

# **“We Never Knew”**

## **The differences between museum history and academic history explored through an exhibition of the New Zealand Wars**

**Elsbeth Hocking**

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## **Abstract**

Public history and academic history have been viewed both as opposites, two practices related only by their concern with sharing the past, as well as conceptualised as similar fields with close connections to each other. Museum history exhibitions are an obvious example of public history in action. However, is the history that exhibitions present all that different from what is produced in the academy, or is this history academia in another form? Initially this dissertation aimed to explore the relationships between academic and public histories as discipline and practice, assuming a relationship rather than divide between the two fields as suggested in some of the literature. However, the eventual results of the research were different than expected, and suggested that in fact public histories manifest very differently to academic histories within a museum context.

Using an adapted ethnographic research methodology, this dissertation traces the development of a single history exhibition, “Te Ahi Kā Roa, Te Ahi Kātoro Taranaki War 1860–2010: Our Legacy – Our Challenge”, from its concept development to opening day and onwards to public programmes. This exhibition opened at Puke Ariki in New Plymouth in March 2010, and was a provocative display not only of the history of the wars themselves, but of the legacy of warfare in the Taranaki community. Other methods include partially structured interviews which were conducted with ten people involved in creating this exhibition, who outlined their roles in its production and provided their views on its development, and also a brief analysis of the broader social and historical context in which the exhibition was staged.

Through tracing the creation of this history, the findings suggested that the history produced at Puke Ariki is a history in its own right, with noticeable differences from academic histories. The strongest correlation between public and academic history in this instance was the shared aspiration to be rigorous in conducting research and, as far as possible, to create an accurate portrayal of the past. Otherwise the history created by Puke Ariki through the exhibition proved to be different in that it was deliberately designed to be very accessible, and it utilised a number of presentation modes, including objects, text, audiovisual and sound. It was interactive, and had a clear aim of enabling the audience to participate in a discussion about the history being presented. Finally, it was a highly politicised history, in that decision making had to be negotiated with source communities in a collaborative fashion, and issues of censorship worked through with the council, a major funding source. The dissertation concludes that producing history in a museum context is a dynamic and flexible process, and one that can be successful despite not necessarily following theoretical models of exhibition development.

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## **Introduction**

On the 17th of March 2010, 150 years to the day after the first shots were fired in what would become the brutal and bloody Taranaki Wars, Puke Ariki officially opened their exhibition “Te Ahi Kā Roa, Te Ahi Kātoro Taranaki War 1860–2010: Our Legacy – Our Challenge” (hereafter the Wars exhibition). This exhibition took eight months of actual production, five years of lead up exhibitions and development, and 150 years of conflict, pain and struggle for the people of the Taranaki region to come to completion. The exhibition aimed to not only present an under-recognised aspect of New Zealand’s history, but also to take a new perspective by utilising a strong Māori voice in addition to focusing on the continuing legacy of the warfare. Puke Ariki’s website states, “the horror of 19th century war and its long-term effects are thought-provokingly real,” and the museum aimed to make these effects obvious to its visitors (Puke Ariki, 2010). Puke Ariki also aimed to provoke conversation about the history and legacy rather than simply presenting factual information, with visitors “invited to have a say in the ongoing conversation about the events and issues that surround war in Taranaki” (Puke Ariki, 2010). The aims and process of creating this exhibition provided a fertile ground for analysing public history and its relationship to academic history. The focus on exhibitionary practice as well as on public history locates this dissertation within the sphere of museum studies, given its focus on the process of presenting history within a museum setting, in comparison to history within an academic context.

## **Background**

The topic for this dissertation came about through a keen personal interest in both the discipline of history, as well as in exhibiting history in a museum setting. I was also interested in the history of the New Zealand Wars, a theme in New Zealand’s history that has not always been given the attention that a topic of its brutality and importance deserves, both in museums and in education and academia. Also of interest was how exhibitions are developed in practice, something that has been touched upon in international literature but not frequently in New Zealand museums. Early possibilities for research looked at how exhibitions about the New Zealand Wars drew upon academic works on the same topic. However, such critiques had been made before about a number of New Zealand exhibitions, and further reading into museums and public history literature began to spark ideas about the relationship between academic and public histories. From here, I decided upon an ethnographic approach to exhibition research which would allow me to get a deeper understanding of one museum exhibition at Puke Ariki, from early development to official opening, and from there explore what I initially thought would be

the relationship rather than opposition between different fields of history.

Looking at exhibitions from the perspective of a researcher tends to involve looking at the finished product of an exhibition and critiquing it as a stand alone entity. However, this oversimplifies the complex nature of museum history. Richard Gillespie has argued that, “it is too easy to visit a museum once and trot out an analysis of the symbolic meanings of the spaces and their arrangements” and consequently “exhibition development remains something of a mystery to people outside museums – sometimes even to those of us who work in museums” (2001, 112). I therefore decided not to focus on a completed history exhibition, but rather use a single, in depth ethnographic case study at Puke Ariki to tease out what I thought would be the relationship between public and academic history through an overall analysis of an exhibition’s development over time – public history as history produced for a wide audience within a public forum, in a range of media formats. In contrast, academic history is produced primarily in universities and normally in book or article formats. My initial question for the research was therefore, “How is the relationship between public and academic history exemplified through the creation of history exhibitions in New Zealand museums?” However, once I had completed the research, it became evident that my initial argument of a relationship between academic and public history was not as strong as first anticipated. Instead, it appeared that the history produced at Puke Ariki was markedly different from that produced within universities, and as such my question changed to “How has the history of the New Zealand Wars been presented in an exhibition at Puke Ariki, and how is this museum history different to that produced in an academic context?”

## **Literature Review**

### *History as discipline and practice*

The literature review which underpins this dissertation looks at some of the key theoretical frameworks which have shaped my analysis of the Wars exhibition at Puke Ariki. Given the interdisciplinary nature of museum studies and theory, this dissertation uses museum literature in partnership with historical theory. The focus on public history signals an intersection between the fields, given its connections to museum theory as well as to history. Firstly, I will discuss the meaning of public and academic histories, and some of the arguments which view them either as opposites or as related fields. In discussing academic and public histories, lightly touching on what history itself is provides a useful starting point for discussing these approaches. History as a form of knowledge has been subject to a vast array of theory, argument and conceptualization.

From the 1960s, theorists have acknowledged the shift within academia away from studying grand narratives, to a far more subjective and multi-faceted discipline. More traditional theorists of history include Arthur Marwick, who argues that history is “the past as we know it from the interpretations of historians based on the critical study of the widest possible range of relevant sources” (1989, 13). This approach centralises the historian as creator of history, with the public simply ingesting the ‘truth’ as it is given to them. However, in more recent years the study of history has taken into account a number of different methods to explore the past, by historians “anxious to to broaden the boundaries of their discipline, to throw open new areas of research and, above all, to explore the historical experience of those...whose existence is so often ignored” (Sharpe 1991, 25). Historical approaches such as “history from below”, the influence of theories of memory and the use of sources such as material culture, images and film have altered history as a discipline as compared to Marwick’s rigid example. Raphael Samuel takes a more sociological view of history and centralises the public as history makers, and sees history as a “social form of knowledge; the work in a given instance, of a thousand pairs of hands” (1996, 8). Such an approach leads neatly on to an understanding of public history, and as such is a more appropriate framework for understanding the creation of history than Marwick’s more historian-centric approach.

### *Public and academic history*

History as a discipline can be split into two fields - academic and public history, described either as opposites or closely intertwined. Whether these two fields *are* as opposed as some sources make out is debatable, but much has been written about what constitutes both academic and public history. At the most basic level, academic histories are those produced within a university setting. Dalley has noted that she sees the major difference between these two types of history as being the nearly unlimited ability for the academic historian to choose their own topic (2001, 24). Unlike the public historian, “the academic historian has the freedom to explore curiosity-driven topics, to argue with other scholars over matters of interpretation and method, or to address the latest intellectual theory” (Dalley 2001, 24). Academic histories are also primarily in the format of the “written, scholarly monograph, the refereed article or the invitation to speak at the major international conference” (Dalley 2001, 23). Text, based primarily on documentary evidence, is the preferred method for the academic historian to present their research, and the audience for these works is generally limited to other academics and a small public audience who have a professional or personal interest in a particular topic.

In terms of public history, particularly museum history, authors have looked at the different ways in which New Zealand historians have approached the writing of histories in museums as well as in academic settings. *Going public*, edited by Philips and Dalley, provides a comprehensive overview of public history and how it works in New Zealand, and is a useful framework for looking at history in the public sector (2001). Trapeznik and McLean, with more of a focus on public history in relation to heritage management, define public history as “the adaptation and application of the historian’s skill and outlook for the benefit of private and public enterprises” (2000, 13). They also comment on the importance of audience and agenda in public history as compared to traditional academic history, in that rather than being written for other historians, public history is instead written for business, and for public interest and information. Therefore it is written for a purpose, perhaps a wider one than academic history, that adds to the body of knowledge about a particular topic (Trapeznik and McLean 2000, 13). Dalley also argues that much public history work in New Zealand has been undertaken with state input, with the government “either directly employing historians or creating the conditions under which public history work is done” (2009, 75). Public history is also characterized as being presented in numerous formats, such as exhibitions, conservation plans, film, television, books, and articles, which are more likely to be found in popular magazines instead of exclusively in academic journals. The audience tends to be wider, although as Dalley notes, some forms of public history such as Treaty claim reports and heritage plans may only have a tiny audience (2001, 22). However, the commissioning of history for a public audience, however large or small, which is often dependent on limited funding which can also determine the topic choice, is perhaps a satisfactory working definition of what public history is in comparison to academic history.

The relationship between academic historians and public historians within a museum setting has been documented by some authors as one between competing opposites. This is demonstrated in Gable and Handler’s brief description of the tensions that exist between academic and museum historians. In their view, “historians working in history museums feel themselves to be looked down upon by historians in universities, and that such feelings are not unfounded”, and academics are the ones who do the real work of history, with museum history being popularized and ‘vulgarized’ (2000, 243). Some academic historians see authority in analysing the past resting solely with them, and subsequently popular representations of history are dismissed as the work of “talented interlopers” (Ashton and Kean 2009, 7). Tosh furthers this point through his argument that, “a gulf is usually said to exist between the academy and popular history, and for good reasons. The questions which interest the academic historian and the general lay

readership seem like oil and water” (2008, 99). This distinction, although containing some truth, disregards that the “lay readership” may have similar questions as academic historians. What differs is the ways of elucidating these questions and the public’s less complex ways of wishing to learn the answers to the questions posed.

The separation between academic and public history can therefore define public history. Dalley argues that defining public history can often lead to it being located as “academic history’s Other,” and therefore being seen as unlike what academic history is (2001, 16). However, this separation between forms of history is challenged by other literature which sees academic and public history as being in a subtle relationship rather than in opposition. Dalley alludes to this relationship through her argument of the depth of museum exhibitions. Public historians, like those in universities, still carry out the rigorous research expected of historians, but this depth of research may not be apparent when the historian is creating a museum exhibition, where such information must be delivered in just a few sentences (2001, 17). Kavanagh sees public and private history as intertwined and this separation as irrelevant, instead seeing historians, both public and academic, as “agents of society [who] produce histories which service society” (1996, 4). An eloquent understanding of the relationship between public and academic history has been elucidated by Curthoys and Hamilton, who describe public history as “[placing] academic historical work in a broader framework seeing it as only one kind of historical practice, constantly in a process of negotiation and dialogue with other forms of history” (cited in Kean and Ashton 2009, 13). Hughes-Warrington also opposes the splitting of history into differing, competing elements, instead claiming “there is no ‘history’ apart from historical practice. Nor, in consequence, is there any logical, universal or unchanging reason to talk of one practice as ‘more historical’ than another” (cited in Ashton and Hamilton 2009, 29-30). Therefore academic and public history can be understood both as opposing practices as well as closely interrelated schools of thought, both underpinned by rigorous research but with rather different methods of presentation.

### *History, exhibitions and museums*

One obvious manifestation of public history is museum exhibitions. Museum exhibitions are a historiography in themselves. As ‘bounded representational systems’, exhibitions create their own versions of history, drawing from sources in the same way as historians to create a narrative. This idea of ‘bounded representational systems’ is adapted from Lidchi’s work, which analysed a single exhibition using her theoretical arguments about representation in museums. Lidchi argues

that exhibitions are not simple displays of unproblematic information, but are instead systems of ideology and therefore shaped by historical trends (1997, 168). Her idea of a bounded system recognises that exhibitions are limited in their ability to present a wide range of historical perspectives or themes. However, for the uses of this dissertation, bounded systems can also be read as exhibitions having a clear theme within them, and being contained rather than limited. Exhibitions cannot include everything about a topic, and describing them as bounded representational systems means that they can be recognized as works of compacting and negotiating by those involved in their creation. However, Lidchi's argument can also be seen to disregard the agency of the community involved in exhibition production, given her focus on the museum's control of information and display. A more flexible model is Clifford's 'contact zone' theory, which argues that the museum becomes a site of an "ongoing...moral relationship" with a "power-charged set of exchanges," the outcome of which can be the museum changing their processes around developing exhibitions to align with community needs and desires as well as their own (1997, 192). Such a model of development is more flexible and less of a 'top down', museum driven process than Lidchi's. Combining both theories illuminates the museum exhibition as both a site of history production as well as of human relationships and interactions as the authors and creators of history.

Others writing about exhibiting include Kavanagh who uses a number of thematic examples to dissect the making of histories in a museum setting, using a range of exhibition examples (1996). International examples of constructing history exhibitions are reasonably widely available, although much of this literature is practically oriented, with guides such as Dean's *Museum exhibition: theory and practice* providing information for exhibition developers and curators about presenting objects, conservation standards and other practical aspects of exhibiting (1994). However, as Labrum argues, primarily academic texts about exhibiting tend to focus solely on the finished display, "in ways that advance the theoretical literature but pay less attention to actual museum practices and do not acknowledge their sometimes paradoxical and always multifaceted nature" (2012, 30). As Schlereth argues, history museums need "to develop a thorough historiography of...history-museum-history", using this as a background to analyse how the history of institutions has resulted in the types of histories being presented (1992, 306).

#### *'Behind the scenes at the science museum'*

With such ideas in mind, I have turned to authors such as Sharon Macdonald, who explores exhibiting from an anthropological perspective, and in doing so attempts to circumvent the on-

going problem that “most research in museums has proceeded by ignoring what happens in them” through emphasising process over product (Macdonald 2002, 8). This also circumvents the problem of exhibitions being presented to the public as fait accompli, with the “assumptions, rationales, compromises and accidents” that were part of the creation hidden from viewers (Macdonald 1998, 2). Macdonald’s work traces the creation of an exhibition at the Science Museum in London, and then analyses how tracing the creation of the exhibition could illustrate the creation of science as a concept. Although focusing on ideas of “public science” rather than history, the comparisons are obvious. She explored a range of perspectives and situations which shaped the concept, design and physical reality of an exhibition about food. Described as an ethnography of display, Macdonald’s work details both the concept and creation of the exhibition, and also a range of factors which influenced the staff of the museum, such as museum vision, funding and sponsorship and visitor requirements. Ethnographic fieldwork is often associated with the discipline of anthropology, and involves the researcher becoming a part of the community being studied. It requires intimate face-to-face interaction with research subjects. Gieryn argues that along with the museum culture made up of staff working to produce the exhibition, there are also a number of other “epistemic cultures” that come into play in the creation of a history exhibition (1998, 198). These could include such varied elements as the funding environment, the particular history of the institution in question, as well as the staff and outside advisers involved in the creation of an exhibition. Like Macdonald, Richard Gillespie followed the development of history exhibitions at the Melbourne Museum as an insider, and acknowledges the roles that curators, designers, writers and concept developers and audiences play in the creation of history galleries about Melbourne (2001, 113).

### *The New Zealand context*

Academically, little attention has been given to exhibitions and their construction within New Zealand. One author who has written on the subject is historian and former curator Bronwyn Labrum, who has focused on the “way that understandings of the ‘past’ are both made and circulated through...museums [and] the types of historical narratives which are constructed through this process” (2007, 149). Her focus on the construction of Pākehā history, rather than anthropological or indigenous exhibiting concerns, makes this a useful piece, given that “history as history often disappears from consideration” (Labrum 2007, 150). Labrum’s most recent work analyses history exhibitions at Te Papa and she takes the approach discussed by Schlereth and creates a history of history exhibiting within the institution, therefore allowing an expanded understanding of why Te Papa exhibits history the way it does (2012). Both Ross and Gibson and

Mallon have also analysed history exhibitions from Te Papa's perspective, in particular the creation of exhibitions for the museum's community gallery. These also take a more inclusive view of history making, in that they follow some of the rationale behind exhibition choices rather than solely discussing the end product (Ross 2007, 5; Gibson and Mallon, 2010). They are also concerned with the use of objects in narrating histories in the exhibition context, as well as outlining some of the internal and external pressures of exhibiting other cultures, from engaging with source communities effectively to institutional requirements and pressures (Ross, 2007; Gibson, 2010).

Three theses have explored the creation of history exhibitions in New Zealand, two from the University of Auckland and one from Massey University, and all focusing on social history at the Auckland War Memorial Museum. Both Bronwyn Wright and Daniel Smith used the relationship between academic history and exhibitions as a foundation for critique, analysing whether the history presented in three social history exhibitions or the City exhibition were equal to the academic historiographies on the various topics (Wright, 2006; Smith, 2003). Wright in particular is highly critical of Auckland Museum's mirroring of academic history, seeing the presentation of history in these exhibitions as continuing the trend for New Zealand history to be a singular narrative prioritizing national identity (2006, 65). Although interesting, such approaches miss the complexity of creating historical exhibitions as they focus solely on the finished product. As well as this, little attention is given to the differences in producing history for exhibiting, and the differences that are required to put historical information in a condensed form, which satisfies the needs of both the visitors and institution.

More relevant to this dissertation is Louisa Knight's analysis of a single exhibition at the Auckland Museum, in which she followed the creation of the 21st Battalion exhibition from collection acquisition to exhibition dismantling. Most interesting is her analysis of museums as exhibitors, in which she acknowledges the museum's role as a creator of history. Unlike Wright and Smith, Knight recognises the range of factors that influence the creation of history, seeing exhibitions as having "the onerous responsibility of determining the social and the intellectual credibility of their host institutions as well as their financial viability" (2007, 87). She recognizes the different forces that apply to producers of museum history, but overall does not relate both public and private history to each other. However, unlike Wright and Smith, Knight sees "the difficulty of using academic history as a yardstick is that they have different methods of production and dissimilar goals", instead preferring to look at history exhibitions on the strength



of their own legitimacy as a form of history (2007, 125).

These three theses have interesting parallels to this dissertation, particularly Knight's portrayal of the development of an exhibition. However, none of the three explore the relationship between public and academic history and, other than Knight, they focus exclusively on the finished product of a history exhibition. Additionally, all three focus on Auckland Museum. Different museums have very different approaches to creating history, and it will be interesting to see the differences apparent when focussing on history creation in a regional setting rather than in a large institution.

### *The historiography of the New Zealand Wars*

The next section of literature to review is the historiography of the New Zealand Wars. As this is not a comparative piece (that is, looking at museum history and comparing it to academic history), but rather a study into how museums create history, a comprehensive understanding of this historiography is unnecessary. Instead, a basic understanding of some of the major schools and authors on the subject is useful as context when discussing how narratives are constructed by museums. The New Zealand Wars are well covered by historians, and it is possible to see a number of distinct trends in the thinking around the causes and consequences of these conflicts.

Traditional historians such as Keith Sinclair have viewed the wars being "minor episodes" in the otherwise "relatively smooth tenor of the country's existence" (Sinclair 1957, xi). Sinclair's titling of his work as *The origins of the Maori wars* is telling, as his work overwhelmingly sees Māori and their continuing to "act in the old way in a new situation" as the cause for many of the "skirmishes" throughout the North Island (Sinclair 1957, 62). Tom Gibson takes a similar perspective, blaming the tribal structure of Māori society and their "self-destructive predilection for internecine strife" as the cause for war (1974, 19). James Cowan's incredibly detailed work *The New Zealand wars: a history of the Maori campaigns and the pioneering period* does not closely explore the causes of the wars, but is fascinating in that he was able to talk to Māori and Pākehā who had fought in these wars and include their perspectives.

Perhaps the most well-known historian working on this history is James Belich, whose 1986 text *The New Zealand wars and the Victorian interpretation of racial conflict* is widely cited. Belich attempted to write a balanced account of the conflicts, incorporating both Māori and Pākehā perspectives on battles, rationales for warfare and multiple interpretations to explain why such

events occurred. Belich's work also unsettled previously assumed truths, such as the apparent ease of victory of the British in battles such as Ruapekapeka, instead claiming a draw.

'Post-revisionist' historians such as Keenan, Maxwell and Ryan and Parham criticise what they see as the "vaguish sentimental revisionism", of Belich's work, and instead read the events of the wars as being predominantly about land, and that it was the loss of land which prompted the explosions of conflict that occurred throughout the country (Ryan and Parham, 1986). Although this is a compelling and straightforward argument, it misses some of the complexities underpinning the wars, which authors such as Belich, Ranginui Walker and, to a lesser extent, Paul Moon, allude to. Keenan has also created a website that briefly outlines his take on the wars and some of the debates central to the historiography of the topic. NZhistory.net has also provided a basic outline of some of the topics, and like Belich argues for a wide range of origins and actions during the conflict. More recent historical interpretations of the wars, such as Wright's work, place the New Zealand Wars in a perspective of the wider world, arguing that technology was applied to war in New Zealand in ways similar to the ways in which war was waged in Europe, Asia and the Americas (Wright 2006, 10). Wright also indicates the importance of recognising the legacy of conflict in New Zealand, and he argues that the history of the wars are "living history" given ongoing legal and political ramifications, although he does not delve deeply into this element (2006, 10).

Also important to note is that these sources are primarily from a Pākehā point of view, even if they are working from a revisionist perspective. Authors such as Ranginui Walker are critical of traditional received histories that see Māori as less capable than Pākehā in battle situations. Walker problematises the accepted origins of the wars, seeing them as more political and complicated than solely about the loss of land. Therefore, it can be seen that there are a number of trends in historical writing about the New Zealand wars, starting with Buick and Sinclair's views of Māori defeat and British superiority, to Belich's radical revision of traditional perspectives. Belich's perspective takes in a number of causes and less certain outcomes of events. More recent interpretations differ again, and include more Māori-centric perspectives, written by Māori historians. This brief overview adds context to the ethnographic study of Puke Ariki's Taranaki Wars exhibition. It has outlined some of the threads of historical knowledge that may have been used to formulate the exhibition narrative itself.

Therefore, this range of sources reveals a gap in the literature, into the process of creating history exhibitions within regional New Zealand museums, as well as limited research into the nature of the relationship or opposition between public and academic histories in a New Zealand context. This gap in museum studies literature is what this dissertation aims to begin to fill. The definitions of public and academic history have long been argued over by historians, and authors tend to separate the two either into opposing fields or as closely related. The museum exhibition is one way in which public and academic history are potentially closely entwined, as museum staff create histories for the public, using the skills which have been associated with academia to create a “bounded representational system” of story, objects, images and research. Whether these schools of thought are closely related or not in a regional history exhibition about the New Zealand Wars remains to be seen. By remembering that museum exhibitions are constrained due to their medium, but with unseen depths of ideas and research, it seems unnecessary to use academic history as a benchmark to measure this form of public history by. Rather, by conceptualizing the museum exhibition as a physical representation of many people’s ideas and work, whether a symbiotic relationship between public and academic history exists can be analysed. The combination of a broader definition of history (that is, as a social form of knowledge rather than the product solely of academia) along with an ethnographic ‘mini-history’ of a single exhibition, incorporating the context as well as content of the exhibition as demonstrated by Sharon Macdonald, will allow for an in-depth analysis of the relationship between public and academic history. Seeing how the exhibition is created, rather than analysing only the finished product, will give a more nuanced and comprehensive view of the relationship between public and academic history. It is through the creation of historical narratives in the development of exhibitions that both elements of historical practice come into dialogue with each other.

## **Methodology**

The aim for this research is to investigate the relationship between public and academic history through museum exhibitions, using Puke Ariki’s Wars exhibition as an in-depth case study. My eventual research question was, “How has the history of the Taranaki Wars been presented in an exhibition at Puke Ariki, and how is this museum history different to that produced in an academic context?” To understand the context of exhibiting at Puke Ariki, I undertook historical research about the institution itself. This gave me insight into the history and structure of the museum before attempting to research an aspect of its practice. Additionally, I also briefly researched the history of the New Zealand Wars and their legacy in the region, using secondary

historical sources to create a context in which to analyse the exhibition itself. Finally I undertook an in-depth inquiry into the process of creating the history exhibition using a number of different methods. Primarily I used an adapted ethnographic method of interviewing. I also included research and analysis of museum-produced literature, such as exhibition plans, images of the completed exhibition and draft exhibition text. However, unlike other ethnographic studies in museums, I studied an exhibition which had already finished. This resulted in an altered, retrospective ethnography, which also drew on other methodologies to achieve the necessary results. Given that this exhibition had already finished by the time I began this dissertation in early 2011, I was unable to personally see the exhibition, so my findings are primarily shaped by the experiences and opinions of the staff, as well as documentary and archival sources about the exhibition held by Puke Ariki, rather than my own observations.

### *Documentary research*

The first method of research I used was historical or documentary research. As previously discussed, a basic understanding of the historiography of the topic is essential to understanding the creation of historical narrative in the exhibition itself. Equally important is an understanding of the history of the institution being studied, as argued by Labrum and Schlereth. Exhibitions are not lone entities - they are products of their environment and more importantly of the individuals in institutions therefore understanding the history of a particular institution adds depth and understanding to analyses of exhibiting practices. I used a number of secondary historical sources to construct a brief overview of the Taranaki region, including an outline of the history of the wars, and a history of the institution of Puke Ariki from its conception as the Taranaki Museum up until today. Since the background and history of Taranaki and Puke Ariki were not a primary focus of my research, I relied solely on secondary sources to inform this contextual material. This is particularly noticeable in my coverage of the Taranaki Wars, where I used well-known sources to compile a basic overview of the events of the wars and their aftermath, without attempting to develop any new arguments or understandings of these events. Instead, this section uses secondary sources to inform my understanding of historical events and provide a context to discussing the exhibition in chapter two. Interviews with staff members, particularly those who had been employed by Puke Ariki for some time, and were present when the museum was called Taranaki Museum, provided some of the history of Puke Ariki as an institution.

### *Ethnography in the museum*

My major research methodology was ethnography, influenced by the literature of case study methodology. Ethnography can be defined as a way of finding out about a culture or group. I am using culture in the broadest possible sense, not necessarily related solely to ethnicity but also to other communities which people feel attached to, such as workplaces. Ethnography prioritises researcher observation, undertaken while within a community or cultural group (Gobo 2008, 5). This involves forming a relationship with source communities in order to be privy to a range of information, including action, words and other documents. Hammersley and Atkinson build on this definition by summarising ethnographic research as being small in scale, in order to facilitate in depth study, with actions being studied in everyday contexts, with analysis involving “interpretation of meanings, functions and consequences of human actions and institutional practices, and how these are implicated in wider contexts” (2007, 3). They also expect that researchers will enter an ethnographic research project with previously established research goals, but will retain the flexibility to refine and change aims and objectives if necessary (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, 3).

### *Behind the scenes in museums*

Closely related to the idea of ethnography is that of case studies, which explore a single example in detail without “seeking to generalise from it” (Thomas 2011, 4). Rather than being a methodology as such, case studies are “a choice of what is being studied” (Stake cited in Thomas 2011, 9). I used both case study and ethnography as my methodological frameworks for undertaking research, and used Sharon Macdonald’s *Behind the scenes at the science museum* (2002) as an example of combining these methods in a museum situation. Macdonald aimed to uncover the process involved in creating concepts of science, through the development of a science exhibition. Using ethnographic principles, Macdonald entered into the museum and became like a staff member, and spent extended periods of time observing interpersonal relationships as well as utilising written texts to analyse the process of exhibiting (2002, 8). Traditionally, ethnographic research has involved the researcher spending extended periods of time with the source community, and using these relationships and participatory roles to gather information (Davies 2008, 80-81). Through her connection and proximity to research participants, Macdonald was able to gather enormous amounts of information to construct her argument, while staying within the boundaries of this one exhibition rather than extrapolating wider.

Macdonald's approach would have been ideal for this dissertation, because it incorporates the huge range of factors and influences in understanding the creation of history as well through exhibitions. Macdonald was able to spend an extended period of time working with staff at the Science Museum, and was also working with an exhibition in the process of being developed. In my case, neither of those options were possible. The Taranaki Wars exhibition which I chose to study had already closed by the time I began researching and I was unable to be a part of the construction of the exhibition. Time constraints were also a factor, as Macdonald spent much of a year at the Science Museum, whereas my entire research project was due to be completed within a calendar year. Therefore, I undertook a retrospective partial ethnography, drawing from Macdonald's example, but adapted to fit the requirements of this dissertation.

### *Adapted interviewing*

My methodology draws more from certain elements of ethnography than others. In particular, my inability to become a close part of the development process of the exhibition meant that I relied more on interviewing methodology than on observational techniques or documents relating to the exhibition. Sharon Macdonald's on-going proximity to those involved in creating the exhibition and extended time within the exhibition's development meant she was able to informally chat with her subjects within the course of a working day, in addition to conducting more structured interviews with staff as required. This increased contact facilitated a more conversational style of interviewing than was possible in this dissertation.

Given my much shorter time frame, I used partially structured interviewing rather than observation or informal conversation for gathering the information needed for this dissertation. Unlike Macdonald's approach, which centralised observation and whatever conversation naturally flowed, I had to direct this study more firmly. I conducted a total of ten interviews with a variety of those involved in the exhibition's development. The first seven interviews took place at Puke Ariki during July 2011. Each interview was arranged prior to my arrival in New Plymouth. Prior to my arrival I compiled a list of potential questions and topics to be discussed during each interview. A week prior to my arrival, each interviewee was sent an outline of my topic and my research aims. In addition a list of potential questions and topics was sent to prepare each interviewee for the types of information I was intending to cover. Each interviewee signed a consent form, which gave them the option of having their transcript returned for approval after the interviews were completed. Choosing the participants for this interview process primarily came down to discussion with Kelvin Day, Manager Heritage Collections at

Puke Ariki, and then emailing those whom Kelvin highlighted as potential participants to see if they would be happy to participate. Seven of the nine staff I initially approached consented to take part in an interview.

The first interviews were conducted at Puke Ariki in New Plymouth between the 13th and 15th of July 2011. I conducted interviews with seven staff members that lasted between 30 minutes and 120 minutes. Each person was interviewed individually and the interviews were recorded. The questions for these staff members were primarily focused on the process of creating the exhibition, with focus on how the concept was developed; which staff were involved in which aspects of the development; what sources were used in researching the content for the exhibition; and broader questions about the institution. Each interviewee was also questioned on the differences and similarities between the history produced in Puke Ariki and related academic histories. I used a partially guided interview method, which incorporated some elements of an informal interview in addition to pre-set questions. I used Patton's "general interview guide approach" which requires a pre-set list of questions, issues or topics that are formulated before the interview is conducted (1990, 283). Having this list of questions and topics means that the scope of the interview is free enough to build a conversation within the topics the interviewer needs to talk about, as well as "allowing individual perspectives and experiences to emerge" from the interview (Patton 1990, 283). A further strength of the method also lies in its flexibility to incorporate topics that may not be listed in the interviewer's prepared list, as questions are not exhaustive. Each of the seven interviews at Puke Ariki evolved differently, given the flexible nature of my questioning, and I was careful to ensure open questions and the space for the participant to discuss related topics or ideas I had not considered when writing research questions. This structured but still relatively informal method resulted in very rich information about not only the development of the exhibition, but also related topics such as the institution itself and its history.

Several weeks later, I undertook three further interviews with non-Puke Ariki staff members who were involved with the development of the Taranaki Wars exhibition. Recruitment of these individuals emerged from the previous interviews at Puke Ariki, with interviewees suggesting I contact the final three participants. These interviews took place in Wellington and followed the same format as those at Puke Ariki, taking between 30 and 60 minutes.

### *Analysing the interviews*

I transcribed each of the interviews prior to analysis. I used a partial transcription method which involved an editing process during transcription. This involved noting down potentially useful material, whilst disregarding that which was deemed unrelated to my research aims. After each interview was transcribed, I contacted research participants to ask if they would like their transcripts returned and any changes made. Three participants requested the return of their transcript, and two of these made minor changes to some content, mostly regarding grammar and clarity of expression. Once these issues were remedied, I coded relevant sections of each transcript into three headings, based on the outlines of the chapters of my dissertation. The first sections coded were related to the background of either the Taranaki region or Puke Ariki itself or were contextual information for the first chapter. The second section consisted of information relating to the process of producing the Wars exhibition. The final section of coding concerned information relating to the similarities and differences between exhibition history and academic history. The coded interview transcripts formed the primary source of material in the construction of my dissertation.

Ten interviews proved to be more than enough for the purposes of research, given the enormous amount of information each interview yielded. There were some limitations to this research. Ideally I would have liked to have also interviewed the two Puke Ariki staff members who for personal reasons were unable to participate in an interview. Also, without the time and length constraints of this project, I would have talked to audience members about their perceptions of the history presented in the exhibition. Related to this would be deeper analysis of the visitor research Puke Ariki did while the exhibition was running, in order to add another layer into the analysis of public and academic history from the perspective of the audience. Unfortunately time constraints meant this element of research was not undertaken, but provide a potential for further research into exhibiting and public history. I have not concluded my work with an in depth analysis of the visitor reaction to the exhibition, but instead have briefly discussed the staff's interpretations of visitor responses to the exhibition. Finally, my inability to see the exhibition in place at Puke Ariki was disappointing, as this would have added to my understanding of the content of the interviews.

### *Documentary evidence*

Although ethnographic research can also take in to account written sources related to exhibition development, such as internal emails, discussion and planning documents and text panels, the



richness of the information gathered from the ten interviews meant that these sources were lightly used for this dissertation. Photographs of the finished exhibition were primarily used as illustrative aids when discussing the finished exhibition, rather than being sources in their own right. Puke Ariki's compiled audience feedback data was used when required. However, as previously mentioned audience understandings and thoughts about the exhibition are not covered within the scope of this dissertation. The interviews provided sufficient information about the background of the exhibition, specifically the history of the region, the wars and the institution itself. They also provided enormous amounts of information about how the exhibition was developed. The opinions of the staff provided provocative and interesting starting points for the discussion about the differences between academic and public history which became apparent in tracing the Taranaki Wars exhibition.

### **Chapter outlines**

There are three chapters in this dissertation. Chapter One provides a background to the case study, which is Puke Ariki's Taranaki Wars exhibition from 2010. It explores the history of the Taranaki wars, as well as the ongoing legacy of that warfare in the region today. It goes on to institution's history, from its conception as the Taranaki Museum through to its current manifestation as a converged museum, library and information centre in New Plymouth. This provides a contextual background to how the museum produced the exhibition about the Taranaki wars, and begins to give an indication of the importance of this exhibition being developed for Taranaki and its people. Chapter Two traces the creation of the exhibition from the germination of the concept in 2005, through to the opening day and the public programmes schedule in 2010. This chapter draws heavily on the staff and outside advisor interviews who were involved in the production of the exhibition. The process of making historical narratives in Puke Ariki is outlined, and some of the trials and tribulations of creating a history exhibition as well as the successes are explored.

Chapter Three discusses how the creation of this history reflects the relationship between academic and public history on the topic of the New Zealand wars. Despite my initial hypothesis arguing that these schools of history were closely linked, in tracing the creation of the exhibition it became clear that, although there were some aspects which were closely related, in fact the differences far outweighed the similarities. The social nature of museum history, its accessibility to a wide audience and the politicised nature of creating this history were all a part of the divergence between the two historical forms. However, it is inaccurate to claim they are

completely different. The quest for accuracy and rigorous historical research remain integral to both academic and public historians in their creation of narratives, although the differences outweigh the similarities. The conclusion will briefly outline the key findings from this research, and make some recommendations for further research on related topics. The usefulness of this research for future museum practice will also be touched upon. I will now discuss the contextual background of the exhibition, particularly regarding the history of the Taranaki wars and the Taranaki region itself, as well as a brief history of Puke Ariki as an institution in the first chapter.

## **Chapter One**

### **“A painful, painful past” – background and context**

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the differences between museum-based and academic histories through the creation of a single history exhibition at Puke Ariki. However, history exhibitions are not stand-alone entities. They do not exist in a vacuum. Rather, the environment around them influences their creation, and they have their own specific histories. As Schlereth argues, a “thorough historiography” of history exhibitions is important to properly understand the process and product of history making within an institution (2004, 306). In the case of Puke Ariki’s Taranaki Wars exhibition, a number of strands form the backdrop to the exhibition. Initially, I will briefly trace some of the historical currents which have shaped Taranaki’s identity as a region, including the wars. Then I will provide a brief history of Puke Ariki as an institution, from its beginnings as Taranaki Museum, through to its redevelopment as a converged cultural centre.

#### **Taranaki – the land and people**

The exact date of Māori settlement in Taranaki is unknown, but evidence of occupation begins in the fourteenth century, with remains of ovens and agricultural production (Lambert 1983, 12).

The settlements of this early period appear to have been located at the mouths of the Waingongoro and Kaupokonui Rivers. There are eight iwi in the Taranaki region: Ngati Tama; Ngati Mutunga; Ngati Maru; Ngati Rauru; Taranaki; Ngāti Ruanui; Nga Ruahine and Te Āti Awa (Lambert 1983, 15; Taranaki Regional Council, 2012).

Relationships between iwi were not always peaceful, and shifting allegiances and threats from outside tribes saw inter-tribal fighting in the region (Hohaia, 2010). A major source of conflict was with Waikato Māori, who frequently raided Taranaki and continued to do so through the 1830s. In the early 19th century, the northern tribes of Ngati Whatua, Te Roroa, Ngapuhi and Ngati Toa raided Taranaki armed with muskets, and captured numerous slaves. Ngati Toa migrated to the Kapiti Coast in response to pressure from the Waikato, and on their way south picked up a number of Taranaki tribes in approximately 1822, joined by more from Taranaki in 1824 (Hohaia, 2010). The final Waikato raids in Taranaki occurred between 1834 and 1837, but the Taranaki tribes led by Wiremu Te Kingi Matakātea defeated the Waikato tribes three times, eventually leading to a peace settlement which remains binding to this day (Hohaia, 2010). Māori land tenure in Taranaki was a complex system of “origins, society and economy”, and the

historical precedents and rules provided particular Māori communities with their customs and land rights (Keenan 2010, 4). The rules of customary land tenure were able to provide “order and stability to community life”, and were deeply ingrained into the memory of hapu, and members were able to recite them when needed (Keenan 2010, 4). Even when North Taranaki seemed devoid of Māori residents because of their flight to the Waikanae/Wellington region, land tenure rules still held strong, which would prove to be a great source of tension when iwi returned to Taranaki after Pākehā settlers arrived (Keenan 2010, 5).

### *The beginnings of Pākehā settlement*

The first contact Taranaki Māori had with Pākehā came in the midst of these complicated tribal relations. Pākehā came to Taranaki in the 1830s on board trading vessels. A system of exchange amongst Māori and Pākehā traders flourished, with Māori trading flax and pigs for muskets and ammunition, amongst other things (Hohaia, 2010). One of the more infamous incidents in Taranaki’s early history is that of the barque *Harriet*, which ran aground at the mouth of the Okahu Stream in 1834. Lambert argues that the subsequent ‘skirmish’ between Māori and the crew of the *Harriet* (resulting in 12 dead) was a consequence of Captain John (Jacky) Guard’s dodgy dealings with Māori before the wreck occurred (1983, 21). Ngāti Ruanui arrived a few days after the wreck and set upon the survivors, perhaps because of the lack of bounty left on the ship. The Guard family and others were held as hostages, and Jacky Guard was released to get gunpowder as a ransom, leaving his wife Betty and their children under the protection of the chief Oaoiti. Jacky returned four months later from Sydney accompanied by members of the 50th Regiment from Sydney aboard the *Alligator* and captured Oaoiti at gunpoint. After Betty and her children were reclaimed, Waimate was bombarded and elderly members of the tribe were shot (Watters, 2011a). The ruthless behaviour of the Pākehā in the face of cultural differences foreshadows the campaigns of the Taranaki Wars, later in the 1800s.

Systematic European settlement began in 1841 with the formation of the Plymouth Company. This short-lived company, eventually subsumed into the more successful New Zealand Company, was formed to cater for those wishing to immigrate to New Zealand from Cornwall and Devon. Six ships were sent to what would become New Plymouth. Frederick Carrington chose the mouth of the Huatoki River rather than at Waitara, despite the lack of a natural harbour (an artificial harbour was constructed instead). Land was purchased, somewhat dubiously, off Māori tribes by British settlers who wanted better land for farming (Hohaia, 2010). The early arrivals had a tough beginning to their new life in the settlement. Pests such as sandflies and rats

abounded, food was scarce, and clearing the dense forest cover for farming was an exceptionally difficult task. However, benefits lay in the ability of the new settlers to make their own income, unlike what they had left behind in their countries of origin.

Peace did not last long, given that the settlers desired control of the rich Māori owned land to the north of New Plymouth. The purchase of 60,000 acres by the Plymouth and New Zealand Companies was protested by Māori, reversed by Governor FitzRoy to 3,500 acres, and then reassessed by the following governor, Grey, who authorised repurchasing as much land as Māori would allow. Grey insisted that land of the original acreage that Māori did not want to sell be compensated with an equivalent purchase elsewhere for Pākehā, leading to the Bell/Puketapu Block purchase in 1848 (Lambert 1983, 31). At a similar time, Māori who had fled Taranaki in the midst of Waikato raids began returning to their ancestral lands, particularly Te Āti Awa who were returning to Waitara. Rising populations of both cultures, and “the insatiable greed of the Pākehā” led to increased tension between the cultures in the late 1840s and leading in to the 1850s (Lambert 1983, 31). As the Pākehā population grew, they became agitated by the rich agricultural land owned by “these natives” which comprised more than two million acres shared amongst approximately 1782 people, compared to 11,000 acres owned by Pākehā - “a travesty” according to E. L. Humphries in 1858 (cited in Keenan 2010, 2).

### *The outbreak of war*

Further tensions arose when Pākehā realised the great success Māori were having in agriculture. Having adopted European agricultural methods under the guidance of Wiremu Kingi Te Rangitaaki, Māori were exporting more produce from the district than Pākehā (Keenan 2010, 23). Governor Gore Browne met with the Pākehā community in 1859 to hear their grievances about the difficulties of obtaining land from the Māori, who themselves were divided as to whether to sell land or hold on to their ancestral acres. The Governor made some very pointed remarks to senior chiefs, particularly Wiremu Kingi, about chiefs preventing individual Māori from selling land, and his speech was quickly followed by minor chief Te Teira Manuka offering land at the mouth of the Waitara River (Keenan 2010, 23). This infuriated not only Wiremu Kingi, but a number of other chiefs, and Kingi responded, “Waitara is in my hands, I will not give it up” (cited in Keenan 2010, 23).

This event, and the ensuing surveys of Waitara land that Kingi and his people staunchly resisted, was a major catalyst for the beginning of the Taranaki Wars. Combined with almost twenty years

of tension over land, this was enough to prompt Te Āti Awa into building a fortification at Te Kohia, which had a clear view of the British position, and two days before the outbreak of war on March 17th 1860 Te Āti Awa performed a haka in clear view of the British troops (Lambert 1983, 32). For the already aggravated Pākehā, this was one provocation too far, and on March 17th 1860 Colonel Gold, Commander of the British garrison, ordered a contingent to attack. After battering the pā, the attack was abandoned overnight. Later that month, word was received that Ngati Ruanui were going to attack New Plymouth from the south, leading to a haka being performed at the Omata Stockade and a relieving British force being sent in to rescue the settlers sheltering there. A further major engagement occurred at Puketakauere, a fortification which had the potential to block supplies to New Plymouth. The British attack on this pā was unsuccessful - Māori drew British troops closer to the pā by firing from seemingly easily accessible ditches. British troops found themselves up against large groups of hidden Māori warriors, leading to a resounding defeat of the British. After this battle, little ground was gained by either side. Settlers were evacuated to Nelson. Disease was rife in New Plymouth and settlers in outer communities were still being killed in combat. This stalemate was broken by a Māori defeat at Pukerangiora, and the negotiations of Wiremu Tamihana eventually led to a truce agreement ending the First Taranaki War on March 18 1861, a year after the first shots were fired.

This peace was not to last. In 1863, British troops occupied the Tataraimaka block, which Māori had occupied after it had been abandoned by Pākehā at the end of the first war. This was seen as an act of war, and the Second Taranaki War began only days before Governor Grey was to return the much-disputed Waitara land to Te Āti Awa. Two battles ensued at Oakura and 'Allen's Hill', the first decisively won by the British, the second less decisively so, but with significant Māori losses. Guerrilla fighting followed these battles, preventing Pākehā settlers access to 'their' land. The Māori position was strengthened by the arrival of Te Ua Haumēne and the Pai Marire religion. This proved to be an effective form of unity for Māori tribes and an even more effective form of psychological warfare as Pākehā fearfully concocted stories about the gruesome pastimes of Pai Marire adherents.

Guerrilla style ambushes were continued by Māori across Taranaki, with some battles such as that of "Sentry Hill" resulting in many Māori deaths. Major General Chute arrived in 1865 and undertook a campaign that matched the guerilla war of the Māori. He and his troops marched around Taranaki through arduous terrain, attacking kāinga and pā as they travelled. By the time they returned to Patea in February 1866, they had destroyed seven pā and 21 kāinga. After their

return, a brief cessation of fighting led the Government to quickly settle land in South Taranaki confiscated by the New Zealand Settlements Act of 1863. In order to attract settlers to what had become a very unpopular region, the Government promised very generous land grants to settlers. However it did not give settlers the means to establish themselves in the region and thus few settlers remained in the long term. Settlers did arrive in small numbers and started to form townships in South Taranaki despite continued minor disturbances along the coast..

### *Tītōkōwaru's War*

This fragile peace was again temporary - the final phase of fighting in the Taranaki Wars was about to begin. The subtle process of “creeping confiscation” of Māori land by Pākehā legislation slowly but surely ate away at Ngāti Ruanui land. Despite attempts by hapu to passively resist this process through protesting land surveying, and then more actively by removing surveyor posts, burning fences and destroying huts, Pākehā continued to take land (Belich 1998, 204). This led to Ngā Ruahine killing three settlers in June 1868, and ‘Tītōkōwaru's War’ began (Watters, 2011b). Tītōkōwaru was a military and spiritual leader of the Pai Marire faith. A preliminary attack by Tītōkōwaru and his men was implemented on the Turuturumōkai redoubt, which the Pākehā were rebuilding as hostilities increased. In response, three unsuccessful expeditions by Pākehā forces attempted to take Te Ngutu-o-te-Manu pā. On the 7th of September 1868 Gustav von Tempsky and a number of Pākehā troops marched on the Te Ngutu-o-te-Manu but Māori were able to successfully attack approaching British troops. A well-aimed sniper shot killed von Tempsky, leaving troops in disarray before retreating (Watters, 2011b). A further expedition was led on Moturoa, including 300 Whanganui Māori as part of the Armed Constabulary, but once again Tītōkōwaru and his supporters wreaked havoc on the Constabulary. In 1869, Tītōkōwaru began building a new pā, named Taurangaika, located 25 kilometres from Whanganui where the Armed Constabulary was regrouping. However, Tītōkōwaru had been abandoned by many of his followers, and the ‘final battle’ of Taurangaika was more a tactical Māori retreat. As Watters argues, “Tītōkōwaru's war effectively ended with the retreat from Taurangaika. The colonial army could not claim to have won it, having proved unable to inflict a decisive blow” (2011b).

### *Parihaka and the post-war legacy*

The war on the West Coast ended after the retreat of Tītōkōwaru in 1869, and Pākehā busied themselves with reconstructing townships and redeveloping the Taranaki economy with

confiscated Māori land. For Māori, the wounds of warfare remained deeply ingrained. European legislation, created ostensibly to punish Māori rebellion (the New Zealand Settlement Act and the Suppression of Rebellion Act), systematically decimated Māori land holdings. As Wright argues, “the process of settlement...devoured land and...became a practical assertion of sovereignty” (2006, 82). Greater numbers of troops and more advanced weaponry also meant Māori were unable to win the overall battle for Taranaki (Addis 2010, 263). After the war, Pākehā felt confident to move onto land that Māori had previously been reluctant to sell. The feet-dragging by the Native Land Court to assign Māori reserve lands meant Māori essentially became landless in their own country (Addis, 2010, 265). However, Māori remained resistant through the 1860s and 1870s to this unfair confiscation process and perhaps the most immediately recognisable of these attempts at resistance was at Parihaka. Parihaka was a community founded by Te Whiti o Rongomai and Tohu Kakahi, who argued for Māori farming for themselves, and if Pākehā were threatened by this, Māori were to not react with violence but to passively resist. Māori flocked to Parihaka, drawn to the ideas espoused by Te Whiti and Tohu of Māori economic self-determination and wellbeing, and the town grew to several thousand people. Food was sent from all over the country to support the effort (Parihaka Management Trust, 2011).

The Crown saw Parihaka as a threat to its sovereignty, and on November 5th 1881, Parihaka was sacked in what may well have been the last armed military engagement on New Zealand soil. Many were arrested, women were raped, people were beaten, houses and farms destroyed. This brought an end to organised Māori resistance in a brutal and shameful way, and the cumulative effects of both this as well as the campaigns of wars, loss of sovereignty and loss of land on Māori communities cannot be underestimated. Taranaki became a prosperous dairying economy, particularly with the advent of refrigerated shipping. Developments in energy sources also began through the twentieth century, and despite periods of Pākehā population stagnation in New Plymouth overall the region prospered.

Māori did not benefit from these developments. Māori mortality rates were high due to poor living conditions and the ravaging effects of European diseases such as measles and influenza, and a lack of employment available for Māori whose land had been taken after the wars. Māori were substantially involved in clearing the land which had once been theirs for Europeans to farm (Lambert 1983, 118). As well as this, Pākehā were endlessly tactless in buying land, and pillaged the gardens of Māori, even of those who had helped the Pākehā cause during the



conflicts (Belgrave 2005, 251). The second West Coast Commission did allow some good arable land to be returned to Māori as reserve land, but because of its rich agricultural capabilities, it was placed into a public trust rather than actually physically returned to Māori control. Subsequently it was leased to Pākehā settlers resulting in Pākehā control of Māori land through legislation (Belgrave, 2005, 261). The Europeanizing of New Zealand's economy led to a decline in the authority of rangatira, and the traditional leadership and kin systems of Māori communities were decimated. However, the Sim Commission of Inquiry of 1927 clearly stated that Taranaki Māori should not have been punished by land confiscations, and in repayment the Crown was to pay £5000 annually, to be distributed by the Māori Trust Board (a far from generous amount), which became the default leadership for Taranaki Māori (Addis 2010, 270; Belgrave 2005, 266). Later, the Waitangi Tribunal Claim hearings which began from 1990 started a process by which Māori could present their versions of history and gain some recompense for the past. As Belgrave argues, part of the power of the Waitangi Tribunal for Taranaki Māori was that they

“clearly expected to be able to tell the story of the colonisation of Taranaki in their own words, with a real sense that their history had not been told. They argued their children, in particular, had been told lies, that their ancestors and leaders had been vilified and their attackers glorified”. (2005, 273).

Although the Tribunal report had its flaws, its strengths lay in its ability to bring together an “integrated overview” of the relationship between iwi and the Crown through the periods of the wars and beyond. It made clear that there was “something rotten in the state’s relationship with Māori”, particularly with regards to the New Zealand Company’s obsession with acquiring land without considering Māori owners (Belgrave, 2005, 275). The Tribunal’s final report did not shy away from strongly criticising past Governments, arguing that “the invasion of Parihaka must rank with the most heinous action of any government, in any country, of the last century” (Taranaki Tribunal Report, 1996). Tribunal claims, particularly those for the Waitara lease lands, remain on going.

### **The legacy of the wars today**

The Tribunal report bluntly states that “the whole history of Government dealings with Māori of Taranaki has been the antithesis to that envisaged by the Treaty of Waitangi” (Taranaki Tribunal Report, 1996). A brutal history of violence and loss of rangatira amongst Māori has led to a division in the development between Māori and Pākehā populations in Taranaki, and has shaped some of the identity of the region. Taranaki struggled for population after the wars due to its reputation as somewhere dangerous for Pākehā settlers, and this history of struggle by both

Māori and Pākehā has helped to shape the do it yourself, go it alone ethic which Taranaki residents today ascribe to themselves (Lambert, 2011). In present day Taranaki, the wars have not simply been subsumed into a textbook story of the past. Instead, the wars remain a lived experience, shaping the experiences particularly of Māori in Taranaki over the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The gap between Māori and Pākehā development, particularly in the realms of income and health, are inextricably linked to the aftermath of the wars. The dis-empowerment of Māori by the Government and the lack of access to land and self-determination combined with a lack of immunity to disease led to generations of inequality between the two groups. As the Taranaki Waitangi Tribunal report claims, “the real issue is the relationship between Māori and the Government. It is today, as it has been for 155 years, the central problem” (2006). Taranaki Māori therefore still have the legacy of the wars hobbling their development, as years of oppression and inequality continue to make their effects known. As the Tribunal report acknowledges, “if war is the absence of peace, the war has never ended in Taranaki, because that essential prerequisite for peace among peoples, that each should be able to live with dignity on their own lands, is still absent and the protest over land rights continues”, a powerful statement of the Māori perspective on the legacy of warfare in Taranaki (Taranaki Tribunal Report, 1996). As Colleen Tuuta said in her speech at the exhibition’s opening, quoting a young Māori person descended from those at Parihaka,

“we have inherited a legacy of mamae [grief] and dispossession...we will never forget what happened, it has in fact moulded and shaped my world view, this is why I have a strong sense of justice, that is why I want to see the wrongs corrected, but that doesn’t mean I have to take on the hurt... There is power in remembrance and reconciliation, but not in holding onto the mamae, holding on only holds us back.” (Tuuta, 2010).

Therefore the wars continue to shape the experiences of Māori in Taranaki, but as the young Māori descendant of Parihaka described, it is time to move onwards and forwards from this pain into a better and brighter future.

Pākehā see the legacy of the war in very different light. Until very recently, the history of the New Zealand Wars was not well taught in schools, and as such much of the history of Taranaki is unknown to many people. The struggles of Pākehā settlers around New Zealand is better known, in that clearing the land and becoming profitable was a highly difficult task. However, much of the bloodshed and Pākehā brutality during the war years, and the following Government condoned inequality through the use of binding acts to strip Māori of land, has not been well integrated into the everyday understandings of this country by its Pākehā residents. The on-going struggles and Waitangi claims in the Taranaki region for the redress of wrongs have not been

well received by Pākehā, who often naively assume Māori should just “get over it”, a sentiment much repeated in letters to the editor or as comments on online newspaper articles. The tension between Māori urgency for recompense and the lack of Pākehā understanding has made the wars a very contentious topic, and one which prompted Puke Ariki’s tagline for the exhibition – “don’t mention the war”.

### **Puke Ariki’s institutional history**

Puke Ariki’s development can also be traced within this social and historical milieu. Prior to Puke Ariki, Taranaki was served by the Taranaki Museum. The museum dates back to the founding of the Mechanic’s Institute in 1847, and by 1867 the museum was located “rent-free” in the Provincial Council Chambers (Punch, Number 21, June 1997). A new library building followed. By 1960, the museum moved to new quarters to display its collection adequately, and a Trust Board was set up to better align the museum’s direction with the needs of the community. However, later in the history of Taranaki Museum, a more inclusive understanding of the region began to develop within the museum (Punch, Number 21 June 1997). In the 1970s, the Taranaki Museum revived the practice of engaging Māori as trustees for particularly important taonga, a process which had begun in the 1920s. The museum was also fortunate to be able to draw upon the knowledge of Marjorie Rau-Kupa, a member of Ngāti Mutunga, who was known as Aunty Marj. She “helped care for taonga, repaired cloaks, and supported museum staff” (McCarthy 2011, 41).

However by the late 1980s it became apparent that the museum’s collection was running out of space, as was the library. The amalgamation of the multiple territorial local authorities in 1989 also contributed to a shift in the operation of the Taranaki Museum, as rather than each authority contributing varying amounts of funds to the museum’s operational costs a single integrated Council funded the museum’s operations (Day, 2011). By the 1990s a working group was formed to address the lack of space for both the museum and library. The group decided that a combined model of library and museum would be developed, and later a visitor information centre was added to the mix. The old Puke Ariki pā site was decided on for the site of the converged institution, and the name Puke Ariki given to the complex. The site “had mana” for both Māori and Pākehā given it was an important early pā as well as a site for early European settlement in New Plymouth (Day, 2011). The newly converged museum, library and information centre opened in June 2003. Funding came primarily from the council, but also from a number of long term commercial partners such as Shell, Methenex and the port, as well as with the TSB

Community Trust. Today, Puke Ariki's heritage collections are broken in to four curated areas - taonga Māori, archives, social history (which includes some natural history items as well) and pictorial. A range of temporary exhibitions, both curated in house and travelling exhibitions, accompany the permanent galleries.

The combination of a brutal and complicated history between Māori and Pākehā, as well as a unique institutional history of Puke Ariki, combine to create a backdrop which contributes to the making of a single exhibition. The influences of this history are present both in the content that was produced in the exhibition itself, as well as in the process of consultation and funding which were a part of the exhibition's development. The specificities of developing the Taranaki Wars exhibition in the museum context is discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter Two

### **“It’s all about the story” – creating the exhibition**

With the background of the history of both the Taranaki region and the Puke Ariki itself in mind, I will discuss how the Taranaki Wars exhibition came into being. This chapter will trace the development of the exhibition from concept until opening day, and then examine some of the public events which were attached to the exhibition itself.

#### *The team for the exhibition*

The converged Puke Ariki institution is a medium sized museum in the national context, and as such there was a varied range of internal staff members and external contractors who participated in the development of the exhibition. At the time of the exhibition’s development in 2010, Puke Ariki’s manager was Bill Macnaught. Originally from Scotland, Bill took the position in 2005 after director’s roles in the United Kingdom. After leaving Puke Ariki in 2011 he became the National Librarian at the National Library of New Zealand in Wellington. There are four main curatorial areas within the museum: taonga Māori; pictorial; social history; and archives. The Manager Heritage Collections, Kelvin Day, oversees these four areas. Although all the curators of these areas were involved to some extent with the Wars exhibition, I was only able to interview the pictorial curator Ruth Harvey and Kelvin Day. Ruth came to Puke Ariki after a Masters degree in Art History and has experience at art galleries in Australia. She has a background in modern and contemporary art, as well as a keen interest in and knowledge of photography. She has been the pictorial curator for four years. Kelvin is from the Taranaki region, and has a background in archaeology. After a number of years working in other New Zealand museums he came to what was then Taranaki Museum in 1992 as programmes coordinator and deputy director, followed by a period working as exhibitions manager before taking up his current position.

Alongside collections is the research team, overseen by Gary Bastin and augmented by Ron Lambert. Gary is from Taranaki and originally studied physics and worked as a researcher for the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) before studying anthropology. He then returned to Taranaki as Team Leader for the Taranaki Research Centre at Puke Ariki. Ron Lambert is the former director of the Taranaki Museum, and originally studied the natural sciences. When Puke Ariki was developed, Ron took on the Senior Researcher role rather than remain director. He is also originally from Taranaki. The exhibitions developer is Gerard

Beckingsale, who co-ordinates both the internally and externally developed exhibitions Puke Ariki uses. Gerard has a background in building, design and media and worked in the film industry before coming to Taranaki firstly as an exhibitions technician before becoming exhibitions manager. Dale Cousens, Manager Service Delivery, works with Jocelyn Millard, the community liaison, to produce educational and public programmes alongside exhibitions. Dale has a background in libraries, both academically and professionally, primarily in Australia. Jocelyn is part of Te Āti Awa, but is involved with all the Taranaki iwi in her role, in which she assists in giving the Māori view of history and their perspectives as related to the museum's activities.

Johanna Knox was commissioned as the writer for the Taranaki Wars exhibition. Based in Wellington, she was involved in the on-staff writing team at Te Papa in 1998, and has done contract writing for a number of other New Zealand institutions. The Taranaki Wars exhibition was her first work for Puke Ariki. Peter Adds, head of Māori Studies at Victoria University of Wellington, acted as an academic and Māori adviser as the exhibition progressed. Peter is also part of Te Āti Awa, and has a background in anthropology and archaeology. Finally, other commissioned staff included graphic designers and exhibition designers, whom Puke Ariki does not have on permanent staff. All quotes hereafter are taken from interviews conducted by the author between July - September 2011, and are attributed to each individual in text.

#### *Early concept development – the Common Ground series*

The beginnings of the Taranaki War exhibition came out of a conversation between Kelvin Day and the then director, Bill Macnaught, soon after Bill arrived in New Plymouth from his previous position in England in 2005. Bill was keenly interested in the history of Taranaki, having little prior knowledge of the region, and Kelvin took him for a guided tour around some of the remaining Taranaki Wars sites around the region. As part of this discussion, the relevance of the 17th of March 2010 came up as the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first shots fired in the Taranaki Wars, and the necessity for Puke Ariki to do something to acknowledge this date was discussed. Kelvin was already working on a book to mark the event; Bill suggested also having an exhibition and the idea began.

It was decided that a series of contextual exhibitions would be developed prior to the opening of the wars exhibition in 2010. This would give an historical overview of the region and provide a background to better contextualise the final exhibition. This became a series of four exhibitions,

based on the four well beings of the New Plymouth District Council with the overarching series title of Common Ground. These well beings are policy frameworks for the council, and are based around environmental, social, economic and cultural elements of well-being. It is the council's responsibility to ensure these are met for New Plymouth residents. The title Common Ground came out of the ideas of conflict resolution, with Bill thinking along the lines of "we've got all these differences but where's the Common Ground" in Taranaki? This idea of conflict resolution fed into one of the aims of the series, which was to illuminate some of the similarities and differences between the world-views of Māori and Pākehā in Taranaki - Pākehā here being used in the widest possible sense of non-Māori. The idea was that, as Bill commented, the exhibition series would "look at the things that separated Māori perspective and Pākehā perspective 150 years ago and similarly today," using the four themes of local council to illuminate those differences. These themes were *Whāriki*, or family history and identity; *Whenua*; *Culture*; and *Economy*, and each portrayed the specifics of the topic in Taranaki and showed some of the differences in understandings of these well beings.

These exhibitions had a second focus - that of common ground as an idea of cohesion, and of different people making Taranaki their home with a shared love of the land. With both these ideas in mind, of differences as well as cohesion, the Common Ground series was developed to provide a backdrop to the final, most important exhibition, that of the wars. The exhibitions were challenging to staff, and put "a hell of a lot of strain" on them, as Kelvin put it, as they had to be developed quickly and in conjunction with other exhibitions that were going on at the same time. Additionally, making exhibitions interesting and engaging for the region's residents was a real challenge for the staff, particularly the last of the exhibition about economy. As Gerard recalled, that was a topic people lived with everyday - they didn't want to be learning about dairy farming when that was their livelihood! Finding suitable objects to illustrate these stories also proved tricky, but with some creativity and ingenuity, including commissioning new artworks for the culture exhibition, the exhibitions were all on the floor in time and had good visitation. The difficulty of the economics exhibition in particular led to the team considering not doing it because, as Kelvin said, "we didn't think we could do it particularly well", but in the end, the team pulled it off. The four exhibitions had a conceptual curator driving the exhibitions' development, Bill Milbank, former director of the Sarjeant Gallery in Whanganui, which was quite different to how the Wars exhibition developed.

### *Curation by committee*

As the Common Ground series came to a close, the final and most important segment – the Wars exhibition – began to draw ever closer. The purpose of the series was to provide a background to the world-views of both Māori and Pākehā before getting into the difficult field of warfare. As *Economy* was completed, attention turned to getting ideas for the wars exhibition. Unlike the Common Ground series, which had an overall conceptual curator, the Wars exhibition did not have a single curator. Instead, the development was governed by what Ruth called “curation by committee,” with the whole team involved in the entire process from concept to completion. At the same time the *Economy* exhibition was closing, Kelvin had been commissioning a number of academics and other writers to write chapters for a book about the Taranaki Wars. This was aimed at a rather different audience than more traditional academic texts, and aligns more closely with a public history mindset. Kelvin aimed to get a range of perspectives on a range of topics, rather than a weighty tome on the cause, course and consequence of the warfare in the region, and to provide something that would “live beyond what we did” in the exhibition. The book was designed to complement the exhibition, rather than being a specific exhibition catalogue, and it was intended that people would dip into chapters rather than having to read the entire book. Peter Adds, head of Māori Studies at Victoria University, was one of the writers commissioned to provide a chapter for this work, and his work was based on his Treaty of Waitangi research about the legacy of warfare on Māori communities in Taranaki. His chapter’s focus explored how adversely the wars had affected Māori communities from the cessation of war until today.

After this chapter had been written, Peter was present at one of the early concept development meetings, which he described as “all over the place” at this stage. Ideas were being thrown around the table, looking at different perspectives on telling the story about the wars, trying to find an interesting and powerful way of presenting this under-represented history. Adds then suggested a somewhat different tack - how about a focus on the legacy of warfare rather than a standard military history, and give a strong Māori perspective on the wars instead of a settler approach? This seemed the right decision to the staff, who according to Adds were “really excited about presenting a new perspective on this stuff”. It was these issues of the effects of warfare on Māori communities that the museum wanted to raise awareness of, and they wanted to be able to tell people that “this is why there are still issues today”, as Gerard put it. With this in mind, and Peter’s chapter as a basis for the concept, the Wars exhibition got under way.



There were eight months between the *Economy* show going on the floor and the 17th of March 2010, creating a very tight development time frame. Additionally, funding could not be guaranteed. The New Plymouth District Council only funds a small portion of the exhibition budget, a remnant from the development of Puke Ariki as a converged institution and the attempt to keep the cost of a new museum as low as possible for ratepayers. There had been some dismay from the Taranaki public over the opening of a new museum in 2003. For many, a library seemed like a reasonable use of public money, but a museum was less desirable. In order to gain support for the project a low operating budget was proposed, with the council only funding a very small amount from ratepayers, and Puke Ariki gathering their own funding as required for bigger projects. This meant as the concept was being developed at the preliminary stages, the team had no idea how far they could go with the project or where the money was going to come from, a stressful situation for all involved.

A writer was commissioned and became part of the early concept development discussions. This idea of curation by committee, mentioned by Ruth, meant that the team met as a group to discuss the direction of the exhibition and other elements together, rather than having a main driving force behind the development such as a conceptual curator. Although this democratic process meant that everyone had a say in the development, it also meant that a clear direction and a strong leadership role was not present, and so the concept development went “round and round and round”, as Ruth put it, with the team discussing and debating possible themes and ways to tell the story. When writer Johanna Knox was commissioned, she came into the debate expecting to have some sort of a brief as to what she was expected to produce for the exhibition. Johanna was Pākehā with little knowledge of the history of the Taranaki Wars, but had a keen personal interest in the subject. Her background, as someone relatively removed from the subject matter of the exhibition, was part of the decision to commission her because, as Gerard said, “we didn’t want any preconceived ideas or any agenda coming into [the writing of the exhibition]”. Her lack of detailed prior knowledge meant she was able to learn as she went and shape her writing with input from the team and the community, as described later.

Johanna arrived to find the concept was based on Peter’s chapter, and she was given a document with the notes from the team in their lengthy discussions about what the exhibition should contain. She was expected to work from this rather than an already developed brief like she would have expected from a larger museum. As Johanna explained,

“normally in a museum job the writer would just write. There might be a bit of interpretation, a bit of research to a greater or lesser degree. But at Puke Ariki...the boundaries were really blurred. I did find myself having to do a lot more concept work than I initially thought I would.”

From the beginning of the exhibition process, decisions were made as a team and, although this was time consuming, it was also dynamic and flexible. Through further consultation with the team, Johanna developed a more solid conceptual framework which she would then use to create texts for the exhibition, and help her to decide which objects to put into the narrative. Eventually the concept was formed into three segments. The first was a basic chronological history of the Taranaki Wars. The next section was an in depth analysis of the legacy of the wars, primarily its effects on Māori communities, loosely based on Peter’s chapter. At this early stage, Johanna noted that the exhibition would contain significant amounts of quite modern material, making it very clear to the audience that some of the issues between Māori and Pākehā, and the anger in some Māori communities, could be directly traced back to the injustices of the war years. The final section was aimed at getting the audience to reflect on this history and the current tensions in this relationship, and thinking about the future direction of Taranaki and the relationship between the residents.

#### *It’s all about the story*

Like the concept development, the writing of the exhibition’s narrative was an organic process, and one that involved a large number of the staff in a range of functions. Also involved were Māori communities, and staff debated how to involve iwi in meaningful ways to give a Māori perspective on the warfare. Early on in this process, it became obvious that the potential idea for having iwi telling their own stories in the exhibition was not going to be feasible. As Bill described it, Māori communities were swamped with their own business of getting Treaty claims through the Tribunal - a time consuming and expensive process. As well as this, it would be extremely unhelpful for Māori if Puke Ariki were to involve them officially in stories that were directly related to their claims.

A further concern for the staff was that the concept they were developing was quite a contentious one, particularly with its strong lean towards illuminating the adverse effects on Māori. The staff knew it was important that the Māori community was aware of their intentions and had at least some input into the shape of the exhibition. Early in the development of the concept, Gerard and Jocelyn visited members of Ngā Ruahine, who were interested in what Puke Ariki were planning

for the exhibition. From the beginning iwi were interested in the exhibition and in some cases somewhat hostile, as they felt their history was going to be told unsympathetically with little consultation by the museum with iwi – “telling our story for us” as Gerard put it. Gerard and Jocelyn, along with other members of staff involved in the exhibition, went to talk to Ngā Ruahine and this experience resulted in the emergence of part of the perspective and aims for the exhibition. On arrival, Gerard was expected to stand up in front of the iwi representatives and introduce himself, and as he said he “felt like such an outsider, a Pākehā guy from Auckland running this project”. As he explained,

“I don’t know anything about the war. Nothing! So there’s a whole bunch of people out there like me and they need to know and that’s why I’m here, the advocate for those people. If I’m starting to get this story and how important it is then other people can as well.”

The response from iwi was immediate. Although they were fearful that their stories would not be told well, or that the pain of the past for Māori would continue to be subsumed into a narrative of Pākehā history, being told the plans for the exhibition put them much more at ease. As one of the tribal members said, “It’s never occurred to me there are people out there like you who don’t know. I’ve spent my whole life assuming they know, but don’t care.” For Māori in Taranaki, knowing that the aim of Puke Ariki was to tell their stories as a conversation rather than Puke Ariki being the sole holders of information meant Māori were overwhelmingly on board with the plans for the exhibition.

### *The Māori world-view*

Eventually, a suitable writing plan was constructed to incorporate Māori viewpoints into the exhibition. Johanna would continue to write the introductory panels (which formed much of the narrative flow of the exhibition), extended label text, and object labels, guided by the curators, researchers, advisers and Jocelyn, the iwi liaison officer. If there were specific stories about a hapū or an event which involved specific people or iwi, the appropriate people would be involved in the telling of that story. With this plan in mind, Johanna began to write the panels, object labels and other materials in earnest. As she had come into the museum with only a basic working knowledge of the history in Taranaki, she read a number of academic texts to give her a background understanding of the events. However, more useful in providing information were the curators, whose knowledge of Taranaki and its history shaped her writing much more than standard texts. The curators also illustrated what they were telling her with objects and their stories, giving her a clearer picture of what the events were like. A key part of writing this

narrative was expressing a particular perspective, which was as important as content. The guidance of both Peter and most importantly Jocelyn was fundamental to writing text and creating a history that articulated the fundamental historical events of the wars while also incorporating Māori world-views and community opinion.

As she was from Te Āti Awa, Jocelyn's role as community liaison was integral to the writing process, providing Johanna with a reference point for a tangata whenua perspective. Her job also involved talking to the community when their stories were being written and "smoothing ruffled feathers," as she put it. Part of Jocelyn's input was to take the standard sources used to describe the wars and show Johanna how they were different to the Māori viewpoint. As well as this, along with the community's input Jocelyn was involved in providing Johanna with some different sources that she may not have used before,

"things like... waiata, using these recordings instead of using textbooks by James Cowan... a waiata poi that's been written on the plundering of Parihaka...and is continued to be recited and the multifaceted interpretations of those meanings. So part of my input was really 'Here is some stuff that we've become familiar with as a recorded history, but that's not how Māori see it'."

Johanna would then write texts with these new perspectives in mind, and then send it to Jocelyn, Peter and the curators, who would all give her feedback to work on. It was at this stage that the operating method of "curation by committee" became problematic, as Johanna would be sending her text to all these people, and as Ruth put it,

"imagine her horror when Jocelyn's saying one thing, and Kelvin's saying another and Ron's saying another and I'm saying another and the other curators are saying something else. Where's the consistency in order to make that not a stupidly overwhelming situation for her?"

This growing number of people to be consulted on the text, particularly those in the community, also added to the confusion and made this a time-consuming way of writing, although it did allow for creative input from a range of staff. Jocelyn was involved in keeping the community to deadlines, but it was a slow process.

### *The Council steps in*

A contentious issue began to emerge as the writing and editing process continued. Staff were well aware of the politicised nature of the topic, and were concerned with not upsetting people as well as not doing anything "that was construed as confusing the issues around any Treaty claims," as Bill Macnaught said. Although there was some worry amongst staff that not getting

iwi to directly tell their stories of the war was problematic, after asking iwi their opinion it became apparent that they “had bigger fish to fry” with Treaty claims. As Bill said, the Māori community became “reasonably relaxed about us telling their story, referring to them for any particular case of the history that we wanted to talk about that affected their iwi.” The staff realised it was more important that this story was told publicly rather than not doing it at all, especially given that the time constraints faced by the museum prevented any in-depth collaboration between the museum and the community.

However, the more impenetrable blockages to the development were those imposed by the New Plymouth District Council. Puke Ariki is governed and almost entirely funded by the council who, at times, tries to exercise control over the actions of the museum. In this case, the issue was to do with a particular story about the Waitara lease hold lands, over which Māori and Pākehā were in legal discussions regarding events dating back to 1860. Although Pākehā dwelling on the Pekapeka block had been told they could remain working the land, it turned out the land in question was a part of a major Treaty claim, leading to a long running and complicated legal process to give both parties a fair outcome. As the exhibition was being developed, this very case was in progress, and consequently the council insisted this story was not to be told. As Gerard said,

“I fought so hard [to put the story in] because it’s one of the most contentious issues here! And if we don’t address it in this exhibition we’re going to look like a council owned, council regulated institution and that was a really dangerous position to be put in.”

Gary noted that Gerard, in great frustration, exclaimed that instead they’d be putting in a “white elephant” – a gaping hole in the story.

However, through some innovative thinking, the team worked around the issue. Rather than putting it in panels on the wall, the story ended up being told in a different format - an interactive table. This table was a visual display of the legislative environment during the time of the wars as well as today, and painted a clear picture of how the government systematically managed to strip Māori of so much of their land, backed up by legal means (see figure one, below). The research team were heavily involved in this part of the exhibition in creating a time line of land loss based on legislation, to show this under recognised and tragic history in a much clearer light. As Gary recalled,

“the two things we were trying to do was...trying to translate the legislation away from legalese into...language that could be understood by most, [and]...to be able to show in a spatial context the relationship between the events, the legislation and how land was

disappearing from ownership...dramatically over that short period of time.”

Although the Pekapeka block story had no in depth interpretation, at least its legislative history was in the exhibition. This incident reiterated to staff how deeply complex and political this history was, even 150 years after the start of the wars.

### *The final push*

Four very tight months before the exhibition opened, funding was confirmed and the pace of development became frantic. The compressed time frame for such a big exhibition elicited mixed responses from the team. As Kelvin said, “we tend to do things in a much more compressed way. We do it, but it comes at a cost to the staff and...perhaps if we had more time the exhibition might be...different”. Gerard also described the process as “very very stressful,” as did Ruth, who said,

“it was a miracle we got what we did on the floor. Particularly given that everything ...concertinaed up into six months before the show, that’s not long enough...for a show of that size and the kind of work that had to go into the research and presentation and development of multimedia.”

However, this pressure also galvanized the staff and encouraged them to do a really good job, as Kelvin described. Gerard also argued that no matter how long the time frame, there would have always been a mad rush at the end as “there’s always other things to do!” The passion and drive of the team to do a great job also helped, and as Gerard wryly mused, “I don’t think it would have been any better if we’d had more time, put it that way. We just would’ve spent more time on it!” Regardless of perspective, all the staff were pushed for time as the exhibition opening date started to loom closer and closer. With funding confirmed, exhibition and graphic designers were commissioned. As a medium sized institution, Puke Ariki does not have their own design team, and as such a Wellington company, Cannibal, was hired to do this work.

The designers worked with the curators who were finalising objects in discussion with Johanna, who continued to write and change stories as decisions changed and new objects emerged. This process continued until the exhibition opened. One of the major struggles with the end of the writing process was the limited words available for labels, which were trying to describe huge topics and complicated Māori world-views. However with the group editing that was going on, the word count was cut down. Eventually the writing was done, the objects were put into their custom built mounts and exhibits, and the exhibition was opened.

### *The finished product*

The finished exhibition consisted of three parts. The introductory panel made a clear statement about the exhibition's purpose, highlighting the brutality of the warfare as well as its ongoing legacy, and introduced the differing world views of Māori and Pākehā (see figure two, below). The first section was an outline of events, what happened when and who was involved - the most 'traditional' section of the exhibition. Unlike the hegemonic Pākehā knowledge of military history, which can efface Māori viewpoints and portray Pākehā as heroes, the Puke Ariki exhibition aimed to have the Māori version of events and battles as well, to augment and redevelop what had until then been a fairly one-sided story in museums. This approach involved the use of multiple presentation methods, from objects and text to audiovisual displays (see figure three, below). As Peter put it, "the exhibitions I'm used to seeing about this sort of stuff are stodgy, dominated by guns. This was a completely new angle on it which I thought was great." The staff were also interested in having an element of doubt in their exhibition. An example of this was described by Gerard, in telling the story of the *Harriet*. More traditional Pākehā retellings of this story paint Māori as bloodthirsty, attacking settlers for their goods because they were there for the taking. However, the Māori understanding of that same story is markedly different, and instead saw the attack as *utu*, or righting wrongs and restoring balance for Pākehā taking goods from Māori further south and not paying for them. In traditional Māori culture, this was a perfectly reasonable response. The exhibition presented this story through an audiovisual medium, and had descendants from the *iwi* involved in the *Harriet* incident talking about their understanding of the events rather than a static text or object based display, which can be a harder medium to present multiple perspectives and elements of doubt in. As Gerard described,

"we don't get that side of the story so these people had the chance to say that on AV. It's always going to be debatable, there's nothing that can confirm or deny either story, but it's a version of the story we've never heard, and certainly not been documented until now."

This element of doubt, combined with the powerful need to share a new perspective, came through the whole exhibition deliberately, "very much acknowledging that museums are a place where you start a conversation, where you enable people, you don't just tell people what to think" as Gerard put it. This idea of enabling the audience to start a conversation about this history was to be further explored in the third section of the exhibition. However, before that section was the Legacy part of the show, which firmly centralised the ongoing costs of warfare

on communities, particularly Māori communities. This was closely based on Peter Addis' essay in *Contested Ground*, which Kelvin edited, and this section provided the background to the overall theme of the show, looking at how the Taranaki Wars still affect the lives of people today. The exhibition made it obvious that the wars in New Zealand were "as bad as that stuff [overseas]. And it was! It was really horrible stuff. It's just that we as New Zealanders tend not to realise that," as Peter described. The point of this section, as Ruth explained, was to inform visitors of "a story that few people know well, can even understand" about

"the way in which [the wars] continue even to this day to inform the way...things happen in Taranaki, the way in which the Māori community feels about this place, the way in which Pākehā relate to Māori, prejudices..."

In particular, she added, it was meant to better inform Pākehā who thought "the Maoris should just get over it."

The final section of the exhibition fit in most closely with the aim of enabling people to engage with the exhibition. This section, entitled "Where to from here?" was a space for people to reflect on what they had learned in the exhibition. There were two options for providing feedback and comments on where Taranaki should or could be heading in the 21st century and people's understanding of the history. People could either physically write on cards and placing these cards on a comments board, or else through a computer terminal which then projected comments on to the website (see figures 5 and 6, below). The comments were checked to ensure nothing abusive was posted, but in general the discussion was unrestricted by museum staff. A reflective ceiling was also in place in this last section to add a symbolic reminder for visitors to reflect on their exhibition experience. Overall, Gerard said that the team "encouraged [the visitors] to see it as their space and to have conversations and discussion about what really happened and what their perspective is". In these three sections were an enormous range of objects. Ruth mentioned one of the difficulties of this show was having an exhibition with a strong Māori perspective, but having a much stronger collection of Pākehā objects, meaning it was difficult at times to augment the narratives with objects. However the final product was both information and object rich, and incorporated objects from the taonga Māori, social history and pictorial collections, including objects which had not been used in an exhibition context before.

### *The grand opening*

As opening day loomed, the staff grew increasingly nervous about the exhibition they had created. Their nervousness did *not* stem from how they had put together the exhibition or the



final product itself. As Johanna said, “I was really proud of it actually. I thought it was great.” Bill added to this, saying “to various degrees the team felt elated that they’d managed to pull off a very difficult exhibition.” The team felt that the immense stress and the occasional feeling of wanting to call it quits was worth it in order to present such an important, unrecognised story. What troubled the staff was the contentious nature of the history they had produced, rather than the casing that it was in. How would the public react to the powerful messages of legacy and pain that Puke Ariki was presenting so clearly?

Opening day was the 17th of March 2010 – 150 years after the first British shots fired at Waitara. It was, as Dale recalled, “a very big day. It was a culmination of in some ways of 5 years of exhibitions, it was the culmination of months and months and MONTHS of work and planning and stress. It was a massive, massive day in its own right.” Opening the exhibition started the day before at Kairau marae, south of Waitara, for a wānanga in which staff and iwi discussed the history. On the 17th itself, the day began at dawn at Te Kohia pā where the first shots had been fired for a ceremony, and then at 10am the exhibition at Puke Ariki was officially opened. The Prime Minister was present, and it was at this stage that staff began to realise just how important this exhibition was to the community. As Dale described, the foyer had never been so full with what she estimated to be 200 people crammed inside. From there, the Prime Minister, John Key, and Chris Finlayson, Minister of Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations, went to Owae Marae where they signed terms of negotiation with iwi. The final event was the formal function that evening, and as Dale said, “we all went home absolutely shattered after that”.

### *The public’s reaction*

After the opening day, the public were free to visit the exhibition. The team were braced for an onslaught of negative feedback, particularly by what they described as “rednecks” who they thought would be opposed to the strongly Māori perspective. Of course there was some feedback on both extremes of the spectrum, with some feeling like it was far too “pro-Māori” as one respondent put it and while some Māori felt it wasn’t hard hitting enough, as Gary said, “there was no real vitriol, we thought...there’d be letters to the paper but there wasn’t.” The overall response from people was “we never knew”. Many people responded with variations on this theme, and there were many comments which signalled increased understanding of why Māori had been upset for so many years in the Taranaki region. One visitor wrote on the comment board

“I wasn’t taught any of this war, I have lived in Waitara all my life. It’s upsetting for

Māori and I am disgusted in my Pākehā blood. Now I know why there [are] diverse views and conflict in Taranaki between Māori and Pākehā.”

Other visitors wrote that “I was not aware of these happenings in my own town not so long ago” and “A real eye opener to see what happened in our own backyard”. Such responses really showed the team how little this story of the war had actually been told.

The team were particularly gratified with the number of Māori who visited the exhibition. As Jocelyn said, “at the end of the day the biggest response was that the Māori community participated. On the opening day they were here in their hundreds.” Although some Māori would have liked a harder hitting exposé of Pākehā cruelty, many were overwhelmingly positive in their feedback and pleased that their side of the story was finally being told. This exhibition became one of the most successful exhibitions Puke Ariki had ever had in terms of Māori visitation – 27% of respondents to visitor surveys about ethnicity identified Māori, from a region in which Māori make up 13 – 15% of the local population. As well as this, there was a much higher proportion of Māori youth visiting the exhibition than normal. People also came back more than once, and the team were gratified that people were making the effort to return and finish reading.

#### *The public programmes – and the council’s response*

With the exhibition on the floor, the team had the chance to recover. However, their work did not stop here. One of the aims for this exhibition was to get the history that the exhibition was presenting out in the community, and public programmes were a key way of doing this. The events programme was designed and run by Jocelyn in collaboration with a number of other team members, including Kelvin, Peter, Dale and Ruth, and involved a huge number of different events related to the exhibition. Overall, the events were there to add to and broaden the experience of the exhibition for the public.

One of the events organised by Jocelyn emerged from the team’s desire to “get some of the issues [in the exhibition] out on the table to be discussed, get us talking”. “What do Māori want, what are Pākehā afraid of?” was a panel discussion, held first at Waitara and later in New Plymouth, and was aimed at getting some questions, particularly about land ownership and Treaty claims, answered in a public setting. As Jocelyn said, it was a chance for these difficult topics to be talked about,

“this is a 150 year burden that’s ongoing. And if we don’t make the best of the opportunity being put out in the open then it might take another 150 years before we get

the chance again. It was totally self interest. We talk about these things in our separate domains or behind closed doors but we're not going to solve a lot if we're not talking to each other."

This event was very successful, particularly in Waitara, where as Jocelyn recalled "Pākehā were able to voice what they thought some of the fears were for other Pākehā and provide a confidence that it wasn't nearly as scary as we think...Our worst fears are in our minds, really", and then Māori were able to respond. This was again a highly politicised event, like the story of the Waitara lease lands, and after the first event was hugely successful a second was lined up at the Waitara library. The council became nervous about what was being talked about and the second session had to be moved to the local RSA – a non-council owned site. This resulted in consternation amongst staff, who felt the pressure of being seen as a "voice of the council", something they did not want to be, especially if such a role meant they were constrained in what they could say or do. Overall, the public events, of which there were many more not mentioned here, extended the conversation about this history outside the walls of the museum and into the community, to keep the conversation going and to prompt the community into making their own decisions about the future in Taranaki.

### *The team reflect*

Looking back on the exhibition, its results and its purpose, the team felt very positive about the experience of putting it together, and had some interesting comments about what they thought its purpose was. Bill Macnaught's take on the entirety of the exhibition and its related events programme saw it as:

"a really worthwhile piece of work that demonstrates the impact a museum can have in its community when it's...acting in that role of the memory institution of that community. It was the right thing to do to look back to what had happened, holding a mirror up to society today and saying actually we've still got issues. It wasn't [that] we were telling people what the solution was. The whole approach was just we are showing you the history, and you can talk about the history for yourselves and draw...conclusions about where we need to go as a community."

As well as this, Ron Lambert saw some of the value in this exhibition emerging from its Māori viewpoint, in that "there was a preponderance of Māori being interviewed on their attitudes [in the exhibition]. But all that that did was start correcting the previous 150 years, when it's been predominantly Pākehā viewpoints that had been espoused." Finally, Dale also summed up how the team felt about the purpose of their show, that "it wasn't just about putting the history on the wall, it was about the fact that we're still living this, there are people still grieving over this, and that...[the visitor] needs to understand where that comes from and why it is still such a big deal".

Ruth also argued that the importance of this exhibition was not so much to do with the physical exhibition itself, but that

“it really struck me that it wasn’t about what we put on the floor. It was actually about the fact we were telling that story, for the Māori community that was what mattered, it was huge. And I hadn’t really put 2 and 2 together....It was successful from that point of view. Successful for telling that untold story.”

One of the interesting elements of tracing this exhibition’s development was comparing how the team produced this exhibition to how academic literature portrays exhibition development. One such academic author is David Dean, whose work *Museum exhibition: theory and practice* (1994) provides a guideline for developing a display. In his view, exhibition development is a linear model, which has distinct ‘phases’ of development through to the dismantling of the exhibition. He sees these steps as being followed in order with little crossover. Dean also assumes that there will be a single director of a project, and that this director will “decide who to include in the planning process based on the requisite disciplines and skills” (1994, 14). He highlights the importance of planning in developing an exhibition, and as he argues “without spending appropriate time and effort at this point, the rest of the development process stands a good chance of being confusing at best, and at worst, resulting in a poorly executed exhibition” (1994, 15). Resources such as Dean’s guidelines are examples of ideal goals for exhibition developers. As discussion with the team made clear, there are numerous factors that influence the way in which an exhibition develops differently from theoretical models. In the case of Puke Ariki, funding difficulties, a requirement to engage with the community in a meaningful way and a large and varied production team meant the linear and straightforward method of production espoused by Dean was not always followed. However, one of the key outcomes of the process at Puke Ariki is clearly that museum exhibition development differs depending on the particularities of an institution. Puke Ariki’s somewhat chaotic approach to developing this exhibition which was so stressful for staff may not have been orthodox, but in hindsight it was by no means an unsuccessful approach.

The next step on the journey for the exhibition is its travel to Nelson, an interesting location as a number of both Pākehā and Māori went to Nelson during the wars as refugees, resulting in a still strong link between the two provinces. Tracing the development of this exhibition highlighted a number of ways in which the history produced by Puke Ariki is actually quite different to that produced in an academic setting, and it is this divergence which is the topic of discussion in the next chapter.



Figure 1: The interactive table detailing legislation enacted by Government to alienate Māori from their land. Further information could be found in the panels on the walls. (Photograph: Jane Dove-Juneau, 2010).



Figure 2: The entrance to the exhibition, with introductory text outlining the severity of these wars (right) and the first panel introducing the differences between Māori and Pākehā world views (left), beneath the visual comparison of a tauihu (prow) of a waka, and a European figurehead. (Photograph: Jane Dove-Juneau, 2010).





Figure 3: The First Taranaki War section of the exhibition, showing the balance between interactive modes of display combined with texts and objects. (Photograph: Jane Dove-Juneau, 2010).



Figure 4: The Economy segment of the exhibition, including the millstones from the Māori flour mill to the right, as discussed in Chapter Three. (Photograph: Jane Dove-Juneau, 2010).





Figure 5: The final section of the exhibition, Where to from here? Comments could be made on the computer portals, where they would be projected on to the screen above, or physically on a comments board (see figure 6, below). Note the symbolic reflective ceiling. (Photograph: Jane Dove-Juneau, 2010).

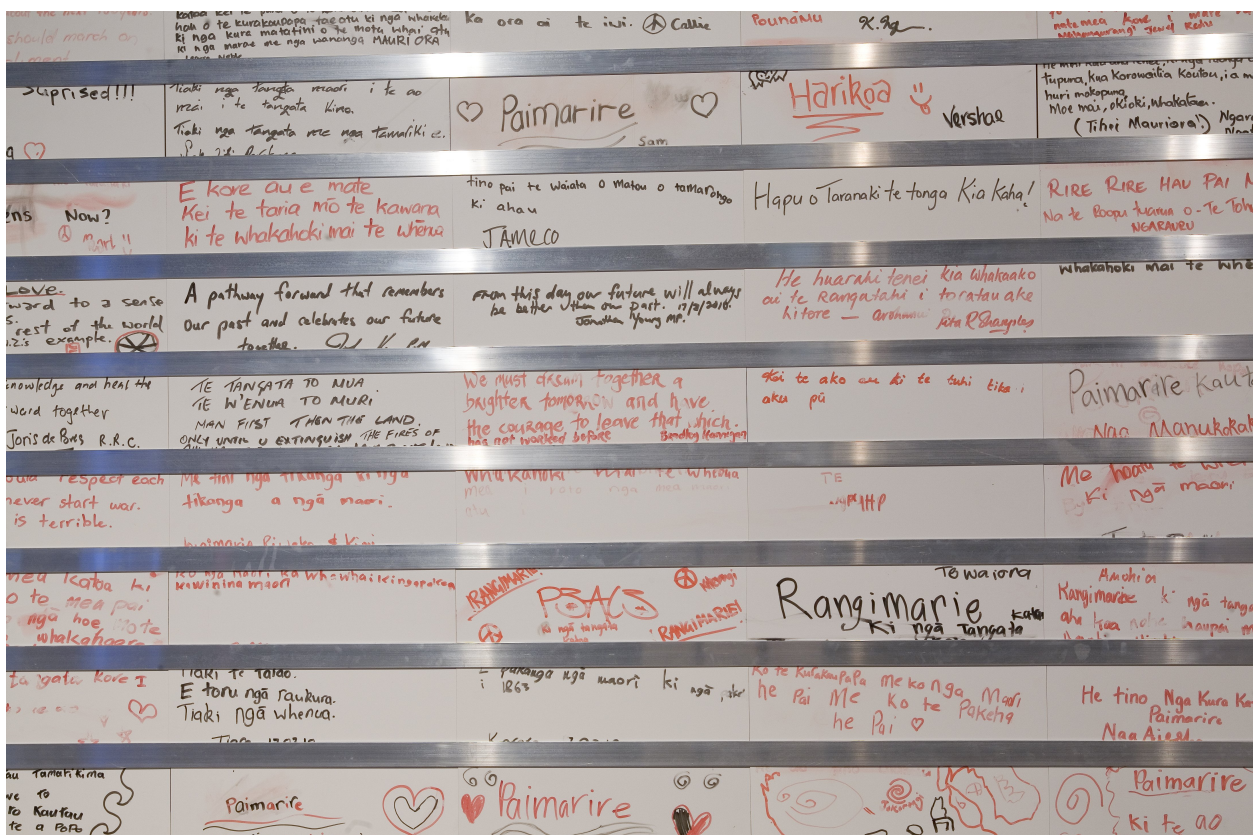


Figure 6: The physical comments board for people to write their own opinions on the future for Taranaki. This was located at the opposite end of the space as the computerised comments portal (see figure 5, above). (Photograph: Jane Dove-Juneau, 2010).

### Chapter Three

#### **“Recontextualising history” – differences in historical practice**

##### *Introduction*

While tracing the history of Puke Ariki's Taranaki Wars exhibition, it became increasingly clear that my initial hypothesis of museum history and academic history being related was not as strong as anticipated. It became obvious through following the exhibition's development that the history produced by Puke Ariki was markedly different in both its production and as a finished entity than that produced in the academic sphere. There are a number of ways in which Puke Ariki's history is different to that of an academic text. However, it is important to note before exploring these differences that this research examines only one example of one museum, and these differences do not necessarily apply more widely to museums when looking at history exhibitions. As well as this, I have not undertaken a parallel study of creating academic history, making this a partial study. Rather, this chapter explores how one institution has created history, and how the particular circumstances of the institution has shaped the process and product that is the history of the Taranaki Wars constructed in this instance. As Macdonald has argued in the case of science museums,

“exhibitions tend to be presented...as unequivocal statements rather than the outcome of certain processes and contexts. The assumptions, rationales, compromises and accidents that lead to a finished exhibition are generally hidden from public view” (2007, 177).

This is a statement which can equally be applied to history exhibitions. Following the entire process of development allows for the differences between these forms of history to be revealed, in place of a focus solely on the finished display, which would perhaps have more similarities.

Tracing the Taranaki Wars exhibition showed how a museum display materialises a number of historical dimensions in ways that differentiated it from academic histories of the wars. It is important to note that this is not a critique of either form of history, a particularly salient point given that I have not given the same attention to the writing of academic texts. This is instead a descriptive and obviously partial teasing out of the differences, intended as a preliminary exploration rather than a definitive end statement. The differences that became apparent while discussing the development of the Taranaki Wars exhibition included the collaborative nature of history production in the museum; the conscious accessibility of the history produced; the social nature of experiencing history in the museum setting; and finally the inherently political nature



of producing history in a public institution.

*“Curation by committee” – history in collaboration*

The concept development was analysed closely in this research, bringing to light one of the major differences with academic history, namely the idea of collaborative development, or as Ruth Harvey put it, “curation by committee”. As my interviews demonstrated, this curatorial process within the museum involved a large number of people from all branches of the museum, not only the curators. For example, Dale, manager service delivery, attended the early concept meetings, as did the research team, along with collections staff, the community liaison, the exhibitions team and people involved from outside the institution such as Peter in his role as academic advisor. Johanna, the writer, was also a key driver of the concept, despite not having background knowledge of the topic as a more traditional curator or writer might be expected to have. Each of these people worked with the concept as a cog in a much larger wheel of development, throwing ideas around and working through different ideas to form a basic outline of a narrative direction and key aims for the exhibition. As Crew and Sims have argued, one of the first and most important aspects of creating history in exhibitions is settling “on a voice that will run threadlike through the exhibition,” based on research outside the institution as well as the knowledge and skills of the staff (1991, 162).

This broad range of interests, capabilities and roles had a number of impacts on the history produced. First and foremost, it was obvious from talking to staff that this way of producing history was fraught and time consuming. Unlike the Common Ground series, which had a single conceptual curator who drove development and had final authority, the lack of any authoritative director behind the production of the Wars show led to a difficulty in making final decisions. When Johanna, the writer, was commissioned, she was not presented with a clear brief, but instead part of her role became solidifying the concept. Ruth also observed that as Johanna started to write the narrative of the exhibition, her writing actually shaped the concept, making it a flexible and constantly changing outline.

However, although the consolidation of the concept proved difficult, and increased the stress amongst staff in that it was hard to reach a final consensus, curation by committee was not necessarily a detriment to creating history at Puke Ariki. As Gerard said, “we were really clear about what we wanted to say,” and the open process allowed the time and room for the combined group energy necessary for everyone to discuss, debate and change what this extremely

important exhibition was going to look like and, most importantly, say to its audience. As Labrum pointed out in terms of exhibition development at Te Papa, “in an inter-disciplinary, team based environment, you need to be able to work with others...work on projects you don’t necessarily want to do, or the outcome of which you can’t control” (2001, 178). This team-based collaboration in times of great stress is a key factor in producing museum history. Although the number of people having a say and the way decisions kept changing was stressful, it also meant the team were able to be creative and add things in at the last minute, in a manner that working within a large academic institution, or indeed a larger public institution would perhaps not allow. Even though putting new information or new perspectives into the narrative at the last minute added considerable stress to the experiences of those involved in the creation of the exhibition, it also meant that the history constructed was able to incorporate broader ideas and more creative directions which came together from the broad range of minds and experiences of the different staff involved.

#### *The anonymous author*

A key part in this exhibition was incorporating the voices of the community as much as possible, particularly the Māori community, which meant the finished exhibition had a number of different perspectives. Johanna therefore wrote from a number of perspectives, most of which were at some remove from her own experiences. These perspectives were shaped by the community, as well as by Jocelyn’s input as a member of Te Āti Awa. The voice of the writer in presenting these perspectives becomes invisible in the final product of the history exhibition. The numerous staff members who were also involved in the shaping of this story are also not attributed to the text. Instead, as Johanna argued, she and the other staff were “a mouthpiece for all those other people,” telling the story of Māori and Pākehā in Taranaki during the wars and afterwards using their perspectives, but through the voice of Puke Ariki as an entity.

This differs from an individual author writing an academic text on an aspect of history, or even a number of authors writing a text, such as those described in the literature review about the New Zealand Wars. As Johanna told me, “as an author you’re writing your own research, you’re presenting it in your own way, you’re hoping people are going to buy the book because they want to know what you have written about”. In comparison, an exhibition has anonymous writers, attributed to the museum as a general entity rather than any one particular person. This also adds to pressure on museum staff to maintain the museum’s brand, given that the text in exhibitions is attributed to the museum as a whole rather than any individual writers. Taking

risks, like the risk of such a contentious topic, therefore must be balanced with the results of such risks on the museum's reputation rather than a more personal risk as would more likely be the case in an academic text. However, it is also possible that an academic author would be equally concerned with the results of their writing on the academic institution they are associated with. The difference lies in the fact that their name is clearly applied to the work, rather than the anonymity of the museum history. As Johanna said, people who write history books are writing for people who want to hear what they as individuals have to say on a topic. For museums, the history which visitors are engaging with appears to come from the museum itself.

### *The community voice*

This anonymous group of writers is expanded when combined with the idea of a consultative history making process. It was not solely the museum staff that had input into the Taranaki Wars exhibition and its final messages that were put on the wall. One of the key features of this exhibition was the engagement with the community. Although this was not the perfect scenario – as Bill explained, having a full and rigorous collaboration with Māori iwi would have been impossible given the time and space constraints – aspects of consultative practice were incorporated into the history narratives which were being presented. As mentioned earlier, this consultation meant that a rather different perspective on the history of Taranaki was given. Prompted by Peter Addis, a much stronger Māori world-view was presented, and this was checked rigorously through the writing process with Jocelyn, from Te Āti Awa, and members of iwi when they were directly involved in a particular story. This process of consultation meant more stress on Johanna in particular, as she had to check with so many different people for everything she wrote, but the upside was that the history which was written was not a single perspective that was solely attributed to the museum. Instead, it aligned with Raphael Samuel's idea of history as "a social form of knowledge: the work, in a given instance, of a thousand pairs of hands" (1996, 8). A much larger number of people were involved in creating this piece of historical knowledge in the shape of an exhibition, from the beginning stages concept development amongst so many staff members, to the research and writing process of cross checking with iwi and other staff members to add their specific viewpoints to the show.

This desire to engage with, and relinquish some control to, the source community is a development stemming from the paradigms of the new museology from the late 1980s (Stam 2005, 56). The new museum theory sees the purpose and power of the museum dispersed outwards into the community, rather than institutions producing history for the purpose of

educating the public or as a ‘monologic’ museum of modernity (Bennett cited in Mason 2005, 202). As a ‘dialogic’ space, museums such as Puke Ariki relocate relations of power to a more two way scenario, “so that source community members...come to be defined as authorities on their own cultures and material heritage” (Bennett cited in Mason 2005, 202; Peers and Brown 2007, 520). This can help to develop “a relationship of trust, often in cases...where there may be a significant legacy of distrust” (Peers and Brown 2007, 520). The visit by Gerard and Jocelyn to Ngā Ruahine to discuss the museum’s ideas for the Wars exhibition went a long way in ameliorating the fears and distrust of the community, who worried they would be ignored and their perspective written out of the historical narrative. Instead, the outreach of the museum into the community made inroads into making the museum’s exhibition development “like any conversation between equals or discourse in the public sphere” (Ashley 2007, 497). Whether the academic world has engaged with source communities in the same way is uncertain. However, the ability of communities and the museum to form relationships through the acknowledgement of source communities as experts on their own material heritage and therefore their own history as attached to material culture is a key aspect of creating histories in the post-modern museum.

### *Puke Ariki as forum*

The idea of a collaborative effort did not stop when the history was placed on the wall, as the role of the community extended beyond the development of the exhibition and its opening. As Bill argued, the major difference in this history as compared to an academic text was that the museum invited its visitors to have a conversation, both with the museum and more importantly with each other, rather than attempting to inform and educate. This was primarily achieved in the final section of the exhibition, where visitors could write their thoughts about the future of Taranaki in a space where it could be seen and then commented on. The reflective ceiling design of the final space also visually encouraged people to reflect on the history presented by the museum, in collaboration with the community where possible. Gerard described this as a conversation *about* history rather than a history lesson, in that it was about enabling people to learn and think about these things from their own perspective. He also argued that this attempt to get people to think and engage with history “recontextualises history”, by putting a new way of thinking about events out into the public sphere which may change people’s understandings of what they already know about the topic. The role of the public programmes, many of which took the format of discussions with the community about the history, were also a way for the museum to begin a conversation, and provide a starting point for the community to talk themselves about this history. This approach, in which the museum provides knowledge based on research and

objects but also provides a space for discussion and debate over the impact of history on Taranaki today, can be seen as a link to the ongoing binary definition of the museum as temple or the museum as forum, as argued by Duncan Cameron amongst other theorists. Whether the museum can be both a temple of knowledge and collections as well as a place without the strictures associated with the temple is debated by Cameron, but as he says “the forum is the place for confrontation and experimentation” and in a time of global crisis, the museum has a powerful role to play in the discussion of important topics, such as the legacy of a brutal war which continues to affect the residents of Taranaki today (Cameron in Anderson 2004, 71).

Such a role is beset by problems and complexities. The museum has long been presented as a dominant entity, a “hegemonic agent of dominant culture” (Ashley 2007, 487). However, museums today, particularly smaller regional museums in the New Zealand context such as Puke Ariki, are far more self-aware and creative in their understanding both of themselves and of their location as operating both within and amongst community as well as being for communities. As the production of this history exhibition shows, the aim of staff was not to educate the mass public in an authoritative way. As Ruth argued,

“I think [authoritative] is a problematic term...who is to say what is authoritative? What exhibitions can do provide a multitude of ways to view history, that there is no one accepted version of history, that it’s different to...different people.”

Instead, the aim was to get people to engage with history on their own terms and to think, discuss and form their own conclusions, and as such “offer...up to the audience a choice of reactions” (Ashley 2007, 497). Instead of focusing solely on presentation and exhibition – “acting in public”, Puke Ariki, through its implementation of aspects of a forum model in providing an environment for visitor interaction and engagement “can serve as a meeting place or a community centre – acting of the public” (Ashley 2007, 497). Unlike academic history, history in a museum setting can be an immersive, embodied participatory experience, in which history is not just presented by the museum as ‘in the past’ but rather as a key element to present day concerns and something that the public is able to engage with, negotiate and discuss while surrounded by physical remnants of the history as well as historical narratives. As Luke has argued, “the display of artifacts, the discourse of historical authenticity, and the disposition of individual agency must come together to show how ‘this presentness’ came from ‘that pastness’” within the museum as forum, such as in Puke Ariki, but must also combine with the ability of the visitor to engage and to connect with their own voices and the voices of those around them (2007, 209).

### *Accessible history*

Part of the way in which this history was recontextualised for a public audience was through one of the key differences in museum history – the accessibility of its information. As Kelvin mentioned, not everyone wants to read an entire book about a topic, and often histories written in an academic environment cater to a specialist audience. As well as this, authors of books have the luxury of being able to explain their ideas in a lengthy way. In contrast, museum history exhibitions are bounded by space requirements, and information must be balanced with the space required for objects and more utilitarian needs such as exit signs and seating requirements. In the case of the Wars exhibition, the space given for the show was not huge, and it was an immense challenge for the staff to fit such a complicated story into a small space. Perhaps even more difficult and different than writing a book is presenting complex stories in an accessible way, without ‘dumbing them down’, in Gary’s words. The staff at Puke Ariki were all very concerned with making this history easily understood, but one which still challenged the audience and encouraged them to think. There was an immense struggle to encapsulate tricky information in a way that provided open access to the stories constructed around objects, but without making things so simple the message or rigorous history is lost, or so complex that it “[could] work to preserve the elitism of [the] institution” (Labrum 2001, 180). The staff felt it was important to get this balance right, as they aimed to challenge their visitors with a strong viewpoint that was very different to what a lot of visitors already knew. Johanna described the major difficulties in writing complicated history in short, snappy sentences which summed up ideas clearly and was engaging to the audience, and although there was some criticism of the amount of reading in the final exhibition space, members of the public came back again and again to read all of the detail.

The combination of a lack of panel space in which to include a large amount of detail, as well as the short attention span of the public, means the history presented about the Taranaki Wars and their legacy was short, snappy and to the point, and obviously could not include everything – as Lidchi has written, an exhibition is a “bounded representational system” and must always be a partial history (1997, 168). This accessibility is a key difference in museum and academic history, as museum histories “have possibilities all of their own” given the centrality of objects and the task of the museum staff to make “meanings from [objects] through exhibitions and other services” such as public programmes (Kavanagh 2005, xi). An academic text has the luxury of delving deeply into minute aspects of a history. In contrast, a museum, due to the enormous range of objects and voices it needs to contain along with space constraints, must provide a compelling overview in a few short sentences, which are accessible to a wide audience, whilst

also relating written information to the objects, making it a challenging task.

### *The power of the object*

Objects as part of an historical narrative also differentiate museum history from that of academic texts in that they provide tangible touch points for the visitor to connect with and relate to the narratives of history presented in text or other formats within the exhibition. Part of the power of objects can be analysed using Stephen Greenblatt's theory of "resonance and wonder". This model of visitor engagement with an exhibition through objects states that an object can elicit two particular responses from the visitor. Resonance is the power an object has to "reach out beyond its formal boundaries to a larger world" and to allow the viewer to understand the "complex, dynamic cultural forces from which it has emerged". In comparison, wonder signifies the power of the displayed object to "stop the viewer in [their] tracks, to convey an arresting sense of uniqueness, to evoke an exalted attention" (Greenblatt 1991, 42). Whether this effect was present at the Puke Ariki exhibition cannot be properly assessed, given the lack of visitor research which was not possible as a part of this dissertation. However, exhibitions do have a point of difference with the inclusion of objects as compared to academic histories in written formats. Art, social history objects and taonga were all included to accentuate the historical narratives being presented, and to reach out to visitors who perhaps learn better by having a physical touch point of an object to connect their information with.

An example of "resonance and wonder" for me in this exhibition were the millstones. These enormous hunks of stone were part of a flour mill owned and operated by Māori on the Taranaki coast which had been very economically successful, but was destroyed in the 1860s by Pākehā as an act of warfare and as an attempt to reduce Māori economic independence. Having these in place can illuminate the history in a way that reading text cannot do. Their ability to enlighten the audience on their complex, dynamic cultural forces was tangible – their presence helped to better explain the culture of war and jealousy present in 1860s Taranaki between Māori attempting to retain their sovereignty in the face of determined Pākehā settlers. For an image of these stones in place in the exhibition, see image four in chapter two.

### *"Thinking visually"*

The use of objects to engage audiences with complicated history is connected to the idea of presenting history visually. Unlike a book, museums are able to use objects, images, audiovisual and interactive elements along with written texts to make history more engaging for a wider

range of learning styles. Labrum terms this “thinking visually” (2001, 186). The staff had to think more laterally than a ‘book on a wall’, and combine text, images, objects and audiovisual information in a cohesive way. The outcome of this accessibility for Puke Ariki was that visitation was high, and people returned more than once to continue learning this history, or else revisit elements they enjoyed or found powerful. A range of media were included in the exhibition and included ‘talking heads’ – community members telling their own stories, which was a powerful way of connecting visitors to an individual experience, particularly in a province like Taranaki where small population size means these people are well known. Legislation, often dry and boring for many visitors, was reconfigured by Gary Bastin and the research team into an interactive table where the powerful history of legislated land loss for Māori was made accessible for people who would not be likely to read the reams of text which make up traditional legislative documents.

The use of the comments section in ‘Where to from here?’ opened the museum up as an enabler rather than an educator. Of course, whether this was received like this by the visitors cannot be known without extensive visitor research, but theoretically the chance for visitors to put their own voice into the conversation which the museum started made for an accessible view of history. Rather than being dictated a view of history by the museum, the ability for the visitor to propose their own opinions, whether based on their experience in the exhibition or not, opens the learning experience in a museum as something rather different to learning from a book. As Screven has noted, “museum learning is self-paced, self-directed, non-linear and visually oriented,” and as Heumann Gurian reiterates, “exhibitions are places of free choice...the visitor receives an impressionistic...sense of the topic” and is free to return, browse, or deeply engage as they choose (Screven cited in Heumann Gurian 1991, 181; Heumann Gurian 1991, 181).

Using objects is also a point of difference from academic history because of the perceived authority and authenticity that having physical representations of history in an exhibition creates. However, as Crew and Sims point out, “the problem with things is that they are dumb. They are not eloquent” (1991, 159). They go on to argue that “objects have no authority; people do. It is people on the exhibition team who must make a judgement about how to tell about the past” (Crew and Sims 1991, 163). In the case of Puke Ariki, the use of objects was a cause of some stress within the team, as the team used two methods of creating a narrative simultaneously – that of picking objects and then shaping a history around them, or fitting objects into an historical narrative. However, the combination of objects as well as other visual means of



presentation, as discussed above, meant that the team were more driven by a model proposed by Crew and Sims. They argue that when confronted with a shortage of objects to augment or centralize historical narrative, exhibition creators can “break from the concept of object-driven exhibitions and produce presentations controlled by historical themes rather than by available objects” (Crew and Sims 1991, 167). “The context in which artifacts are presented and the authenticity of the historical concepts that the artifacts represent” become as important, if not more so, than the physical object itself (Crew and Sim 1991, 170). In the case of Puke Ariki’s Taranaki Wars exhibition, the staff were able to use both objects and other means of presenting history to provide an experience for the visitor that was immersive and compelling, with information presented not only by the ‘resonance and wonder’ of the object but also through written and audiovisual information. The ability for history exhibitions to harness all these forms of presentation is a marked difference from the more static presentation of academic history.

#### *The collision – academic rigour and the museum*

However, just because the history presented in Puke Ariki was concise and used a number of presentation methods does not mean it was not academically rigorous. As Ruth explained,

“the people who were involved in creating the exhibition...[are] academics, we’re all academically trained... the exhibition is an interpretation...it is still... good academic history that is being told. We didn’t just make that stuff up. We researched it, there’s a huge amount of personal understanding gone on there... it’s just a different way of presenting it.”

Although the history on the wall was presented in a simpler, more concise way than in a history book, the research was still of a rigorous academic standard, and it is here that the museum most clearly aligns with the aims of the academic world. The format of an exhibition in terms of its relations of objects to historical narratives sets it apart from academic histories. As Gary mentioned, “one of the nice things we were able to do was hang this stuff up, put it on a timeline, put it in some space, and add other events around that contextualised that space... You could see what was driving it.”

However, the relationship between academic forms of history and that which was on the wall at the museum came from the desire of the staff to ensure this was a well researched and, as much as possible, factually accurate history. The staff at Puke Ariki did not simply make up a new perspective – through deep research and community consultation, a robust history was developed that stood up to academic scrutiny. As Johanna explained, she and other staff were concerned with the accuracy of their history for the audience: “you can simplify stuff, you can make it

accessible but you never want people to have to unlearn...what you wrote. So you never write anything wrong that anyone would have to unlearn.” In her view, it was unthinkable to sacrifice “accuracy for a good story”, and instead the basis of historical research, both through primary and secondary text sources and community consultation, and the enormous amounts of editing and cross checking helped to ensure this history was as accurate as possible, much like the editing process of academic books and articles. The academic basis of this exhibition is connected to the idea of the “professionalization of museum work and especially the professionalization of the exhibit-making process”, which Harold Skramstad argues means exhibitions in large institutions have become a form of academic history, with specific educational outcomes and a glossy finish (2010, x). Skramstad goes on to say that such exhibitions have “lost something” that previous incarnations of museum history had (2010, x). He argues that the professional curator “gets his or her authority from scholarship; a community or entrepreneurial curator gets that same authority not only from research, but by the inclusion of a lived experience...and through identification with a particular community” (Skramstad 2010, x). Crew and Sims also argue that the work of university based scholars is “the voice of authority...it is the foundation on which many museum professionals base their exhibition interpretations” (1991, 163).

To argue that a well-researched exhibition with a strong professional ethos – that is, a desire to display history in a clear, concise and in a way as accurate as possible – equals academia on the wall is to underplay the complexity of the museum history exhibition. Puke Ariki’s Wars exhibition is professional in that all its creators were deeply concerned with the academic rigour of the information, as well as creating an experience for the public that would be visually appealing and technologically advanced. However, they were also concerned with telling a community story, and as the institution is based in the Taranaki region, created and operating within a particular historical milieu of the region, arguing that as a professional museum they do not gain authority from the community seems short-sighted. As Ruth put it, not only was the exhibition well-researched in an academic sense, there was also “a huge amount of personal understanding” as a vast proportion of their research was through iwi perspectives and community stories, although the staff were unable to collaborate with the community to the extent they would have liked to. Therefore, although the museum and the academic world most closely relate through their rigorous research processes, the museum still differs in its wider focus on community sources rather than a solely academic and professional outlook. To state that the authority of curators stems from directly from academic research is to deny members of the

community a voice, and relegates them to the role of the ill-educated amateur. As the consultation process at Puke Ariki revealed, community knowledge is incredibly valuable, and provides a rich vein of information to be combined with more traditional academic sources.

*Politics and pressures : the ‘contact zone’*

Museums are inherently political, and exhibiting can be a politically sensitive activity. In particular, presenting the histories of others within the walls of an institution is a process which requires delicate handling if a museum wishes to avoid alienating those whose stories it seeks to display. As previously mentioned, museums such as Puke Ariki aim to include and involve their community, rather than bring them through the doors by writing *about* them instead of *for* them. James Clifford’s ‘contact zone’ model suggests that the power relations between museums and their communities can be changed through the process of consultation, because museums and the groups they are engaging can become involved in an “ongoing...moral relationship” with a “power-charged set of exchanges”, whereby museums take into account the community perspective, and “radically alter their modes of being” (Clifford 1997, 192). This means that communities engage in a push and pull method of information gathering and cross-checking the ways in which they are being represented by the museum, rather than the museum gathering information and then being free to do what they wish with it.

This was a key element of the history produced by Puke Ariki, although the museum still retained final control of the information gathered from the community in this instance due to time constraints. It was essential to the staff that they ensured iwi were engaged with the development of this history, rather than writing about the ‘other’ from a position of observational power. This was also fundamentally important given that iwi were also in the process of claims to the Waitangi Tribunal, which meant Puke Ariki had the capability to make things difficult in relating politically controversial stories. As Bill recalled, “we had to make sure that we talked [the stories] through...properly. Building that sense of trust that we weren’t actually going to make things worse for iwi trying to pursue treaty settlement claims.” This balance of consultation and trust was greatly aided by the work of Jocelyn, who as a member of Te Āti Awa was well-placed to “smooth ruffled feathers” and continue the museum’s positive relationship with local iwi that had developed from the days of the Taranaki Museum. As the exhibition developed, iwi were kept informed of the museum’s intentions, and the museum reached out to the community to ensure they knew what was going on, such as when Gerard and Jocelyn visited Ngā Ruahine to keep them informed of the scope of the exhibition. Throughout the writing

process, Johanna was constantly revising and reworking aspects of her narrative to ensure they fit with the requirements and most importantly with community perspectives. The care the museum took in these aspects of history production meant that feedback from Māori was very positive, and visitation was high, although of course the process was not perfect – staff would have liked even more community control and what Clifford would call a “contact zone” development, given more time and resources. In a perfect world, Gerard and Jocelyn’s visit to Ngā Ruahine could have been repeated for all the iwi in Taranaki, and greater authority relinquished to these community groups. However, the beginnings of this model and the overt inclusion of community driven stories, particularly in audiovisual displays of people narrating their own experiences, helps to move the museum away from the traditional ownership of research by those commissioning it, whether that be the museum or the university. Instead, this begins the shift towards Clifford’s ‘contact zone’ model, where engagement and consultation rather than the relationship of powerful researcher and subordinate subject are the key relationships as an exhibition is being developed.

### *The politics of stakeholders*

However, less positive politically was the reaction of the council to a number of elements of the exhibition, and the resulting image that created of Puke Ariki. Despite Gerard and the team’s attempts to include the whole of the Waitara leasehold land story on the text panels, in the end the unyielding position of the council meant that the story could not be put on the wall, although as Gerard said, “we worked around it” by including it in the table-based interactive. Another example of the council’s input into the exhibition was during the events after the exhibition had opened, when the panel discussion “What do Māori want, what are Pākehā afraid of?” had to be moved to a non-Council operated building. As Gerard mentioned, the staff struggled to not be seen as the voice of council, as in their view “that was a very dangerous position to be put in”. Being the voice of Council reduced the ability of Puke Ariki to open the history up to discussion amongst the community, but as the Council were major funders of the museum’s operational costs, the connection was largely inevitable. This exhibition’s contentious subject matter and rather different means of researching and producing history – that is, engaging as much as possible with the community to tell their own stories – meant it was subject to political issues in a way that academic historians are not necessarily subject to.

Although being attached to an academic institution or publishing house has its own obligations, the political aspects of representing another group (in this case, the iwi of Taranaki) within a

museum while also being inclusive in retelling people's stories, as well as being answerable to council, creates a rather different context for making history. These pressures of political accountability and indeed the pressures of writing for highly critical audiences make museum history a complicated site. The reaction of the public to politically contentious histories, and the backlash that this can cause the museum as an institution as well as the staff as individuals is something that "university-based historians rarely encounter and it takes an exceptional strength of purpose to remain clear in the goals for history in the museum" (Kavanagh 2005, xii) This goal for exhibiting history is further explained by Kavanagh as being "a commitment to present histories which are compelling and accurate, relevant and insightful, plural and object rich", all objectives of the staff of Puke Ariki in producing this difficult, stressful and ultimately successful exhibition (2005, xii). The audience can be much wider for a history exhibition than an academic text and as such the creators of history are in the precarious position of presenting a rigorous history, which is succinct and visually stimulating, while as much as possible mitigating the potential negative reactions that could come from their perspective. Museums such as Puke Ariki have the potential to be at the "cutting edge of history discourse if their very special nature is realistically grasped" through their ability to combine powerful community narratives with rigorous academic research, in a format that is accessible to a wide audience through the combination of visually presented knowledge, text, audiovisuals, objects and visitor interaction in a way that academic history is unable to (Kavanagh 2005, xii).

Puke Ariki also provided an opportunity for visitors to become part of the conversation about history and legacy through public programmes and the forum in the final section of the exhibition, thus enabling the audience to learn and consider a number of perspectives rather than consuming a single narrative. Whether Puke Ariki's history of the Taranaki Wars is indeed at Kavanagh's "cutting edge of history discourse" is another research topic entirely, but as Gerard mused, "we changed known history for some people....it's very much a case of recontextualising history, reinterpreting it, that's not twisting it around, just someone else's version of the same story. And that's what happens when you give people a voice and start these conversations". I would therefore argue that while museum history can be complicated, it can also be empowering and powerful.

### *Conclusion*

Tracing the creation of the Taranaki Wars exhibition at Puke Ariki illuminated a number of key differences in history produced within the museum as compared to similar history topics

produced in academia. Rather than critiquing the finished product of the exhibition and the history as seen on the wall, understanding the process as well as finished product has meant that the relationship between academic and public history, although still apparent, is less strong than anticipated when beginning this project. Although both museum history and academic history are concerned with the accuracy and, as much as possible, reliability of their historical narratives, there are multiple differences. Whether these differences are replicated in other museums is not within the bounds of this research, but in the case of Puke Ariki, the history of the Taranaki Wars which they produced was different to academic interpretations in multiple ways – from the museum’s research and consultation process with the community, to the accessible nature of this history and museum’s facilitation of discussion, to the political struggles involved in presenting a lived history in a public domain. This is not to say that academic history is not complex and valuable – of course it is. However, museum history is not simply, as sometimes claimed, easily digestible stories created by “talented interlopers” (Ashton and Kean 2007, 9). Instead, it is a powerful form of visual and written knowledge, with those creating it having a commitment to creating histories that are “compelling and accurate, relevant and insightful” for a wide public audience (Kavanagh 2005, xii).

## **Conclusion**

### **The impact of “the imperfect beast”**

Producing history in a museum is a complicated and politicized process. Tracing the development of an exhibition illuminates the differences between public history and academic history. This dissertation initially intended to explore the relationship between academic and public history, as exemplified through one history exhibition at Puke Ariki. Prior to undertaking this research, the literature available about public history and academic history more broadly suggested that these two approaches to history were either oppositional, or alternatively closely entwined, “as only one kind of historical practice, constantly in a process of negotiation and dialogue with other forms of history” (Kean and Ashton 2009, 13). My initial hypothesis prior to interviewing was that museum exhibitions were a site of relationships between historical approaches as compared to oppositions, through the combination of academic research and a multiplicity of display methods. However, upon completing my interviews with the staff of Puke Ariki, and with a deeper understanding of the process as well as product of the Taranaki Wars exhibition, it became abundantly clear that in this case my initial hypothesis was incorrect. Instead, I discovered the relationship between public and academic history was far weaker than anticipated.

The aim of this dissertation was twofold. Firstly, I hoped to illuminate what I thought would be the relationship between public history and academic history in a New Zealand museum exhibition. Public history as a field of research has only been lightly examined since the early 2000s, and the role of museums in producing history for public consumption has not been well studied, particularly in New Zealand. I felt history exhibitions in museums were a key expression of public history, and the Taranaki Wars exhibition a fascinating choice for a case study. Although my research was obviously limited, given that I only interviewed staff members involved in the creation of the exhibition about their roles and opinions on history rather than exploring audience perceptions of the exhibition and of public history more generally, the results were significantly different to what I initially expected. My key finding was that, despite my previous assumptions, the relationship between making history in museums and in universities is tenuous at best in this instance. The differences between academic histories on the topic of the Taranaki Wars and the exhibition itself were multiple, and the crossovers minor in comparison. Although both academic historians and museum historians apply standards of academic rigor and good research methods to their work, the differences between the two historical practices were

far more obvious.

Creating history at Puke Ariki was a collaborative effort, described by Ruth as ‘curation by committee’. Although academic historians may also collaborate with others to create a book or article, the large and diverse range of people involved with Puke Ariki’s history-making process distinguishes it from academic histories. The project involved academic advisers, outsourced writers, community liaison officers to curators and collection managers, and all had their say in how the history created at Puke Ariki should look, sound and feel. Group energy and dynamism shaped a uniquely Puke Ariki style of history, without a single driving force such as an overall curator to drive production. However, the other side of this creative freedom was the slow nature of development and tension amongst staff as deadlines grew near. Related to this is the idea of the anonymous author. Johanna, the writer for the exhibition, as well as all the other staff members with input into the narrative, were anonymous in the final product, with the information and perspective subsumed by Puke Ariki as an institution. Unlike academic historians, who are “hoping people are going to buy the book because they want to know what you have written about” as Johanna put it, Puke Ariki’s history makers were not clearly shown to those visiting the exhibition.

The idea of ‘curation by committee’ was further expanded at Puke Ariki by the community consultation process which the museum used when researching and writing history. Although not a perfect scenario, given that time constraints prevented a full and open consultation process with the various iwi of Taranaki, the efforts of Puke Ariki to engage with source communities and share the knowledge and power of exhibiting publicly sets museum history apart from traditional academic histories. The history produced in partnership with source communities at Puke Ariki aligns with Raphael Samuel’s view of history as “a social form of knowledge: the work, in a given instance, of a thousand pairs of hands” (1996, 8). This collaboration with source communities was also reflected in the idea of Puke Ariki as a forum, and the staff’s conviction that a museum is “a place where you start a conversation, where you enable people, you don’t just tell people what to think” as Gerard argued. Visitors were encouraged to not simply accept what Puke Ariki put on the wall, but instead to engage with the history, through comment boards, space for communication and multiple types of learning and engagement, as well as public events which spread the conversation audience further into the community.



Part of the attempt to involve the audience related to the ways in which information was presented. A major difference between this history and academic history was the deliberate attempt to make the historical narrative accessible, through simple (although not simplistic) written information and a range of display techniques to encourage learning and engagement for a range of learning styles. The ability for museums to present history differently from solely written text by using objects supplemented with audio-visual and other interactive elements makes it a powerful educational tool

The political nature of the history presented by Puke Ariki displays another difference between public and academic histories. Political tensions are always present in exhibitions in which the museum seeks to tell stories about others. However, the staff at Puke Ariki were very concerned with enabling the community to tell their own stories, and as much as possible with their tight schedule embraced a ‘push and pull’ model of receiving information, cross checking and presenting, as described by James Clifford in his ‘contact zone’ model (1997). Although the museum retained final control over the information and opinions given by community groups, particularly those from the Māori community, the beginnings of engaging with this model show the museum’s desire to devolve traditional ownership of information and materials away from the institution. Instead, the museum aims to create a relationship of trust and partnership that involves the community rather than using the community solely as a source of information.

However, less positive politically for Puke Ariki in the making of this exhibition was the involvement of the New Plymouth District Council. As major funders of Puke Ariki’s activities, the council was able to dictate some aspects of the museum’s plans for the Taranaki Wars exhibition, most notably preventing part of the history of the Waitara leasehold land story from being told publicly. Such direct pressures to represent not only the requirements of council, but also of those whose stories are being represented within an exhibition space, makes for treacherous political terrain for public history to be created in. As Kavanagh argues, the potential for backlash from the public is something that “university-based historians rarely encounter” (2005, xii). This was of particular concern to the staff at Puke Ariki, given their provocative display of negative impacts of warfare on Māori communities. However, despite their concern, the overwhelming response from the community was positive, to the relief of all those involved.

Therefore, the history produced in Puke Ariki about the Taranaki Wars differs markedly in numerous ways from academic histories, from its accessibility to its fraught political nature.

However exploring this difference was not the sole aim of this research. A secondary aim was to expose the process of creating a history exhibition in a regional New Zealand museum. As Richard Gillespie argues, “exhibition development remains something of a mystery to people outside museums – sometime even to those of us who work in museums” (2001, 112). Although larger New Zealand institutions have had their exhibition development processes examined superficially, there has been little in depth research into the actual process of creating an exhibition. Talking to those involved with the Taranaki Wars exhibition was a fascinating and informative experience. Trials, tribulations, stress and tight deadlines were justified by an incredibly positive public response, a positive response by Māori to museum requests for information and opinions, and one of the highest Māori visitation rates in the museum’s history.

Such research will be of interest to those working in the public history sector, most obviously within a museum setting but also for those working in other fields, to show that what they are doing is indeed different to universities, but no less valuable for that difference. Secondly, this research will be useful to those in the field of exhibition development, as it provides a rarely seen glimpse into the ways in which one exhibition was developed, from concept to opening. This is not so much as a ‘how to’ guide but a resource for further thinking and possible approaches to exhibition creation for exhibition developers. Exhibition developers in New Zealand are rarely able to take the time to critically reflect on their exhibition practices. The ability to step back after an exhibition and evaluate the successes and potential improvements is a valuable tool for a museum’s development, and in an ideal world an opportunity for critical reflection would be beneficial for museums such as Puke Ariki to repeat in their ongoing exhibitions programme.

Researching an area which has been largely unstudied has led to a number of other related research possibilities. The time and space constraints of this project meant that an equally detailed discussion of the nature of academic history was not undertaken. For a more expansive view of the relationship between public and academic history, both sides of this divide should be given equal weighting. Further research into the audience’s reaction to this display of public history would also be invaluable to better understanding the differences between academic and public history. It is currently only my assumption that audiences have different opinions or learning outcomes from public history as compared to academic history. Such a study would be of further use to those involved with exhibitions. Further research which brings museum professionals and academics together in discussion about theory and practice would be beneficial to both New Zealand museum practice more generally, and would allow academics to better

understand how museum theory works (or does not apply) in actual practice.

In conclusion, this research has taken me on an unexpected journey, changing my assumptions about the nature of history in museums and the ways in which a powerful and provocative exhibition can come into being. Although the team at Puke Ariki did not follow an industry-recognised organisational processes in developing their exhibition, their unique institutional approach to history, their tight-knit team dynamic and their obvious passion for both the subject and the region of Taranaki meant despite a highly stressful and fraught development process the result was a successful and popular history exhibition. This research is not an evaluation of Puke Ariki's exhibitionary practice, but potential recommendations for any future exhibitions could revolve around a more obvious driving force behind producing an exhibition, to reduce the stress on staff from a lack of planning and organisation, although this model of sorts was also a catalyst for lateral thinking and creativity in production. Perhaps more of an equal weighting between creative freedom and group decision-making, and an organisational force or driver, could lead to an even more successful (and less stressful) development process. However, perhaps my strongest recommendation is for Puke Ariki to continue to present provocative history in a way that the community is able not only to learn from, but to participate in, both in the production of exhibitions as well as in the discussion generated by presenting such history. Puke Ariki, as a smaller and therefore more nimble institution than some of New Zealand's larger museums and galleries, is well placed to be a "place of experimentation and confrontation" (Cameron cited in Anderson 2004, 71). Museums, given their ability to utilise objects as well as oral histories and contemporary perspectives in a single exhibition "can literally make histories with those who made history" (Kavanagh 1996, 5). As Ruth mused,

"in my head it was such an imperfect beast...but on the [opening] day, it really struck me that it wasn't about what we put on the floor. It was actually about the fact that we were telling this story, for the...community that was what mattered."

This manifestation of public history is a powerful social force, and one which Puke Ariki should continue to embrace and present – telling the story of and with the communities and cultures in which Puke Ariki is embedded.

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