

Tipu Ake

An Update from Peter Goldsbury in New Zealand

by Lyn Hartley

If you attended the 2003 Summer Program, you may recall a 90-minute workshop presented by Peter Goldsbury called "The Tipu Ake Lifecycle: A Leadership Model for Innovative Organizations and Communities." At this workshop, Peter shared stories from an indigenous community in New Zealand.

Peter returned to the community where he grew up—the Maori community of Te Whaiti—three years ago, after 40 years in mainstream organizations. In his words, "The achievements (against all the odds) of the people and my little old school at Te Whaiti completely turned my ideas about leadership and innovation upside down." The community had undergone a dramatic self-transformation—its rural school has gone from educational failure to one of the highest performing in New Zealand.

At the Summer Program Peter was also engaged in Margaret Wheatley's "Leadership Inquiry" module, which he claims challenged many of his unquestioned assumptions about chaos. He recalls:

"A group of 50 people was dropped from a state of dependency and order into a state of chaos and left to get out of it. Many were frustrated and out of their comfort zones. It seemed like we were in a whirlpool and desperately had to use all our energy to try to swim for the order of the shore. Others thought that we had been put there for a reason, so stubbornly hung loose. Amidst the turmoil and heated discussion we noticed that seemingly small actions or statements by individuals in the group could cause very large positive or negative fluctuations in behavior and direction. Sharing, listening and reflecting on this experience brought many rich learnings to all."

Upon returning home, Peter applied his learnings to the model for Tipu Ake. "As a result of the chaos, turmoil, transitions, reflections and accelerated learning that took place in Margaret Wheatley's model, we now reflect on this in a new chaos view of Tipu Ake."

Besides the lessons on chaos, Peter enjoyed spending time with people from around the world with similar interests. "The biggest gift we got from Halifax was the large number of enthusiastic contacts we made, and we would like to publicly thank one in particular—Andrée Mathieu. She has very generously spent so much time researching and translating the Tipu Ake story into French. Her perspective is now adding a lot to our understanding of it."

The stories have so inspired Andrée that she is travelling from Quebec to visit the small village of Te Whaiti in February 2004. Says Andrée, "I am greatly impressed by

the Tipu Ake lifecycle because I believe this model offers our organizations a unique way of getting the best out of both the scientific method and the oral traditions.”

There is still much work to be done with Tipu Ake. Peter notes, “We are a growing network of international volunteers with lots of energy, no funding, and not even a structure or bank account. I looked in my journal and noticed that Margaret talked of sperms looking for eggs – none of these little suckers will stop and ask for directions. That sounds a bit like how Tipu Ake is spreading on our worldwide web network!”

For more information: [www.tipuake.org.nz](http://www.tipuake.org.nz)

Stories in French: <http://agora.qc.ca/mot.nsf>