online comments to do with website or any associated Facebook page.

Other input from engagement hui

25. At the engagement hui of 27 February, the Franklin Branch of the NZ Society of Genealogists tabled their research about the urupaa to share with the committee. This research includes plot number of person interred, date buried, surname and first names, parents' names, comments, and whether the registration of birth or death was found.

26. The committee asked that officers of council integrate information from the Franklin Branch of the NZ Society of Genealogists with other research information, referring this to Auckland Council Heritage Unit for a Pukekohe Cemetery research report under development.

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