

## Tool for community meetings with government officials or others

This tool will help to guide community actions when meeting with government officials or others interested.

- Prepare beforehand:
  - Find out who is going to the meeting, what is the purpose and what issues might arise.
  - Plan to go with someone you trust and sit together, or sit beside someone you consider to be an ally because an ally understands where you're coming from.
  - Agree to play different roles at different times and to protect each other so that no-one takes all the hits.
  - Send a signal before taking a stand, so that the other person knows to support your courage.
- When you say something, own who you're speaking for and what hats you're wearing; *remember* that we do not claim to represent 'the community', but rather seek to contribute our own knowledge and experience of this area.
- Talk from your knowledge base and don't assume to know about another realm.
- Identify the different gifts that people bring and encourage people to think about how to mobilise those gifts to achieve common goals.
- Sharpen the focus:
  - Question the absolutes that people may take for granted.
  - Keep in mind the purpose of the hui and what people are trying to achieve.
  - Invite people to consider the bigger picture and reflect on a shared vision.
  - Check out your thoughts but don't waffle on, because if you do you'll use up the talk time.
  - Skirt the boundaries so that people will know the outside limits.
- If you're feeling bombarded with information, ask for a buzz time: take five minutes to consult a colleague to ensure you respond thoughtfully rather than in a rash manner.
- Laugh a lot to break tension.
- Encourage everyone to sing a song at the end of the meeting to release tension and end on a good note.