

## **Lindsay MacLeod – Tui Ora Board member 1999 to 2011**

Lindsay MacLeod was one of the longest serving members of the Tui Ora Board from 1999 to 2011.

Highly regarded throughout North Taranaki, he had a special way of bridging the gap between Māori and Pākehā at times of conflict.

“He had a great rapport with people and a willingness to help others. He believed the concept of Tui Ora as a kaupapa Māori organisation was one that could help not only Māori people but all people,” says his widow Marion MacLeod.

“He felt proud to be part of the concept and ideals of Tui Ora.”

His own experience at Taranaki Base Hospital deepened his desire to help others overcome prejudice, as did the poor health of some of his relatives who suffered from diabetes and heart problems.

In 1985, badly injured in a car accident on the outskirts of New Plymouth and Waitara, he was transported to the hospital emergency department. Wife Marion recalls the treatment as “terrible and seemingly racially motivated.”

When contacted by the hospital and questioned as to Lindsay’s occupation she confirmed his statement that he was the PR officer at Petrocorp although they didn’t seem to believe her either.

Hospital staff insisted he be taken home that night, walking him to Marion’s waiting car even though he was barely coherent and unable to stand on his own. Alarmed by their attempts to force him through the car doors and her daughter’s insistence he should not go home she finally insisted he stay.

When more thorough checks were carried out by a new shift of hospital medical staff, he was found to have a fractured skull and had lost the sight in his right eye, spent three days in a coma and his recuperation and ability to return to work took several months.

The MacLeod family received an apology from hospital management thanks to the action of Lindsay’s employer, however it was “a wake-up call as until you personally experience that type of treatment it is difficult to conceive,” says Marion.

Born to John (Jack) McLeod and Poroaki Watson, Lindsay spent his childhood at Parihaka with his Koro and Kuia before boarding at St Bede’s Catholic College in Christchurch where he quickly adapted to the communal environment, thrived on challenges and took on leadership roles which may have reflected close links to Tohu and Te Whiti and their teachings.

He and Marion met in Picton when he was visiting his Koro and Kuia who had moved back to the area. The couple has two children, three grandchildsons and one great-grandson.

A move to Wellington in 1966 saw them operate a number of grocery and book stores before returning to Taranaki in 1977.

A keen sportsman, who boxed, played rugby, rugby league, tennis (his great love until his eyesight was affected) and golf, Lindsay was a liaison between the local polytechnic and young men training in the trades. Working for the Department of Maori Affairs as Trade Training Officer he would find work placements for them and provide pastoral support.

Then he moved to Petrocorp as a liaison person working across Taranaki with Māori, the farming community and other special interest groups.

In that role, he “was a great people person who could put people at ease and get them to really talk about anything. He had this way of getting to the essence of what was bugging people and how they felt it could be improved or not,” says Marion.

As the New Plymouth District Council's kaumātua and member of the iwi liaison committee he took part in many functions and advised on correct protocols. He also worked closely with council staff including those at Puke Ariki and Govett Brewster Art Gallery to enable better understanding and acceptance for dealing with Māori issues and perceived differences.

People were his great love and he was always available in person or at the end of the phone. "I would describe him as a bridge builder not an engineer," says Marion.

Lindsay died on February 21 at age 74.

At his tangi. Parihaka identity Ruakere Hond said:

At the request of the people Mr Macleod returned to Parihaka " in 1977, to engage with Taranaki Maori again, he said.

"He also wanted to fix some of the concerns with our younger people.

"He was always keen to see people develop."

Relationships meant everything to Mr MacLeod and he always took it upon himself to resolve conflict or disputes, he said.

"He had great wisdom and knowledge of the current environment and how Maori fit into the systems and procedures of the Government."

For many years Mr MacLeod had led Taranaki Maori forward, he said.

"They all looked to Lindsay to be able to see the bigger picture."

Mr MacLeod had the ability to bring the best out in everyone, he said.

"He continually talked positive about everyone no matter what went down.

Former governor general Sir Paul Reeves said he had known Mr MacLeod for about 40 years.

His legacy would continue through everyone he touched, he said.

Sacred Heart Girls College principal Rose Sawaya said Mr MacLeod, who was the school Kaumatua, had a very inclusive style of mentoring.

"He had a very generous and caring way.

"When he spoke to the girls he had that mana which held them."

*By Sarah Foy*