TE KAAKA

6AM - 10AM WEEKDAYS

TE ATATŪ

Te Atatū is a dynamic breakfast show designed to kickstart your day with motivating music, up-to-date and relevant content, engaging kōrero, and a strong presence of te reo Māori to inform, connect, and inspire.

10AM - 3PM WEEKDAYS

TE KOHA

An energetic show that brings a passion for music and hauora, guaranteed to brighten your day and lift your wairua. Whakaroko mai ki tēnei hōtaka a Te Koha!

3PM - 7PM WEEKDAYS

TE IHI

Covering a wide range of topics – from mana wāhine and hauora to mental health and overall wellbeing – this show brings the ihi every weekday!

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THE BEAT OF THE SOUTH

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NGĀ HAU E WHĀ FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM

Against a rising tide of social and economic challenges, erosion of rights, abuse of Te Tiriti partnership amidst other chatter, there remains much to celebrate as we reach the end of 2025.

As we reflected on the content for this issue, we noted several recurring themes: restoration, returning and recognition – all positive manifestations of a strengthening cultural renaissance.

Tracey Wright-Tawha is a name synonymous with whānau wellbeing in Murihiku. Her commitment and passion span decades, and earlier this year Ngā Kete Mātauranga Pounamu Trust – the Whānau Ora agency she founded – marked 25 years of enhancing the lives of whānau in the south.

It is a privilege to feature Tracey on the cover of this issue in recognition of her contribution – He mihi maioha i tō manawanui me tō tuku aroha, e whaea Tracey.

The restoration of Takapūneke is finally being realised through a partnership between Ōnuku Rūnanga and Christchurch City Council. This site of immense cultural and historical significance is having its heritage restored, and is now on track to become a "must see" attraction where locals and visitors can gain insight into the profound events that shaped it.

The journey of the Shortland pounamu over almost 180 years ago is fascinating. From Aotearoa to England and back, the taonga was gifted back to Kāi Tahu by the Crown at the signing of the Ngāi Tahu Deed of Settlement in 1997, and remains an important symbol of our Te Tiriti partnership.

We were deeply saddened by the recent passing of Masashi Yamada, the Japanese businessman and philanthropist, a lifelong friend and supporter of Kāi Tahu. His generosity was instrumental in financing the Settlement and has continued over the years – not least through the Yamada O'Regan secondary school scholarship fund.

Over the years TE KARAKA has featured two stories on Mr Yamada, and we have no doubt his legacy will continue.

From the TE KARAKA editorial team to you and yours, we wish you a Meri Kirihimete me kā mihi o te tau hou Pākehā.

Nā ADRIENNE ANDERSON-WAAKA me SASCHA WALL

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
TE RŪNANGA O NGĀI TAHU
BEN BATEMAN

He tau korokē te tau, he tau nihoroa te tau
Nā Marukaitātea te whakatonu 'Koi patua moetia koe'
Ko maraka, ko mataara a Tahu
Nā Tūteurutira te whakahau 'Aukahatia ō koutou waka'
Ko whatua kā aukaha mauroa mō te ao kōmiro nei
Kia tūturu te noho, kia tūturu te hono, kia tūturu ake nei
Waihao awa, Waihao tākata
Kai kā tohuka o te manaaki
'Te taukaea o te aroha, ka mau ake tonu e'

As we close out the year, Hui-ā-Tau at Waihao offered a reflective reminder of who we are when we come together, and a tono to 'bring back the aroha'. My sincere thanks to Waihao Rūnanga for their manaakitaka and to every whānau member who joined us. The wairua over the weekend was uplifting – a sign of our collective strength, and the deep pride we share as Kāi Tahu.

This year has been unlike any other in recent memory. We have operated in an economic environment that remains challenging and uncertain, while also navigating a political climate where our Settlement rights, our mātauraka, and our constitutional standing have been questioned repeatedly. Against this backdrop, our responsibility is to remain principled and fiercely focused on the aspirations and intergenerational prosperity of our people.

Throughout the year, we have spoken clearly to the Crown, reminding leaders that "a nation is not a blank canvas," and that asserting our rakatirataka is not radical; it is inherited. From Treaty principles debates to resource management, conservation reform, Takutai Moana, and national Māori policy settings, we have engaged openly and constructively, but without compromising the integrity of our Settlement or the rights of our whānau and taiao. We continue to demonstrate our leadership and rakatirataka, bringing stability and thought leadership during a period of divisive tactics and a distracting political agenda.

Alongside this, we have continued to support Papatipu Rūnaka aspirations through the Regional Investment Fund and through shared-service offerings that lift capability, strengthen balance sheets, and build economic self-determination – critical foundations for *Mō Kā Uri* and a more interconnected tribal system.

This year also required hard decisions and a financial reset. Our review showed our pūtea distribution levels were not sustainable, so Te Rūnanga reduced the Office budget and began shaping a more enduring long-term strategy. Hard decisions, but essential to protect our resources for future generations.

Looking forward, there is much to be optimistic about. As a country, we are facing a void of credible long-term policy – particularly across water, climate, infrastructure, and regional development. But within that gap lies one of the greatest opportunities our iwi has had in decades: to shape the future rather than simply respond to it.

Mō Kā Uri – Kāi Tahu 2050 is the foundation for that future. It brings clarity, purpose, and direction. It centres our rūnaka, lifts the entire Group, and positions us to act as the anchor of Te Waipounamu – for the good of our people, and all of Aotearoa.

Mō tātou, ā, mō kā uri ā muri ake nei.

TE KARAKA

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FRONT COVER

From working in a stationery cupboard with no computer or money, 25 years on, Tracey Wright-Tawha has built Ngā Kete Mātauranga Pounamu Trust into an organisation that touches thousands of lives each year.
PHOTOGRAPH: PHIL TUMATAROA

Whenua

AHURIRI The Ahuriri River flows through the southernmost part of Te Manahuna (the Mackenzie Basin) before reaching the Ahuriri Arm of the artificially made Lake Benmore. Before the creation of Lake Benmore, the Ahuriri River flowed directly into the Waitaki River. In 1880, Kāi Tahu kaumātua recorded Ahuriri as a kāika nohoaka and kāika mahika kai where tuna, pora (turnip), weka, and purau ('Māori onion') were gathered.

2014-103-001, TE RŪNANGA O NGĀI TAHU COLLECTION, NGĀI TAHU ARCHIVE | PHOTOGRAPH: TONY BRIDGE


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Nā MATARIKI TARENA

My Kura Kaupapa Learning Journey

I grew up at Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Te Whānau Tahi. I was there for 12 years of my school life. At a kura kaupapa things are quite different. From year 0-13 all ākoka in a kura kaupapa are taught in, and surrounded by te reo and tikaka Māori. Learning academic subjects as well as uara and tikaka Māori was something we did every day.

I always remember the school environment feeling like a whānau, where everyone knew each other and relationships were based on aroha, and manaakitaka. Connections between kaiako and ākoka were strong and personal with teachers guiding students not only in learning but also in life.

Te reo Māori was a natural thing, you would think and speak in te reo Māori. From doing karakia and waiata every morning, tikaka was always working alongside te reo Māori. This was everyday life.

Education here was a bit different compared to a kura auraki, but for me, I felt that kura kaupapa think about what really matters culturally and in education. The majority of kura tuatahi was still focused on te reo Māori. It was only up until tau 6 where you started doing English classes. Everyone could understand English and speak it to a certain degree, but it was the reading and especially the spelling that we focused on.

At tau 9 I moved schools and went to Cashmere High School. This was definitely a different experience because I liked kura kaupapa and I didn't want to leave. When I went to Cashmere I was so overwhelmed by the size of the school and the English environment. I had to take some English and math lessons before I went there because I had never been in an environment like that before – maths and science were like a different language that I just couldn't understand and even though I wasn't the best in maths and science I still did it, but when it came to culture and te reo Māori i was always at the top. I never really understood or appreciated my upbringing

... I TRULY APPRECIATED MY KURA KAUPAPA EDUCATION BECAUSE I GOT ALL THESE SKILLS LIKE PUBLIC SPEAKING, WORKING UNDER PRESSURE, LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND A WHOLE LOT OF OTHER MĀTAURAKA. FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER WE ALWAYS HAD TO SPEAK IN FRONT OF PEOPLE AND ALWAYS BE PREPARED TO DO A MIHI. SO WHEN IT CAME TO DOING THESE THINGS AT UNIVERSITY I HAD NO ISSUE WITH DOING IT.

in a kura kaupapa and my reo until I went to Cashmere. I realised that anyone can learn maths and science anywhere but learning the reo, tikaka and ahurea was something rare and not many people had that opportunity. I made the decision to go back to kura kaupapa at year 10 and stayed there for the rest of my schooling.

Back at te Whānau Tahi we would be in classes like Pūtaiao, Pākarau, te reo Pākehā, te reo Rakatira, te ao haka, Hītori, Kōiri and Pūoro. These were our main classes and we would also have classes like kapa haka and mau rākau every week. These classes were made relevant to our life and culture. For example pūtaiao was focused on mātauraka Māori – things like mahika kai and maramataka – and we would also go out and practise these for ourselves. All the learning we did at kura was not stuff you would learn just anywhere, it was hard to find but because you were at a kura kaupapa you were rich in cultural knowledge and practice.

As tau 13 we all had to do karaka and whaikōrero. This is something that freaked me out but I was glad I did it anyway because whenever we did karaka and the boys did whaikōrero all the teina were looking up to us and the manuhiri were always staring with a smile on their face.

NCEA was something I found wasn't too hard to do because before I even reached tau 11, I already had credits for all three senior years because of our involvement in all sorts of kaupapa like kapa haka. All the teachers made sure we had the option of going to university whether we wanted to or not.

I am currently studying towards a BA at University of Canterbury. This is where I truly appreciated my kura kaupapa education because I got all these skills like public speaking, working under pressure, leadership skills and a whole lot of other mātauraka. For as long as I can remember we always had to speak in front of people and always be prepared to do a mihi. So when it came to doing these things at university I had no issue with doing it.

When it came to essays and assignments I would always do them in te reo Maōri. The reo was something I was confident in and grew up with so it was natural. English essays were academic but te reo Māori had this way of being both academic but also poetic and beautiful. Even when doing presentations I would do it in Māori because I could add a mihi, tauparapara or something else to make it academic in a Pākehā view and a Māori view as well.

I am now in my third year of study and working as a kaiāwhina at Hillmorton High School. When it comes down to teaching the reo, I am in a comfortable environment and am confident in my reo. Te reo Māori and tikaka is what I grew up with so this environment is something I can relate to. Even when telling some student off or being an encouraging teacher, it feels natural thanks to my upbringing. I am very glad and grateful for my kura kaupapa Māori education.

Matariki Tarena is Kāi Tahu (Ngāi Tūāhuriri, Kāti Huikai) and Te Ati Haunui-ā-Pāpārangi. She has grown up in Ōtautahi, is a raukura of Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Te Whānau Tahi and was one of the original pēpi of the Kotahi Mano Kāika reo Māori playgroup – Te Puna Reo o Ngā Matariki. Having grown up in te reo Māori, she is now studying towards a teaching qualification to share her passion for our reo and culture with rakatahi everywhere.

Nā JUSTIN TIPA

Undermining the Customary Rights of our Coastline

From Rakiura to Kaikōura, across to Te Tai Poutini, our people have lived by the tides – gathering kaimoana, feeding our whānau, and protecting the life of the coast.

The Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011 was meant to recognise these deep and enduring relationships. It was meant to restore balance after the wounds of the Foreshore and Seabed Act 2004. But the government's recent amendments have shifted that balance once again – and not in our favour.

The government's retrospective legislation to undermine customary rights in the marine and coastal area is a betrayal of New Zealand values and a failure of leadership.

The Amendment Act, which passed its final reading in late October, has changed the legal test for customary marine title by raising the threshold for what iwi, hapū and whānau need to prove.

The government claimed this bill was needed to clarify the law after a 2023 Court of Appeal decision on how to apply the legal test for customary marine title. But the Crown won its appeal in the Supreme Court in December 2024, overturning that very judgment. Despite that off-ramp, they chose to press ahead with legislation that will restrict Māori rights and cost taxpayers millions.

Worse still, the legislation applies retrospectively to July 2024, when the government first announced it was amending the law. This means that any court decisions made recognising customary marine title since that date are now set aside.

Groups who have had their customary marine title recognised in that time are now forced to go back to court for costly re-hearings under the new, more restrictive legal test. This includes overturning the confirmed rights of Ruapuke whānau from a decision only months ago.

The Crown has conceded this will cost taxpayers millions of dollars, during a time when the government is facing severe fiscal challenges and budget deficits.

THE GOVERNMENT'S RETROSPECTIVE LEGISLATION TO UNDERMINE CUSTOMARY RIGHTS IN THE MARINE AND COASTAL AREA IS A BETRAYAL OF NEW ZEALAND VALUES AND A FAILURE OF LEADERSHIP.

On the one hand, Treaty and Justice Minister Paul Goldsmith is ploughing money into the court system to try to clear the severe backlog of cases; on the other hand, he is spending millions in taxpayer money to send already decided cases back into the queue. Even if it weren't unjust, this would still be a very questionable use of public money.

And it is unjust. It goes against the right that every New Zealander can have their day in court. It undermines the rule of law and the credibility of the legal system.

When a National-led government bypasses its own 2011 Marine and Coastal Area Act, it breaches the honour of the Crown – the duty to act with integrity, consistency, and good faith towards Māori. By seeking to avoid Parliament's legislative process and judicial interpretation, the government undermines a cornerstone of the Westminster system: the separation of powers and respect for due process.

The most frustrating aspect of all this is that the 2011 Act had largely helped put the divisiveness of the foreshore and seabed issue to rest. In response to the appalling fear campaigns trying to pit "iwi" against "Kiwi", Labour nationalised the foreshore and seabed in 2004. Following this, the Māori Party at the time negotiated with John Key's National government to secure the repeal of the 2004 Foreshore and Seabed Act and the restoration of the right to seek customary title in the courts. It was a positive step, but it was still a compromise by iwi and hapū.

Nevertheless, hapū and whānau set about the hard work of assembling the evidence required to meet the Act's legal tests. In 2017, Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu filed a customary marine title claim for the entire takiwā coastline as 'placeholder' on behalf of Kāi Tahu whānui.

I know many of you will be keen to contribute your time, knowledge and expertise to help your rūnaka or whānau gather evidence – that's our coastal place names, our mahika kai practices, and our long history of nohoaka and pā along the coast.

We need to keep going with this, as it's important knowledge for our whānau to hold.

The tide may turn again on this legislation. Our time in court or in negotiations with the Crown will come. In the 20 years since the courts first recognised the right to investigate the existence of customary rights in the foreshore and seabed, none of the scaremongering predictions about customary title holders have come to pass.

Public access, fishing, and navigation were never under threat. The 2011 legislation guaranteed these for everyone in the common marine and coastal area, including areas in customary marine title.

It feels like this government has lost sight of what is important to the country and the majority of New Zealanders.

New Zealanders want action on the things that matter to us. We're concerned about the cost of living, access to infrastructure and public services, economic opportunities, and protecting the natural environment.

Instead, the Prime Minister is allowing Parliament's time, and tens of millions of dollars, to be spent re-opening old attacks on Māori rights – rights that have been repeatedly recognised in legislation and the courts.

It's a failure of leadership, and it's out of touch with the concerns of New Zealanders.

General Manager Melanie Reed and Chief Executive Tracey Wright-Tawha.
PHOTOGRAPHS: SUPPLIED

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF SUPPORTING WHĀNAU WELLBEING

From working in a stationery cupboard with no computer or money, Tracey Wright-Tawha has built Ngā Kete Mātauranga Pounamu Trust into an organisation that touches thousands of lives each year. As the Murihiku charitable trust celebrates its 25th anniversary, its founder and CEO reflects on the journey, the kaupapa, and the tīpuna who light the way. Nā **ANNA BRANKIN**.

EVERY SO OFTEN TRACEY WRIGHT-TAWHA (KĀI TAHU – ŌRAKA APARIMA) MAKES TIME IN HER BUSY SCHEDULE TO sit down in the reception area of Ngā Kete Mātauranga Pounamu as if she's a whānau member arriving for an appointment, rather than chief executive of the busy agency.

"I think it's important to experience the meet, greet, seat encounter that whānau have when they come into our space," Tracey says. "One day I was downstairs in our GP practice and I decided to just sit in reception for a minute. I wanted to see if it was warm enough, if the TV was too loud, if people seemed comfortable and happy. This kaumātua came in and sat down and looked across at me and said 'It's warm in here, isn't it?' and I asked if he wanted me to open a window. He replied 'I'm not talking about the temperature. I'm talking about the people.'"

That moment – captured in a chance encounter – speaks to everything Tracey and her team have built over the past 25 years. Ngā Kete Mātauranga Pounamu Trust isn't just a health and social services provider: it's a place where people can bring their whole selves, where a taua's visit to the GP might naturally flow into conversations about budgeting advice for her children and safe sleep for her mokopuna.

The Trust's story began in September 2000 in a stationery cupboard in the office of Te Puni Kōkiri in Invercargill. "I had no money, no computer and, frankly, no idea," Tracey laughs. What she did have was the mandate of her rūnaka, Ōraka Aparima, and an unwavering belief that whānau in Murihiku deserved better health outcomes.

Over the course of a single year, several kaumātua had died unexpectedly and Tracey started thinking about the alarming statistics around Māori dying 10 to 12 years younger.

"I remember talking to Whaea Dawn Wybrow and she said 'Well, why don't you do something about it?' I pointed out I had no experience in health and she said, 'Yeah, but you're a good project person. You can pull the building blocks together and manage it all,'" Tracey recalls.

"So with the backing and mandate of Ōraka Aparima and guiding health stalwarts, which was really important to me, I got started. I was pretty determined to make it work – I also had a mortgage and two tamariki, and I needed an income."

That determination paid off four months later when Ngā Kete Mātauranga Pounamu Trust secured its first contract with the Land Transport Safety Authority, which gave them money to work with whānau who didn't have roadworthy vehicles, helping them to get licensed and able to access essential healthcare.

That first contract was just the beginning. In its first year Ngā Kete transported about 1,600 people into primary health services. By the second year it was more than 2,000. Today, the agency has 126 kaimahi, about 40 key contracts, and an annual budget of around $12 million. There are about 140,000 encounters with whānau each year.

It runs two GP practices, mobile nursing, and mental health services. Their mental health and addiction counselling service is a pillar of the agency and has seen exponential growth.

For Tracey, these details tell only part of the story. "Ngā Kete is really based on believing that whānau are the experts in their own world. We get the privilege of walking with them when they need some support to navigate a certain issue or break cyclical behaviours."

Compliment Tracey on the organisation's success and she will immediately deflect praise, telling you about her first employee, Teina Wilmshurst, who has been with the agency for all of its 25 years, or her general manager Melanie Reed, whom she says is so in sync they can finish each other's sentences.

She also highlights many other kaimahi who have made Ngā Kete Mātauranga Pounamu Trust what it is today. "This isn't the pursuit of one, it's the pursuit of many. I might be the CEO, but this organisation simply wouldn't be here if it weren't for the amazing staff who actually turn aspirations into reality.

"It's about the alchemy of a range of skills and experiences that come together and illuminate a way forward."

This philosophy permeates everything Ngā Kete does. When staff bring their whole selves to work – perhaps a registered counsellor who mentions she loves art – Tracey's response is to explore how that gift can serve the community, and suddenly Ngā Kete can offer art therapy. The result has been a suite of innovative programmes and approaches that funders regularly praise, and a workplace where staff feel supported and empowered to do their jobs well.

While funders praise their innovation, the feedback that matters

"THIS ISN'T THE PURSUIT OF ONE, IT'S THE PURSUIT OF MANY. I MIGHT BE THE CEO, BUT THIS ORGANISATION SIMPLY WOULDN'T BE HERE IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE AMAZING STAFF WHO ACTUALLY TURN ASPIRATIONS INTO REALITY.

"IT'S ABOUT THE ALCHEMY OF A RANGE OF SKILLS AND EXPERIENCES THAT COME TOGETHER AND ILLUMINATE A WAY FORWARD."

TRACEY WRIGHT-TAWHA

most to Tracey comes from whānau – like the kaumātua in reception that day, or the man she interviewed after he spent time in the crisis respite centre, a former motel repurposed for mental health respite care and stabilisation.

"This person had been diagnosed when he was 16. He told me that since that day he had been made to feel like he was a mental health patient and nothing more.

"But when he came to us, he said, 'You just asked me my name, and then I just got to be there. I had my own room, my own bathroom, I was encouraged to join in activities like planting the garden or going down the beach to collect driftwood, to help cook dinner or just to enjoy having it cooked for me. I feel that I have a voice, that I can contribute, that there's a place I belong.'"

That sense of belonging and contribution isn't accidental – it's built into the organisation's foundational model. Te Pōhā Oranga is drawn from Murihiku's traditional muttonbirding practices.

"If you look at tikaka and hauora for the deep south, it was definitely associated with our tītī practices. It takes a whole whānau to achieve that, from harvesting the birds, to processing them, to actually creating the pōhā," Tracey says. "If you unpick that, it's about the intrinsic worth of every member of that whānau and the contribution they make to their wider whānau. It's about whakapapa: our people, our practices and our places – altogether these things create a watermark of how we do what we do as an agency – we are stronger together."

Tracey's grit and determination, and her deep connection to Murihiku and its people, were inherited from her family. She comes from a working class whānau who understood the value of determination and community contribution.

Her father worked as a grader driver and later in the freezing works. Her great-grandfather, George Radford (Kāi Tahu, Kāti Māmoe, Te Ātiawa), was a firefighter in Wellington who moved to Te Anau in the late 1940s, felled trees and milled the wood to build a general store he and his wife ran for years.

"I grew up in Te Anau, and we travelled around a lot between one set of grandparents in Orepuki and another set in Te Anau," Tracey says. "My great-grandmother lived out at Colac Bay, where our marae is, and I remember being out there and helping her bring the cow in for milking, making butter and cheese, as well as getting meat out of the meat safe."

From a young age Tracey was drawn to helping others. "I was always the kid in the neighbourhood who was rescuing animals – I came from such a nurturing, loving family that I guess I had a bent towards those kinds of things."

But it's her tīpuna from further back who truly guide her path. Tracey tells the story handed down to her, of Mereana Teitei, daughter of Pahi and Paki, who made the remarkable decision to travel by waka from Cosy Nook to Moeraki.

"Her father had drowned at sea, and she wanted to get to Moeraki to live out the rest of her days with her sister," Tracey recounts. "The story goes that when she was rounding the Otago Peninsula a storm broke out and she recited karakia to call two whales to come either side of the waka to create ballast.

"Then, as she approached Moeraki, her sister was woken by the birds and was able to run down to the foreshore in time to call the waka in."

The lessons of Mereana Teitei were reinforced by experiences Tracey has had over the years, exploring the southern islands visited and occupied by her tīpuna, a rare opportunity to see middens with evidence of fires and sleeping areas.

"Our people made their way across the ocean and across those islands, and when I followed those footsteps it made me really emotional," she says. "They didn't just want to survive, they wanted to grow and flourish. They had dreams and aspirations. Here I am today, a continuation of their footsteps, and I just want to do them proud."

Above: Tracey and dear friend Marcia Te Au-Thompson.
Left: Ngā Kete kaimahi performing waiata at the 25 Year celebration.

"I SEE MY ROLE AS HAVING BEEN THE HOLDER OF THE MOEMOEĀ – THAT WE AS MĀORI CAN CUT OUR OWN TRACK FORWARD TO WELLBEING, THAT WE PUT OUR OWN TIKAKA AND CUSTOMS AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE WAY WE DO THINGS."

That sense of continuation, of being part of something that stretches back through generations and forward into the future, shapes how Tracey thinks about succession.

"I'm nearing the end of my career. So now it's about handing on the mantle to somebody else and preparing for me to exit or do something quite different."

Characteristically, she is approaching this transition with the same consideration and insight she has brought to her role over the past 25 years. "You have to have a sense of paying it forward when you move on from something, to help role model or shine a light for others who dare to step forward into leadership or senior management roles."

There is no doubt Tracey will leave big shoes to fill. Thousands of whānau are healthier, more connected, more able to flourish because one determined wahine decided her people deserved better – and then made it happen, one encounter at a time.

"I see my role as having been the holder of the moemoeā – that we as Māori can cut our own track forward to wellbeing, that we put our own tikaka and customs at the forefront of the way we do things," she says.

"Our ancestors didn't get it wrong. They were highly intelligent, influential, entrepreneurial can-do go-getters. We are the living footprint of their work. In a hundred years' time I hope my own mokopuna look back and say, 'Well, that old girl didn't know much, but she gave it a bloody good try."

THE ‘SHORTLAND POUNAMU’

Nā **HELEN BROWN**

Taoka are potent connectors travelling across space, time and generations. Imbued with the whakapapa of our tīpuna, they connect our past, present and future. When taoka are gifted, they often return, generations later, to the hands of their descendants. *While the colonial project with its attendant ethnographers, collectors and museums has disrupted this dynamic, sometimes taoka speak for themselves. They manage to be heard through the glass case, or in this case the shoebox – and return home.*

IN THE MID-1950s THE LATE GEOFFREY DISS OF CUMBRIA, ENGLAND attended an estate sale in the Lake District near his family home. A wooden display case caught his eye, and he bought it for the family’s jewellery business. The case came replete with a large collection of “curiosities” including bone and ivory objects, several pounamu pendants, and a magnificent hei tiki.

Diss regarded these objects as incidental and carefully stored them in a shoebox in his attic where they lay safe, albeit neglected, for a quarter of a century.

Curious to know more about the hei tiki, Diss sent it to a London-based valuation company in 1976 for appraisal. The valuer noted the significant monetary value of the taoka but also its cultural value, writing: “The Māori regarded the tiki amulet as the most sacred … usually elaborate precautions were taken to prevent the tiki falling into the hands of strangers.”

Diss absorbed this new information and for a time his son displayed the hei tiki and other taoka pounamu amongst his fossil, rock and gemstone collection. Diss’s daughter-in-law even lined a special wooden box to house the collection when it was not on display.

In 1983, prompted perhaps by publicity about the exhibition of Māori art the following year at New York’s Metropolitan Museum (the watershed *Te Māori*) or by empathy fostered through his own deep interest in family history, Diss contacted the New Zealand High Commissioner in London and generously offered to gift the pounamu to New Zealand.

He wrote: “The greenstone has just come to my notice again after lying neglected in a cupboard since 1976. The ‘tiki’ must surely feel it is amongst strangers. My wife and I feel it is time it returned home. Would you agree? If you do, we would be happy to donate the tiki and greenstone to your Excellency, on the understanding that they would be passed on to some Māori organisation or museum who would treasure them for the future.”

The pounamu collection comprising the hei tiki, nine mau kāki (pendants) and beads arrived in NZ in January 1984 and was immediately dispatched to the National Museum (later Te Papa Tongarewa) where it was accessioned until a “final keeping place” could be found. Thirteen years later, the donor’s wishes were fulfilled when the Diss collection, now described as the *Shortland pounamu*, was gifted by the Crown to Kāi Tahu at Kaikōura on the signing of the Ngāi Tahu Deed of Settlement. The gift marked the significance of the settlement of Te Kerēme, and remains an important symbol of Te Tiriti relationship between Kāi Tahu and the Crown.

While the Shortland pounamu is symbolically tied to that critical moment in our tribal history, the hei tiki in particular has even deeper layers of historical and cultural significance for Kāi Tahu whānui. The provenance of the mau kāki is unknown and the beads are not of NZ origin, but the hei tiki is believed to have been gifted to the English physician Edward Shortland, whose name has come to be associated with the entire collection.

Shortland was appointed private secretary to Governor Hobson in 1841-42. During his tenure he travelled with Hobson throughout the Waikato, and developed a keen interest in te ao Māori.

Shortland further honed his command of te reo Māori and his familiarity with tikaka as Police Magistrate and Sub-Protector of Aborigines in the Bay of Plenty. In August 1843, he was appointed official interpreter to Colonel Godfrey who was the Land Claims

Above: Then Prime Minister Jim Bolger presenting Tā Tipene O'Regan with the Shortland pounamu at the signing of the Ngāi Tahu Deed of Settlement in 1997.
TE RŪNANGA O NGĀI TAHU COLLECTION, NGĀI TAHU ARCHIVE, 2013.P.1907

Above: Dr Edward Shortland.
PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN, P.1910-001/1-066, HOCKEN COLLECTIONS, ŌTĀKOU WHAKAIHU WAKA.

Previous page: The Shortland hei tiki held by the author at Te Rau Aroha Marae, July 2025. TE RŪNANGA O NGĀI TAHU COLLECTION, NGĀI TAHU ARCHIVE, 2025-1266-055

Commissioner appointed to investigate pre-Treaty Māori land sales. In this role Shortland visited Te Waipounamu for the first time, attending claim hearings at Akaroa and Otago. He then travelled around Murihiku and Otago in 1843-44 as the government-appointed Sub-Protector of Aborigines, investigating land claims in Te Waipounamu and taking a census.

As he passed through the district, Shortland meticulously observed daily life and met Kāi Tahu rakatira including Tūhawaiki, Karetai, Topi Pātuki and Huruhuru. He returned to England in 1846 and published an account of his travels, *The Southern Districts of New Zealand*, in 1851.

Shortland maintained an ongoing connection with NZ, taking up various government posts in the North Island on three occasions between 1862 and 1889 before his death at Plympton, Devon, in 1893. Much of the information Shortland recorded was later used by Kāi Tahu as important evidence for Te Kerēme. His observations continue to inform the work of our tribal historians and are an important source for Kā Huru Manu.

While there is no record of Kāi Tahu gifting the hei tiki *directly* to Shortland, the taoka is certainly of southern origin; the raised tab for the suspension hole at the top of the head is a stylistic feature indicative of hei tiki made in Te Waipounamu. Fashioned from stone tools during Te Ao Kohatu, the hei tiki exhibits very high-quality artisanship.

Indeed, our pounamu experts have described it as a flawless example, made even more significant by its association with Shortland whose compassionate, progressive and humanitarian regard for Kāi Tahu and Māori kātoa was rare amongst the early colonial administrators. As an agent of the Protectorate of Aborigines, Shortland was charged with the task of defending the rights of Māori as enshrined in Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The Protectorate operated for just six years, but its duty was to give effect to a set of humanitarian ideals outlined in an 1837 report by a House of Commons select committee that had expressed concern over the effect colonisation had on indigenous peoples, and recommended they ought to be protected.

Shortland recognised our shared humanity, refused the then-prevalent pseudo-scientific notion of racial inferiority (at least, as regards Māori), and believed Māori "must always have a political weight in their own country." A cultural outlier, he was one of the first members of that special class whom Tā Tīpene O'Regan fondly describes as "Friends of Kāi Tahu." Such people continue to move amongst us – our non-Kāi Tahu allies, advisers, colleagues and friends.

In July this year, the Shortland pounamu was formally returned to Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu from Southland Museum and Art Gallery Niho o te Taniwha, where it has been on long-term loan for more than 20 years. Representatives of Te Kupeka Tiaki Taoka Southern Regional Collections Trust, Southland Museum and Art Gallery Niho o te Taniwha, and Invercargill City Council accompanied the pounamu onto Te Rau Aroha Marae where it was received during a pōwhiri on behalf of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu by Tā Tipene and Kaiwhakahaere Justin Tipa.

The handover was poignant as it recalled the occasion 28 years earlier at Takahanga Marae in Kaikōura, on November 21 1997, when Tā Tipene accepted the pounamu on behalf of Kāi Tahu whānui from then Prime Minister Jim Bolger at the signing of the Ngāi Tahu Deed of Settlement.

The *Shortland pounamu* is currently on display as part of the exhibition of the Kāi Tahu deeds, *Kā Whakatauraki: The Promises* at Te Puna o Waiwhetū Christchurch Art Gallery, until February 2027.

Above: The Shortland pounamu being carried on to Te Rau Aroha Marae by Evelyn Cook accompanied by representatives of Te Kupeka Tiaki Taoka Southern Regional Collections Trust, Southland Museum and Art Gallery Niho o te Taniwha, and Invercargill City Council, July 2025.

Below: The Shortland pounamu at Te Rau Aroha Marae, July 2025. From left to right: Helen Brown, Atholl Anderson, Takerei Norton, Tā Tipene O'Regan, Mike Stevens, Justin Tipa. TE RŪNANGA O NGĀI TAHU COLLECTION, NGĀI TAHU ARCHIVE, 2025-1266-052.

Below right: Shortland hei tiki. TE RŪNANGA O NGĀI TAHU COLLECTION, NGĀI TAHU ARCHIVE, 2019-0781-002.

OUR POUNAMU EXPERTS HAVE DESCRIBED [THE HEI TIKI] AS A FLAWLESS EXAMPLE, MADE EVEN MORE SIGNIFICANT BY ITS ASSOCIATION WITH SHORTLAND WHOSE COMPASSIONATE, PROGRESSIVE AND HUMANITARIAN REGARD FOR KĀI TAHU AND MĀORI KĀTOA WAS RARE AMONGST THE EARLY COLONIAL ADMINISTRATORS. AS AN AGENT OF THE PROTECTORATE OF ABORIGINES, SHORTLAND WAS CHARGED WITH THE TASK OF DEFENDING THE RIGHTS OF MĀORI AS ENSHRINED IN TE TIRITI O WAITANGI.

NOMAD: LIVING THE OLD WAYS, CREATING NEW PATHWAYS

Nā **NIKKI-LEIGH MĀHAKANUI WILSON-BEAZLEY**

ON A STILL MORNING BY THE RIVER, THE FIRE IS ALREADY CRACKLING AND SPITTING INTO LIFE. Two small pairs of gumboots thud across the grass while pāpā checks a net and māmā sorts out breakfast. It looks like a scene from television, and it is, but for the Mahuika whānau it's just another day.

That lifestyle became the foundation for *Nomad*, the Māori Television series launched earlier this year by Kahurangi Mahuika and Ashlea Williams. The show follows their whānau – Whaiariki (4) and Tiniura (2) – as they live closely with the land, travelling Aotearoa and meeting others who are rediscovering traditional, sustainable ways to live.

They live primarily on Te Tai o Poutini but rarely stay in one place for long. Over the past year they've lived in a tent, a caravan, and at times on marae, shifting wherever the wairua leads. One month they might be camped beside a river; the next helping at a wānaka hundreds of kilometres away.

"We always wanted a life that felt true to who we are," says Kahurangi. "A life where our tamariki and our values come first – where we can live by our tikaka, keep learning, and stay close to the whenua."

Before building this life with Ashlea, Kahu spent years in the kahere. "I knew as soon as I set foot in the forest it was where I belonged," he says. "When you live with the land you slow down, you listen, and everything starts to make sense."

As a young man he worked seasonally – one week on the tops of Mt Ruapehu, the next in the depths of Fiordland – moving with the cycles of nature and working wherever the wairua took him.

Kahurangi didn't arrive at this life by chance. He grew up whitebaiting, hunting, and practising mahika kai on Te Tai o Poutini. His upbringing was filled with examples of self-reliance and connection to the taiao.

His grandfathers had spent their early lives in the bush; one in the Kaimanawa Ranges, the other deep in the dense Haast forests. Their stories, and their ways of providing for whānau, gave him a lifelong respect for living off the land.

Right: Kahurangi Mahuika and Ashlea Williams with their whānau, Whaiariki and Tiniura. PHOTOGRAPHS: SUPPLIED

"WE ALWAYS WANTED A LIFE THAT FELT TRUE TO WHO WE ARE. A LIFE WHERE OUR TAMARIKI AND OUR VALUES COME FIRST – WHERE WE CAN LIVE BY OUR TIKAKA, KEEP LEARNING, AND STAY CLOSE TO THE WHENUA."

KAHURANGI MAHUIKA

After finishing Hato Paora College he began his career as a wilderness guide in the Hollyford Valley, where he spent long days leading visitors through landscapes layered with whakapapa and story.

"Spending all that time in the taiao, sharing our stories, that's when I realised I wanted to live more closely with the whenua, to walk the talk," he says.

That experience led him to co-found Te Ara Whakatipu – a Kāi Tahu leadership and environmental education programme designed to help rakatahi connect, or deepen their connection, to their Kāi Tahu heritage and the whenua. As lead guide, Kahu helped young people build confidence and cultural awareness through time spent on the land – learning to navigate, harvest and understand the whakapapa of each place they visited.

Ashlea's journey ran in parallel. After completing her Master's degree, she attended an indigenous conference in Auckland and watched Te Mana o Te Moana, a documentary about waka voyaging around the Pacific.

"I just knew – that's me," she says. "I started volunteering on a waka, turning up to maintenance days, and learning navigation. I loved that I could see my whakapapa reflected back in those people and that kaupapa.

"I didn't grow up connected with my marae or the whenua. It wasn't until I found waka hauora that I felt like I'd found my place in the world. For me, my place is being on the water – on the ocean. My father was a diver, and I love diving too. When I got older I realised that's how he connected with his culture, through the moana."

It was on a celestial-navigation hīkoi that Kahurangi and Ashlea first met, united by a shared passion for kaupapa Māori and wānaka.

"A lot of our values aligned," says Ashlea. "We both wanted to live off the grid and not be tied down to a nine-to-five job. It all just made sense."

Kahu's mahi remains grounded in the same values today. He contracts for his rūnaka, supporting kaupapa that protect native species and promote kaitiakitaka across Te Tai o Poutini. He also works in tourism, helping businesses integrate Kāi Tahu stories and values into their experiences.

For a time, he was caretaker at his marae, where he continues to support on the pā and lead rakatahi excursions – roles that keep him deeply connected to his community and the whenua.

Ashlea and the tamariki are almost always with him, sharing in the experiences that connect their whānau to the wider community.

"Every decision we make – where we go, what mahi we do – it's all about our tamariki and the values we want to pass down," says Ashlea. "We try to live in a way that feels meaningful, that reflects who we are."

Living as modern nomads comes with its challenges. Money is tight, travel constant and privacy rare. But for them the rewards are far greater. They've learned to live within their means, stretching every dollar and finding abundance in time, freedom, and shared experiences.

"The thing is, we don't feel like we go without – we never have," says Kahu. "What people live off in a month, we can stretch out. We don't need much – our life is built around experiences, not things."

Between them, Kahurangi and Ashlea have spent the better part of their adult lives training in as many kaupapa Māori as possible – mau rākau, waka ama, kapa haka, te reo Māori, rokoā Māori, whakapapa – you name it. Those experiences have shaped who they are and how they live, grounding them in the values that underpin everything they do.

When Māori Television approached them about filming *Nomad*, they saw it as an opportunity to share their lifestyle; not as something unusual or nostalgic but as a living expression of Māori values still thriving across the motu.

"Every person who appears in *Nomad* is someone we already had

“EVERY DECISION WE MAKE – WHERE WE GO, WHAT MAHI WE DO – IT’S ALL ABOUT OUR TAMARIKI AND THE VALUES WE WANT TO PASS DOWN. WE TRY TO LIVE IN A WAY THAT FEELS MEANINGFUL, THAT REFLECTS WHO WE ARE.”

ASHLEA WILLIAMS

a relationship with – friends, whānau, people who were expressing their mana motuhake in their own way,” says Kahu. “We wanted to highlight those who are already doing the mahi, living in ways that reflect who we are as Māori.”

Each episode highlights whānau who are reconnecting with the taiao in their own ways – growing kai, working in conservation, and caring for the land and waterways.

“Showcasing our whenua and the people of the South Island; that was big for us. We wanted to show that there are other pathways for whānau to live, not just one mould to fit,” says Kahu.

Nomad reminds viewers that living Māori values isn’t just about reflecting on the past but about recognising and nurturing what’s already around us.

“Our tīpuna lived this life,” says Kahu. “They were nowhere near as comfortable as we are – they had to do it a lot tougher. But they had manaful lives and theirs would have been kaupapa-driven, just like ours.”

Ashlea was initially hesitant about sharing their lifestyle with an audience but ultimately chose to take part in the series to preserve their journey for future generations. “I did it for our kids. One day, when I’m not here, they can look back and see: this is how we lived, who we were.”

Through *Nomad*, the Mahuika whānau hope to show that Māoritaka isn’t defined by one look, one practice, or one place. It lives through intention and the small, everyday choices we make.

“For anyone starting out on your journey of discovering your Māoritaka,” says Kahu, “find your passion, your pathway. Is it kapa haka? Is it waka? Mau rākau? Reo? Whakapapa? Waiata? Everyone has a thing and your tīpuna are always there, waiting for you.”

Ashlea adds: “As soon as we start defining what it means to be ‘Māori’ we start creating barriers. All you need is whakapapa – that’s all you need to start connecting and start your journey. Māoritaka is for everyone.”

For Kahurangi and Ashlea every move, every season and every challenge has been a reminder of why they chose this path. To live with purpose and to raise their tamariki in the embrace of their culture.

“Living with the whenua teaches you patience,” says Kahu. “It teaches you to slow down, to listen. The land reminds you that everything moves in cycles – growth, loss, renewal. That’s how we try to live too.

“It’s not a perfect life, but it’s ours and it feels right knowing our kids will grow up grounded in who they are, surrounded by everything that matters.”

WEAVING ACROSS TIME

Nā **NIKKI-LEIGH MĀHAKANUI WILSON-BEAZLEY**

WHEN MASTER WEAVER HAMUERA MANIHERA FIRST STOOD BEFORE THE kahu tīkumu at London's Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, it was a moment of reconnection. The 19th-century cloak, woven almost entirely from tīkumu fibres, had not been worn for more than 160 years.

"It was like meeting a long-lost friend or whānau member," says Hamuera. "There was warmth, familiarity, and a sense of reunion, even though our time together was brief."

For years he had studied the ancient kākahu remotely through books, photographs and video calls with curators caring for it. "But none of that prepared me for the feeling of being in its presence," he says. "Photographs and words never quite capture the scale, the texture, or the mauri that flows through taonga."

That moment marked the beginning of a two-week residency at the Royal Botanic Gardens, where Hamuera and his wife Naomi were invited to study and document the kahu tīkumu, a garment woven almost entirely from tīkumu, donated to Kew by Walter Mantell in 1856.

"Our goal was to bring that knowledge home and allow it to inspire the making of a new taonga, shaped by this encounter," he says.

The trip had been months in the making. Over late-night video calls and collaborative research, the couple built a close relationship with Kew's staff, especially senior research leader Mark Nesbitt, who invited them to work with him on a successful funding application to the Bentham-Moxon Trust.

That grant made their journey possible and opened doors to other museums across Europe.

In France they spent time at the Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, viewing kākahu collected during the 1826 Dumont d'Urville expedition. In the UK they were welcomed at Cambridge and Oxford universities, the British, Natural History and Perth museums, and the National Museum of Scotland.

Each visit, says Hamuera, added "another layer to the journey and reminded us just how widespread taonga Māori are, and how important it is to reconnect with them."

"Before leaving, my biggest hope was that Naomi and I could honour the taonga properly, to warm its mauri, to really listen and learn from it, and then to bring that mātauranga home to Aotearoa, where it could be

shared and carried forward."

During their residency, Hamuera was offered the chance to wear the kahu tīkumu for the first time in more than 160 years.

"To be honest, I never set out with the intention of wearing it," he says. "But when the opportunity arose, it felt both deeply special and a little frightening.

"One of my kuia, Te Hemoata Henare, stood with me, and alongside textile conservator Luba Nurse, they placed the kākahu carefully around my shoulders. Because of its fragile dyed black fibres, every adjustment had to be done with the utmost care. There were no taura to secure it, so I held it closely around me."

The weight of the garment was striking – slightly heavy yet soft and warm.

"It felt as if it was still doing the job it was created to do," he says. "Despite its age, the kākahu remains in remarkable condition. The tīkumu whenu are still strong, and much of the muka aho still intact. Wearing it after more than 160 years was a moment of deep connection – one I'll carry with me always."

The artisanship revealed a mastery few could appreciate without seeing it in person. "This kākahu was unlike any other I've seen," says Hamuera. "The kaupapa was woven almost entirely from rau tīkumu, with muka used primarily for the aho. What stood out was the precision in the spacing of the aho and the way the weaver alternated rows of whatu aho rua to build structure and strength.

"The dyed whenu were also striking – deep blacks from paru and rich reds from tānekaha or toatoa bark. That interchanging of colours created a rhythm that was both practical and beautiful. It showed not only technical skill but also the creative decisions of the weaver, who was clearly working with deep knowledge of materials and design."

Inside Kew, the kahu tīkumu is housed under carefully controlled conditions, with precise regulation of temperature, humidity and light. Textile conservators use digital microscopy and fibre analysis to monitor

Above left: Luba Nurse and Hamuera Manihera lifting the kahu tīkumu from box, Kew Museum London; above: Hamuera Manihera wearing the kahu tīkumu, Kew Museum, London. PHOTOGRAPHS: NAOMI APORO

"THE PROCESS OF PREPARING MATERIALS IS A LENGTHY PROCESS, BUT REWARDING. I USUALLY ONLY USE NATURAL, NATIVE MATERIALS. THERE ARE SPECIFIC PLACES I HARVEST AND MOST OF THEM HOLD A SPECIAL CONNECTION FOR ME, PLACES WHERE MY TĪPUNA ONCE LIVED, PLACES THAT HOLD THE STORIES OF MY WHĀNAU."

HAMUERA MANIHERA

"OBSERVE OUR TAIAO CLOSELY, THE WORLD KEEPS SHIFTING, AND WITH IT, OUR RESOURCES. LISTEN TO THE CALL OF YOUR TĪPUNA TAONGA. VISIT THEM IF YOU CAN. AND WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT, BRING THEM HOME."

its condition over time without direct contact, preserving the muka and tīkumu for future generations.

"It was reassuring to see that level of care," says Hamuera. "But what impressed me most was their openness – they wanted to understand the taonga as a living being, not just an object."

Weaving was part of Hamuera's life long before this trip. He grew up in Te Tauihu, surrounded by the hands and stories of weavers. "My kuia, Nellie Robb (née Manihera), was a weaver," he says. "There was a group of kuia that used to get together for kaupapa like weaving tukutuku for different marae around Te Waipounamu and fundraising for different kaupapa. It was just a part of our whānau."

He began helping his kuia when he was about 10, plucking feathers and sorting fibres. "She then taught me the art of tāniko and whatu in my early teens. My practice was refined by my mother, Dianne Robb, who was also taught by my kuia and Te Hemoata Henare."

Over the years he was guided by some of the country's most respected weavers, including Rānui Ngārimu, Reihana Parata, Morehu Flutey-Henare and Veranoa Hetet, each contributing to his understanding of the art form.

"Weaving for me is an intentional connection to my kuia," he says. "She passed when I was 18. It reminds me of her teachings, her humour, and her presence. When I weave, she's right there with me.

"As I've started to reconnect to other traditional practices within te whare pora, it's also become about revitalisation, responsibility, and intergenerational transfer of knowledge. It is whakapapa and it is art, but it is practical and tells a story. It carries whakapapa and connects us to the taiao and the whenua."

Preparation remains one of the most important parts of his work. "The process of preparing materials is a lengthy process, but rewarding. I usually only use natural, native materials. There are specific places I harvest and most of them hold a special connection for me, places where my tīpuna once lived, places that hold the stories of my whānau.

"Sometimes preparing materials can take several months, but I always make sure I finish prepping before I start to weave. If the prep isn't right, you'll see it. There's nowhere to hide in weaving."

His tikaka reflects practical and wairua principles. "For me, karakia is one of the most important aspects of weaving. From beginning to end, karakia provides guidance, whether harvesting raw materials, starting the first row, lifting your energy, or completing the final lock-off of the kākahu. In moments of unease, karakia restores balance and grounds me physically."

Returning home to Aotearoa, Hamuera says he had two clear goals. "The first was to take all the new teachings and insights I had gathered overseas and weave them back into my own practice. Every taonga had something to teach, whether it was a technique, a material, or simply the way it carried its mauri.

"The second was bigger than just my own practice. It's about creating pathways and tools to whakamana the taonga that remain in Europe and to help reconnect them with Aotearoa and with weaving communities and uri across the motu. Those taonga still hold knowledge and still belong to our story."

The experience also reminded him how fragile the resources that sustain raraka have become.

"Many taonga I saw overseas were made from species now extinct or endangered," he says. "That reality speaks not just to climate change, but to the wounds of colonisation, the damage to Papatūānuku, the predators brought here and the restrictions that limit how we can care for what remains."

His message for future weavers is simple but urgent. "Observe our taiao closely, the world keeps shifting, and with it, our resources. Listen to the call of your tīpuna taonga. Visit them if you can. And when the time is right, bring them home."

Looking ahead, he believes some taoka will one day return while others may remain overseas.

"For some, the whakapapa is clear, and their return can restore vital connections. For others, their origins remain uncertain. But each one still carries something to teach us."

Above: Kew Museum, London, viewing of the underside of kahu tīkumu, left to right – Mark Nesbitt, Luba Nurse, Gayathri Anand, Erin Messenger, Hamuera Manihera.

Left, top: Kaimatau/Ōtira; below: Hamuera Manihera assessing tīkumu plant; commencement of a kahu tīkumu, Hamuera Manihera.

TAKAPŪNEKE
A SITE OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

Pou-tū-te-Raki-o-Te-Maiharanui, Takapūneke Reserve, Akaroa Harbour. PHOTOGRAPH: RICHIE MILLS

On a 14-hectare reserve on the outskirts of Akaroa, a forgotten piece of history is being transformed into a place of healing and learning. Through a partnership with Ōnuku Rūnanga and Christchurch City Council, Takapūneke will feature sculptural landscape design that tells the site's stories, walking trails through regenerated native bush, a cultural centre and space for reflection. The story of this wāhi tapu connects directly to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and, finally, it's being shared. Nā **ANNA BRANKIN**.

WHEN RIK TAINUI, CHAIR OF ŌNUKU RŪNANGA, DRIVES PAST TAKAPŪNEKE on his way to Ōnuku Marae, he thinks about his brother every time.

"As soon as I drive past there and see all the work that has been done, I'm instantly connected to him," says Rik. "I keep thinking about how proud he'd be of what we've done as a whānau."

His brother, the late Pere Tainui, along with George Tikao (Waitai) and Maurice Gray, were the visionaries who dreamed of transforming Takapūneke from a desecrated dump into a place of healing and remembrance. Although all three tāne have now passed, their vision is becoming a reality on the sloped site between Akaroa and Ōnuku, where one of Aotearoa's most significant – yet least talked about – historical events unfolded nearly two centuries ago.

Takapūneke is first thought to have been occupied around 1820. As well as a small fishing village, it was known for its role in the thriving harakeke trade between local Kāi Tahu and takata pora. Harakeke was collected from various sites across the peninsula, then brought to Takapūneke to be prepared for trade.

"Uncle Pere used to say that Takapūneke was basically a harakeke processing plant," says Keefe Robinson-Gore, a member of the co-governance group who has also become keeper of the site's stories.

"Ropes made from flax were superior to the hemp ropes that Pākehā sailors had been using at the time."

It was also the trading quarters of Te Maiharanui, the paramount chief of Kāi Tahu in the Canterbury region in the 1820s.

In November 1830, Ngāti Toa chief Te Rauparaha arrived at Takapūneke aboard the brig *Elizabeth*, hidden below deck with a party of his warriors. Captain Stewart was ostensibly there to trade for flax. When the *Elizabeth* came to anchor off Takapūneke, Te Maiharanui was absent. Several days of onshore negotiations ensued, during which Ngāti Toa stayed hidden to maintain the pretence of a peaceful trading mission. When Te Maiharanui returned, unsuspecting, to Takapūneke, he boarded the boat to trade, as was customary. He was captured alongside his wife and daughter, and a massacre followed in the village.

The prisoners were taken to Te Rauparaha's stronghold on Kāpiti Island. On the journey, Te Maiharanui and his wife made the heartbreaking decision to kill their daughter.

To Keefe, this action speaks of their deep foresight: "They knew that she would likely be enslaved or forced to marry one of their captors. Whether it was to protect her from a life that was very different from the one they wanted for her, or to prevent Ngāti Toa from gaining a foothold in the rohe by marriage, there was a measure of prudence in their decision that protected what we had for future generations."

Te Maiharanui was taken to the mainland opposite Kāpiti Island and executed. The Elizabeth Affair, as it became known amongst the British, horrified authorities when they learned of Captain Stewart's complicity. The incident contributed directly to Britain's decision to strengthen their

Above: Blythecliffe, Akaroa at the end of a pivotal hui where representatives of New Zealand Historic Places Trust, Ōnuku Rūnanga and Akaroa Civic Trust met and discussed Takapūneke for the first time. The group includes Pere Tainui (back), George Tikao (front row, centre), Harry Evison (front row, rightmost), John Wilson, Anne Salmond and others. September 8, 2001. PHOTOGRAPH: VICTORIA ANDREWS

Left: Looking towards the monument. J.L. Buckland photograph, c.1920s. PHOTOGRAPH: GIFT OF JAN SHUTTLEWORTH, COLLECTION OF AKAROA MUSEUM (AK:2003.18.2.24)

Right: A meeting to discuss the Takapūneke Reserve proposal was hosted by Ruth Dyson (centre, red jacket) at Ōnuku marae on 2 July, 2004. Among those attending were Peter Richardson on behalf of Helen Clark, the Minister for Culture and Heritage (in front of Dyson) and Bob Parker, Mayor of Banks Peninsula (front, right). PHOTOGRAPH: VICTORIA ANDREWS

presence in the country, appointing James Busby as the first British resident and setting in motion the events that would lead to the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in 1840.

"This story really encapsulates what it is about Takapūneke that is so special in terms of its national significance," Keefe says.

After the massacre, Takapūneke became tapu – the site of lost lives and a symbol of betrayal. Those who survived moved further down the harbour to Ōnuku, where the marae stands today.

Keefe explains one interpretation of the sites' respective names: "Takapūneke – to have moved from your original location and Ōnuku – literally of distance, the place over there. So the old place and the new place."

For generations, kaumātua told their children to stay away from Takapūneke. It was a bad place, they said, although many didn't know exactly why.

For many years the land was farmed by Pākehā families, the distinctive red farmhouse a landmark in the bay. The first farmer gathered the kōiwi he found and burned them. In the 1960s, Banks Peninsula District Council built a wastewater treatment plant directly where the village once stood.

During construction, middens on the small flat were destroyed, wiping out archaeological evidence of the site's use. In the late 1970s a rubbish dump was added.

The way the land was being used never sat right with local whānau, but they didn't have the resources or relationships to make a difference. Then, when the council proposed subdividing the land in 1996, something shifted.

"Believing that the subdivision was inevitable, we went along with it reluctantly, because part of the proposal included returning two parcels of land to us," Rik recalls. "That was better than nothing, which is what we'd had up until then. But then we decided, actually, that's still not good enough."

Keefe remembers these conversations – heated hui at the marae in which the Ōnuku whānau were called "waka jumpers" by council representatives.

"I was just this little ten-year-old kid at the time; didn't really understand what was happening. All I knew was that they wanted to put houses on a piece of land that was really important to us. Those discussions started my journey to learning more about Takapūneke."

The fight to protect and reclaim Takapūneke has become a decades-long journey involving countless hui, strategic relationship building, and persistent advocacy. Tangata Tiriti allies including acclaimed historians, well-known politicians, public servants, and local community advocates provided crucial support. The bay was finally declared a wāhi tapu area by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust in 2002, offering it protection from further development. In 2010, the Takapūneke Historic Reserve was formalised.

"The key thing has been building really strong relationships, and making sure the council understands the story of Takapūneke," says Rik. "The co-governance model itself has become a powerful example. We've demonstrated that this co-governance model actually can work if both parties buy into it."

Rik credits former mayors Bob Parker and Lianne Dalziel for backing Takapūneke, and current Mayor Phil Mauger for ensuring the project continues. Council staff like chief ranger Paul Devlin and project manager Steven Gray have been equally important, as has the co-governance group chair Pam Richardson.

Landscape architect Debbie Tikao entered the picture in 2014, working alongside Pere, Waitai and Maurice to support them to establish a co-governance group and translate their vision into design.

"We would have these hui with the three of them, recording their stories," she recalls. "Waitai talked about the history of the site and its significance. Maurice would talk about connecting with the stars, how the pou needed to face certain ways, aligning with constellations.

Above: Formal blessing ceremony at Takapūneke Historic Reserve. The area that was previously earmarked for subdivision was planted with commemorative trees, 5 February 2010. PHOTOGRAPH: HERITAGE NEW ZEALAND

Above: Pere Tainui with a group from Ōnuku at Takapūneke, 2019. PHOTOGRAPH: DEBBIE TIKAO

Below left: Rik Tainui, James Robinson and Waitai Tikao in the Mayor's Lounge in 2012 after the presentation of the Takapūneke Conservation Report. PHOTOGRAPH: VICTORIA ANDREWS

Below right: Blessing of the land at Takapūneke that was to have been subdivided, and planting of commemorative trees, 7 February 2010. Ruth Dyson, MP for Port Hills electorate, formerly Banks Peninsula electorate (back, left), Tā Tipene O'Regan (centre), Mayor of Christchurch, Bob Parker (right). PHOTOGRAPH: HERITAGE NEW ZEALAND

"WE WOULD HAVE THESE HUI WITH THE THREE OF THEM, RECORDING THEIR STORIES. WAITAI TALKED ABOUT THE HISTORY OF THE SITE AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE. MAURICE WOULD TALK ABOUT CONNECTING WITH THE STARS, HOW THE POU NEEDED TO FACE CERTAIN WAYS, ALIGNING WITH CONSTELLATIONS. PERE PAINTED A PICTURE OF HIS VISION FOR THE FUTURE WHICH WAS TO CREATE A PLACE FOR OUR TAMARIKI, A PLACE THEY WOULD BE PROUD OF. AND THEN ONE AFTER THE OTHER THEY PASSED AWAY. BUT WE HAD ENOUGH OF THE VISION FROM THOSE THREE TO CREATE THE DESIGN."

DEBBIE TIKAO

Above and left: The recently completed second takarangi, tells the story of harakeke – the flax that made Takapūneke a thriving trading post in the 1820s.
PHOTOGRAPHS: SUPPLIED

"Pere painted a picture of his vision for the future which was to create a place for our tamariki, a place they would be proud of. And then one after the other they passed away. But we had enough of the vision from those three to create the design."

For Debbie, the complexity of translating spiritual concepts and history into physical design has been challenging and rewarding. "It's absolutely a passion project for me."

Takapūneke will eventually have four distinct areas, each featuring a pou carved by Fayne Robinson aligned with different seasonal constellations. Te Atutahi o Takapūneke (park of silence) is the most sensitive, where the original village stood. This will be protected by palisade-style fencing, accessible only for cultural purposes.

Te Whai Ao o Takapūneke (park of healing) comprises the bush-clad valleys where walking trails and boardwalks will wind through regenerating native forest. And at the centre, a facilities hub will include the restored Red House as a café and reading room, event spaces, and eventually a cultural centre with exhibition space and a shop for Ngāi Tahu artists.

But it's Pou-tū-te-Raki-o-Te-Maiharanui (park of reflection) where visitors can experience the vision most fully. This section features three large-scale takarangi built into the landscape, double spirals symbolising creation as dynamic movement, unfolding of the cosmos, and the passing of time through past, present and future.

"Maurice explained his aspirations for Takapūneke – to showcase mātauraka Māori to the world; to create pathways and restore the connections between the whenua and cosmos; and restore mana and mauri to people and place," says Debbie.

"There were many more instructions, but these three points encapsulate the main intent. Translating these aspirations, and those of Waitai and Pere, into design was the challenge. The dynamic form and layered meaning of the takarangi jumped out as the form that would enable us to unfold the many stories of Takapūneke and shape a powerful landscape of meaning, reflection and learning."

The first takarangi was completed in 2022, a double spiral of paths built into the sloped landscape. As you enter the spiral on the paved path, chevrons carved into the ground tell the story of Takapūneke's history. The final chevron is blank, representing the story yet to be told. On the way out of the spiral the path becomes gravel. "That's in homage to the next generation, acknowledging that their path is still yet to be formed by their own aspirations," Keefe says.

The second takarangi, completed at the end of this year, tells the story of harakeke – the flax that made Takapūneke a thriving trading post in the 1820s. It features a seating area, enclosed by a stunning sculptural roof that radiates outward like the sun, with intermediate beams to be coloured in the hues of the kererū feathers, mimicking their wings in flight and honouring the manu kaitiaki that watch over this landscape. Beneath it sits a centerpiece made of resin embedded with muka fibre.

"It talks about weaving together past, present, and future," Debbie says. "Harakeke formed the basis of early trade between Europeans and Māori, but it also talks about innovation. We're still discovering new things about this super plant – from soaps and hand creams to wall finishes and surfboards. It reminds us that within nature we can find solutions to the challenges ahead."

The complexity of building circular structures on steep slopes has made progress slower than anticipated. But for Debbie, who has worked as a landscape architect for 26 years, compromise isn't an option.

Above: Dr Kelly Tikao, of Ōnuku Rūnanga addressing the crowd at the public opening of Pou-tū-te-Raki-o-Te-Maiharanui, the park of reflection, Matariki, 24 June, 2022. PHOTOGRAPH: COURTESY THE AKAROA MAIL

Below right: Members of the Takapūneke Reserve Co-Governance Committee at the unveiling of Pou-tū-te-Raki-o-Te-Maiharanui, the park of reflection, at Matariki, 24 June, 2022. From left: Rik Tainui, Pam Richardson (Chair), Debbie Tikao, Nigel Harrison, Keefe Robinson-Gore, Paul Devlin and Steven Gray. PHOTOGRAPH: SUPPLIED

Above: Whānau at the unveiling of Pou-tū-te-Raki-o-Te-Maiharanui, the park of reflection, at Matariki, 24 June, 2022. PHOTOGRAPH: SUPPLIED

The third takarangi, currently under construction, will explore the theme of relationships – acknowledging the site's painful history and the partnership that has made restoration possible. It will stand near the Britomart Memorial, a symbol of colonisation, creating a conversation between past and future.

The vision extends far beyond what's already built. Plans include a nature play trail where children can learn about forest ecology through the story of Tāne Mahuta, with stepping stones and carved pou depicting layers of the forest system. The main car park, designed to sit above the old landfill area, will include a waharoa – a large shelter structure providing interpretation and access to the reserve.

Nine smaller pou markers, designed by Fayne Robinson, will be laid out in alignment of Matariki, each facing towards significant sites around the harbour – traditional schools of learning, food gathering areas, sacred mountains.

By 2030 or 2031, the wastewater treatment plant will be decommissioned, allowing the site's full restoration.

“We're probably looking at another eight years to complete everything,” Debbie says. “The bodies of work are significant – the website, the interpretation strategy, lighting design, cultural centre. But we've been at this for over a decade. We know how to be patient.”

The site is already making a big impact**.** When Ōnuku Rūnanga recently hosted a group of First Nations leaders from Canada, they visited Takapūneke and shared its history**.**

“One of the chiefs asked us if he could call to our ancestors, and we said ‘yes’. He called and started this beautiful call, just as he would do to his own ancestors in Canada,” Rik says. “There wasn't a dry eye in the group. Everyone had tears streaming down their face and I stood there thinking that we never could have predicted just how important this project would end up being.”

As Takapūneke continues its transformation from massacre site, to dumping ground, to sacred sanctuary, it stands as testament to the power of persistence, partnership, and the determination to honour those who came before – and those who dreamed of what could be. In the words of Waitai: “Tell the people – let them know what it is, why we have cried over this land.”

“It's not about forgetting what happened,” Keefe says. “It's definitely about knowing and remembering. But we want to move beyond the anguish. For a long time this place was untapped, untouched, and a lot of that was due to the horrific things that have happened to us. But I love that we are at a stage now where we get to create rather than fight. Tell the people – let them know what it is, why we have cried over this land.”

When completed, Takapūneke will stand alongside Waitangi as a site of national significance – a place where the past is honoured, the present is built on partnership, and the future is shaped by possibility.

Takapūneke Historic Reserve is open to the public. The first two takarangi are accessible, with the third expected to be completed soon. Visitors can access audio tours via QR codes on site, with Keefe Robinson-Gore as narrator, sharing the stories that have waited so long to be told.


Kiwibank.

MANA OF THE MIND: RETHINKING NEURODIVERSITY

Nā **SASCHA WALL**

"IF YOU WANT A PROBLEM SOLVED AND YOU WANT IT SOLVED QUICKLY, find someone with dyslexia," says Sumaria Beaton-Sikisini (Kāi Tahu – Awarua) with a confident smile.

It was Sumaria's email signature, embedded at the bottom of her response to a boring admin email I'd sent her, that first piqued my interest: "#MadeByDyslexia – expect curious ideas & curious spelling." In one line Sumaria owned her dyslexia, framed it with positivity, and wrapped it in humour.

What many may see as a challenge, she wears as a badge of creativity with confidence.

As a fellow neurodivergent I felt an instant connection and reached out. I knew our kōrero would carry a te ao Māori lens, shaped by our shared whakapapa to Awarua.

Dyslexic brains have a unique ability to connect seemingly unrelated ideas and find solutions quickly and creatively. Sumaria embraces this as her greatest strength. "There are some things I really struggle with that are just weird … but give me a problem and I'll give you ten different ways to figure it out. That's my gift.

"I've made my whole business work for my brain," she says – and that mindset is a big reason Awarua Synergy, her Murihiku-based company, has thrived. Her ability to think outside the box, and several steps ahead, is what makes her an exceptional leader and business owner.

Neurodiversity is the natural spectrum of human minds – the many ways in which we think, learn, feel and experience the world. It challenges the notion of a single 'normal' brain and celebrates cognitive differences as part of what makes us innovative and resilient. Within this spectrum people whose brains work differently from what is considered 'neurotypical,' are described as neurodivergent.

Unfortunately, as Western science has evolved, neurodivergent conditions have been framed in a way that paints a picture of what a person is lacking. Labels like Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and dyslexia frequently carry the weight of unspoken stereotypes – images of disruptive children throwing chairs, individuals who dodge eye-contact and lack empathy, or those who simply cannot read or write.

These harmful narratives misrepresent reality and contribute to stigma, limiting opportunities and eroding the confidence of those whose brains are wired differently.

Not to undermine the struggles, there are multiple challenges with communication, sensory overload, maintaining focus – all side effects of navigating systems designed for neurotypical minds. But in reality, neurodivergent brains often bring remarkable strengths – creativity, problem-solving, innovative thinking and unique perspectives that enrich our communities, workplaces, whānau and ultimately, our lives.

Within te ao Māori there is a growing movement to reframe Arororeretini (ADHD), and Takiwātaka (autism), and other neurodivergent conditions as distinct ways of being – each carrying their own mana.

Arororeretini (meaning attention to many things) is the kupu Māori for ADHD which reflects the way people experience the world with an abundance (rather than a deficit) of attention spread across multiple interests. It emphasises curiosity and adaptability rather than limitation.

Takiwātaka means "in his or her own time and space". The term, developed by Māori linguist Keri Opai, honours the unique rhythm and perspective of autistic individuals, framing autism as a different way of being rather than a disorder. It conveys respect for individuality and connection to the world on one's own terms.

Currently, there are no confirmed kupu Māori and only limited resources that explore a te ao Māori perspective on dyslexia. To me, this highlights a gap in understanding, not just of what dyslexia is, but of its strengths and its complexity beyond the common view of it as just difficulty with reading and writing.

In kōrero with Sumaria we explored her experience of dyslexia and how she draws on te ao Māori to bring structure and clarity to her life and mahi.

"Growing up I felt stupid and dumb, to be honest. But then I'd pick things up quite easy and fast. So you think, 'Am I smart or not?' You have to learn to trust yourself."

That tension shaped much of her early life until diagnosis offered answers and challenges.

"After I got diagnosed, I went through a phase where you kind of

Left: Sumaria Beaton-Sikisini; overleaf: Dr Andre McLachlan. PHOTOGRAPHS: SUPPLIED

go through a whole filing system of your life. You're like, oh, that's why that happened ... but it's also a grief process because you're grieving what wasn't right, or what you didn't fit into."

For Sumaria, creating safe spaces is critical. "If there's not a safe space for you, and instead you're constantly getting told you're not good enough because you're not spelling properly, then it's just going to crush you."

She believes dyslexia brings unique strengths, especially in problem-solving. "We can see all the different sides and pieces. That's why we need the big picture. Give us the big picture and we'll see how everything connects."

Sumaria also challenges the systems we work within. "How much space could we occupy if there was more of a te ao Māori focus on things, rather than a Western focus?"

For her, tikaka offers a blueprint for structure and balance.

"If you think of pōwhiri on the marae, there's a process, step by step. Different marae might do things slightly differently, but the essence is the same: welcoming manuhiri and tangata whenua, that's tapu. You know how it works, and that structure gives you boundaries. I reflect on that a lot because it helps my brain. It's the same with lean management: visual, tidy, efficient. When everything around me is clear and in order, it makes sense."

Dr Andre McLachlan Ngāti Apa (Ngāti Kauae), Muaūpoko (Ngāti Pāriri), champions the view that mātauraka Māori offers a holistic lens on neurodiversity, which he sees as vital for the wellbeing of tamariki, rakatahi and pakeke. A clinical psychologist and addictions specialist based in Waikato, Andre combines academic expertise with lived experience. A father of six, he is deeply committed to indigenous approaches to mental health, trauma, addictions and neurodiversity.

His work spans research, teaching, and workforce development, and he is widely recognised for delivering interactive workshops that equip practitioners and whānau with practical tools they can apply in everyday life.

When we began our kōrero, I shared my desire to reframe neurodiversity away from the deficit model. Andre gently challenged me to think deeper. He knows this space intimately: he has ADHD and autism and his own children live with learning differences and developmental disabilities.

"The reality of having a disability is not fun and it's not a superpower," he said. "Talk to any parent of a child with a disability, and they will tell you it's f..king hard."

Andre spoke candidly about his own experience. "For me, I have a PhD, but there are still things, normal things, I simply can't do. However, I can write a whole book in a weekend."

He believes the education system often gets it wrong by focusing only on what's broken.

"The problem with the mainstream education system is that it looks purely at challenges and then the focus is on fixing things. As soon as you're fixing something you stop focusing on the development and the inherent positive aspects of that person."

Punitive approaches, he says, only compound harm. "Punishment creates shame, disengagement, distrust of the world – you just feel stupid."

Instead, Andre advocates for comprehensive assessments that look beyond labels. "Diagnostic overshadowing is when someone looks at someone and goes, 'Oh, they've got ADHD. That's because of ADHD.'

DR ANDRE MCLACHLAN CHAMPIONS THE VIEW THAT MĀTAURAKA MĀORI OFFERS A HOLISTIC LENS ON NEURODIVERSITY, WHICH HE SEES AS VITAL FOR THE WELLBEING OF TAMARIKI, RAKATAHI AND PAKEKE.

Everything becomes about the diagnosis, and you stop seeing the person.

"A diagnosis is part of the process, but the goal is to understand who we are. A comprehensive assessment lets you know where the strengths are and where the difficulties are, and they are often different than the behaviours or the concerns we have."

To explain his approach, Andre uses the metaphor of a wharenui. "Think about a wharenui and the structure of the whare pou holding up the tāhuhu, which is the central nervous system. All of our whare are different. Some elements are standard, some are amazing, and some are fraying at the edges.

"If you take the entire story of the whare and shine a light on the things that are going OK and the things that are amazing, we can then utilise them to support the entire story of the whare."

This philosophy underpins the resources Andre has developed for whānau and practitioners.

"We've developed a series of those developmental abilities into a set of Mana Roto cards. They describe the elements of development and connect them to our concepts. By doing that you have a resource so you can sit with whānau and look at all of the areas of development across the four pou."

Once strengths and challenges are identified, the next step is planning.

"We've developed a process for creating a strength-based plan, and we've done that in relation to tukutuku stitches. Who are the weavers? Who are the stitches? That's about communications and relationships. Next part of the plan is the frame that holds the tukutuku together. What are the expectations, and what's the match between this child or adult's ability, strengths and needs, and what's being expected of them in the world?"

Sumaria and Andre challenge the narrow frames that have long defined neurodivergence. Their experiences reveal that what some call limitation can become a source of insight and innovation. Sumaria's gift for connecting ideas and Andre's vision for strength-based planning show us that when we honour the full story of a person we discover possibilities that rigid systems will never imagine.

These kōrero remind us that the way we understand minds shapes the way we shape lives. When we choose to see complexity as richness and difference as part of the pattern, we create spaces where people can stand in their own rhythm and thrive on their own terms.

“My dream is for my tamariki to have the opportunity to thrive on their own whenua, in their own way, as Kāti Māhaki, Kāi Tahu and as Māori.”

– NIKKI-LEIGH MĀHAKANUI WILSON-BEAZLEY

WRESTLING WITH THE RIGHT WORDS ... AND WINNING

Ko Te Kohurau ki uta
Ko Waitaki ki te raki, ko Waihemo ki te toka, ko Kākaunui i te waeka
Ko Takitimu, rātou ko Uruao, ko Araiteuru ki tai
Ko Tahu Pōtiki, rātou ko Hotu Māmoe, ko Rākaihautu kā tūpuna
Ko Kāti Hāteatea te hapū
Ko Moeraki te marae
Ko Tipa tōhoku whānau
Ko Peter rāua ko Anne ōhoku mātua
Ko Nick tōhoku ikoa

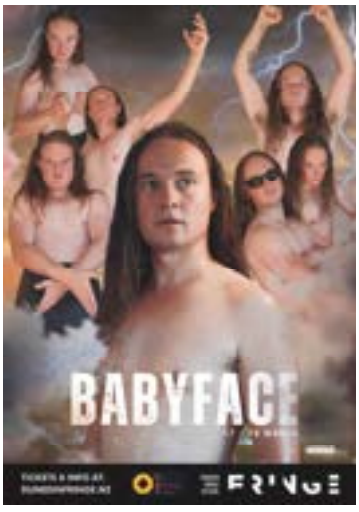
Nick Tipa is having an excellent year. The Ōtepoti-based writer and performer debuted his one-man play, *Babyface*, at the 2025 Dunedin Fringe Festival, taking away three awards in one night: the UNESCO City of Literature Beyond Words Award, the Fringe Festival Theatre Award, and Promising Māori Artist, all of which took him completely by surprise. Kaituhi **ILA COUCH** reports.

"I WASN'T EXPECTING TO WIN ANYTHING, SO MY acceptance speeches were pretty bad," Nick admits with a laugh. "The first was awkward, the second was an apology for the first, and by the third speech I was crying."

In addition to his recent accolades, Nick is fresh from a writers' residency through the New Zealand Young Writers' Festival (NZYWF). It's given him time to work on his next project, which is helpful for the creative all-rounder who describes himself as "new to writing" and "a bit slack" when it comes to committing to one thing.

As a kid Nick was interested in everything from maths, sport and music, which his parents, Anne (Aerani, Ingarani, Kōtirana) and Peter (Kāi Tahu, Aerani, Ingarani, Kirihi, Kōtirana), fully supported. His love of the arts, music and live performance took hold in high school, where as a 16-year-old the only way he could play the late-night gigs his band booked at R18 venues was to take his parents as chaperones.

"They were often out into the early hours of the morning just so we could play a gig. My parents are creative people from working-class families, and they were integral to my ability to develop as an artist and musician."



When it came to higher education, Nick kept his options open, studying Physics and Music at Otago University. However, a theatre course cemented his interest in performance and after graduating with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) he headed to Drama School in Melbourne to hone his performance skills.

"I was 23 at the time, and it ended up being the best educational experience I could have had. There was no grading – that wasn't the point. We worked on developing as artists, focusing on craft and taking away the expectation of having to be good.

"It became a really good lesson for me in letting go of the pressure to perform to an audience and, instead, learn what it is to be in communion with an audience."

For his first play, Nick mined his own childhood for ideas, creating a story inspired by his experiences. *Babyface* is the story of 10-year-old Kahu, a boy who has an alter-ego called Whiplash, a WWE-style professional wrestler.

"I spent some years growing up in Middlemarch, which is a town of 250 people, an hour outside Ōtepoti. As a 10 to 13-year-old I watched a lot of WWE professional wrestling. For a time I was telling people

Above: Continuing with his passion for live music, which started as a teenager, Nick performs and records with his current band, Laney Blue; top: Avon Tipa (Nick's great grandfather), Peter Tipa (Nick's father), Desmond Tipa (Nick's grandfather), baby Nick Tipa. PHOTOGRAPHS: SUPPLIED

that when I grew up I wanted to be a wrestler, so weirdly this play is me fulfilling my childhood dream."

Kahu, who is dealing with the separation of his parents and in the process of packing up his bedroom, finds objects that send him back to memories of the small town he is about to leave. Interspersed throughout the play are wrestling matches where the world instantly changes and Kahu becomes his alter ego. In the play, Nick takes on the role of at least 17 characters, and since it's a solo show, he wrestles himself.

"I did a bunch of research, so when the wrestling fans turn up I'm not going to embarrass myself. There are moments of throwing myself, hitting myself with a chair and trying to create an actual wrestling match. The show is fun, and one person wrestling themselves is inherently comedic."

An enjoyable aspect of writing and preparing for the play was research. Nick says this allowed him a deeper dive into a world he had only understood as a child.

"I looked into the history of big-time wrestling, where it came from – the carnival circuit in the 1800s – and also wrestlers from Aotearoa who had an impact on the world stage. It's really a form of semi-improvised theatre, live-streamed to the world."

Following the success of *Babyface* at the Dunedin Fringe Festival, Nick is keen to take the show around the motu as well as Adelaide and Edinburgh.

Encouraging people to venture out and experience live performances is something Nick is passionate about.

"Bringing people together to have a shared experience – that's the reason for doing anything at all. Without there being something to draw people together, to gather around and reflect upon, it's far too easy to be antagonistic, lose empathy and be limited in our understanding of the ways one can be human. You know what it is – it's wānaka. It's sitting and reflecting together, and that's what makes it valuable."

As part of the NZYWF, Nick was also selected to be part of a rōpū of emerging voices to wānaka at Puketeraki Marae and present their work during the festival weekend. For Nick it was an amazing experience to be on the whenua, spend time in whakawhanaukataka and explore the relevance of the written word in modern storytelling.

"I met so many amazing young writers and got to hear the work of these amazing young voices – Tahu, Māori, Tauiwi, Pākehā. It was completely inspiring. There was really good kōrero about how in te ao Māori stories are told in a multitude of ways, whether it's through whakairo, tukutuku, raraka and that words are only one way to tell stories.

"But today I think about how important words and written stories are in the way it translates into different forms of media, whether that's film, TV, radio or social media. Writing to some degree is still core to those processes."

"BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER TO HAVE A SHARED EXPERIENCE – THAT'S THE REASON FOR DOING ANYTHING AT ALL. WITHOUT THERE BEING SOMETHING TO DRAW PEOPLE TOGETHER, TO GATHER AROUND AND REFLECT UPON, IT'S FAR TOO EASY TO BE ANTAGONISTIC, LOSE EMPATHY AND BE LIMITED IN OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE WAYS ONE CAN BE HUMAN. YOU KNOW WHAT IT IS – IT'S WĀNAKA. IT'S SITTING AND REFLECTING TOGETHER, AND THAT'S WHAT MAKES IT VALUABLE."

NICK TIPA

Among the 21 poets, writers, researchers, playwrights and musicians selected to take part in the wānaka at Puketeraki Marae, more than half were whakapapa Māori, and six identified as Kāi Tahu.

Supporting the next generation of Kāi Tahu writers is important to Nick.

"When we nurture the talent of our writers we are nurturing our people as a whole and the proliferation of our tikaka and reo as well. It's through writing that our stories get told; our history, our kōrero, our pūrākau, our atua, and all of those other things that are important to us as Tahu and tākata Māori katoa."

Boosted by a recent writers' residency at the Robert Lord Cottage in Ōtepoti, Nick has already started developing ideas for his next projects.

"I have a few new play ideas I think are going to be good stepping stones on the path to working up a larger piece. I don't know if it will come together, but I'll do my best. It will be in large part in te reo Māori and an exercise to get out of my own way and let that creativity flow.

"I'm not trying to be matatau, just being where I'm at and trying to tell a story that has relevance to whānau out there, especially whānau Kāi Tahu."

Despite putting his formal reo Māori studies through Te Wānanga o Aotearoa on hold, Nick has found opportunities to flex his reo skills, recently touring with Taki Rua Productions, bringing a stage adaptation of Patricia Grace's story *Te Kuia me te Pūngāwerewere* to audiences in Te Waipounamu. The play is entirely in te reo Māori.

Long-term, Nick is excited to be part of the ongoing movement to strengthen and normalise the use of te reo Māori.

"There's some reo strategy happening at Moeraki, and I'm stoked we might get to see some kura reo set up or online. I'm feeling a real passion about learning with the hapū and learning from the whānau. It hits different when you're at the marae and learning. Hopefully, next year will be the year."

Above: Students from Te Kura o Hato Opani in Ōtautahi take a group photo with Nick and the cast of Taki Rua Productions following a te reo Māori performance of Patricia Grace's, *Te Kuia me te Pūngāwerewere*; top: In character – Nick on stage at the Dunedin Fringe Festival for his solo-play *Babyface*, the story of a young boy and his wrestling alter-ego, Whiplash.

TIKAKA HOU, ORAKA HOU
Changing habits, changing lives

Whai Rawa is an investment scheme designed to help Kāi Tahu whānau achieve their life goals of tertiary education, home ownership, and having sufficient funds for retirement.

Whai Rawa's milestones are a testament to the positive impact on whānau lives.

Whai Rawa

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RESTORING THE MAURI OF RAKIURA

Nā **DEBORAH McPHERSON**

TO THE UNASSUMING TOURIST, RAKIURA MIGHT SEEM LIKE A HAVEN FOR native wildlife. Being greeted by kākā and tūī at your accommodation and seeing adverts to join kiwi-spotting tours can give first-time visitors the impression the island is an untouched paradise.

But first glances can be deceiving.

While the absence of stoats has allowed larger birds such as tokoeka/brown kiwi to persist, many species that once thrived on Rakiura disappeared decades ago as ecosystems that were once in balance failed to adjust to rats, cats and possums.

Some taoka such as the hakuwai/tutukiwi/Stewart Island snipe, South Island kōkako, pekapeka/greater short-tailed bat, and mātuhituhi/bush wren were lost forever.

Kākāpō were removed from Rakiura in the 1980s and 1990s and relocated to the safety of predator-free islands such as Whenua Hou. Other species have found refuge on neighbouring Ulva Island and the predator-free Tītī Islands.

But those that have managed to cling on are in peril of losing the battle for survival. Among these are the hoiho/yellow-eyed penguin and the pukunui/Southern New Zealand dotterel.

The trajectory of the pukunui population puts it on course for imminent extinction. With only 105 birds remaining and high vulnerability to predation by feral cats, the fate of this tiny manu is one of the many drivers for the Ngāi Tahu whānau working hard to make the dream of a Predator Free Rakiura a reality.

Tāne Davis, Estelle Pērā-Leask, Ulva Goodwillie and Stewart Bull are members of the Kāi Tahu leadership group advancing the Predator Free Rakiura kaupapa. In August they were invited to observe a significant milestone when the first phase of the predator control operation started on the island, targeting wild cats and rats living within range of the area where pukunui breed each year.

"It felt significant to be able to watch the work being carried out," Estelle says. "This is the result of a lot of work by a lot of people, much of it non-remunerated. While the future of the pukunui is still uncertain, this predator control operation gives these taoka a fighting chance."

Although important, the pukunui is only a small piece of the overarching vision, which is to restore the island so that kākāpō and other wildlife previously found there, like the tīeke, mohua and titipounamu, can return.

“PREDATOR FREE RAKIURA IS AN EXAMPLE OF CO-GOVERNANCE AND CO-MANAGEMENT IN EFFECT. WITHOUT THE NGĀI TAHU VOICE THROUGH THE ENGAGEMENT AND ADVISORY GROUP (EAG) AND THE LEVEL OF SUPPORT WE HAVE PROVIDED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION, THIS WOULD NEVER HAVE HAPPENED.”

ESTELLE PĒRĀ-LEASK Predator Free Rakiura

“It has been a long-awaited dream to bring back the mauri of the motu,” Tāne says. “We really want to share with Kāi Tahu whānau how excited we are and how much we have wanted this for such a long time.”

Ngāi Tahu representatives from the four Papatipu Rūnaka ki Murihiku – Awarua, Hokonui, Waihōpai and Ōraka-Aparima – have been instrumental in progressing Predator Free Rakiura.

“Predator Free Rakiura is an example of co-governance and co-management in effect,” Estelle says. “Without the Kāi Tahu voice through the Engagement and Advisory Group (EAG) and the level of support we have provided to the Department of Conservation, this would never have happened.”

The EAG is an advisory body that acts as a connector between the project and governance teams and the community. Tāne Davis represents the Rakiura Tītī Islands Administering Body on the EAG; Stewart Bull represents the Rakiura Titi Committee; and Gail Thompson is the representative for Awarua and the other Papatipu Rūnaka ki Murihiku. Together they work with Predator Free Rakiura community representative Ulva Goodwillie and Rakiura Māori Land Trust representative Riki Everest.

In her capacity as a trustee of Te Puka Rakiura Trust, Estelle is a member of the Ngāi Tahu Leadership Group, which also includes the five EAG members and Te Puka Rakiura Trust Co-Chair Dean Whaanga.

Above: A helicopter distributing bait as part of the operation to save the pukunui; Tāne Davis, Stewart Bull and Estelle Pērā-Leask. PHOTOGRAPHS: SUPPLIED

Al Bramley, Tumuaki/Chief Executive of Zero Invasive Predators, the organisation involved in delivering the Predator Free Rakiura project, says working in partnership with mana whenua is something ZIP strives for in its work.

"The support of Papatipu Rūnaka ki Murihiku and their role as kaitiaki to restore the mauri of Rakiura have been the driving force that has enabled this important kaupapa to go from an idea to action."

Darius Fagan, General Manager – Predator Free Rakiura for Zero Invasive Predators, says the Kāi Tahu whānau involved in the project have been generous in sharing their mātauranga to highlight why this work is so important.

"It presents an opportunity to rectify losses of the past and restore the mauri of Rakiura.

"Our work has had unwavering support from Kāi Tahu, especially when it has been difficult and the passion of the people is a huge motivator for us all."

Key milestones for the project include the signing of the Predator Free Rakiura Memorandum of Understanding in 2019 by then Conservation Minister Eugenie Sage, local council representatives and Ngāi Tahu representatives, including Tā Tipene O'Regan.

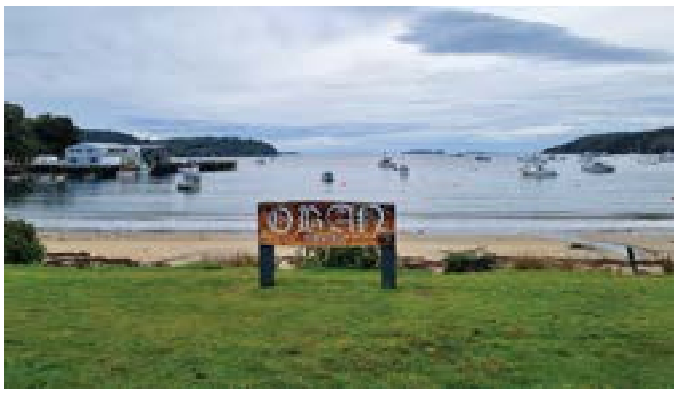
In June 2023, strategy and research consultancy Kauati finalised the Ngāi Tahu Expectations and Aspirations Action Plan for Predator Free Rakiura, which serves as the foundation for mahi on the project, centred around the concepts of rangatiratanga and kaitiakitanga.

The success of iwi and whānau-led eradications of predators on the small islands surrounding Rakiura, including many of the 36 Tītī Islands, Rarotoka, Whenua Hou and Ulva Island, has enabled tītī and other seabird populations to thrive.

The abundance of birds contrasts sharply with larger islands where birdsong in Rakiura National Park has become notable by its absence, as have the formerly large flocks of seabirds that used to congregate outside Oban.

Murihiku kaumātua Michael Skerrett has seen the impact the arrival and removal of predators can have on island ecosystems.

Above: At Te Rau Aroha Marae, from left: Dean Whaanga, Ulva Goodwillie, Estelle Pērā-Leask, Stewart Bull, Michael Skerrett, Riki Everest, Gail Thompson, Tāne Davis, Gary Neave.
Below: Oban, Rakiura.
Right: Tieke. PHOTOGRAPH: DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION



"IT IS CRITICALLY IMPORTANT THAT WE DO THIS – THE OFFSHORE ISLANDS SURROUNDING RAKIURA CANNOT SAFELY REMAIN PREDATOR FREE UNTIL RAKIURA IS PREDATOR FREE."

MICHAEL SKERRETT
Murihiku kaumātua

"I have been going to Taukihepa/Big South Cape Island for 71 years," Michael says. "Before the invasion of rats, the noise of birds on the island was incredible. In 1964, the rats invaded and the next year there was silence.

"After the rats were finally eradicated 40 years later, not only did the birds flourish again but geckos, weta and seedlings also re-appeared. While none of us like toxins, 1080 is the best tool we have currently to hold the ground for our threatened species.

"It is critically important that we do this – the offshore islands surrounding Rakiura cannot safely remain predator free until Rakiura is predator free."

Estelle has also seen a glimpse of what Rakiura could be again through her involvement with the Motupōhue Hill Environment Trust. In 2008, the Trust embarked on an ambitious restoration project to bring birdsong back to the area through trapping, weed control and habitat restoration.

During the years since the project began Estelle says she has seen bird numbers explode.

"You see flocks of kererū in huge numbers on Bluff Hill now that you never saw before, and I was born and raised on Bluff Hill, so I know how silent it was. The understory and sub canopy in our forest is so lush that you cannot see five metres into it, whereas on Rakiura you can see a hundred metres into it."

In February, Estelle spoke at an event hosted by Te Rūnaka o Awarua at Te Rau Aroha Marae in Bluff, launching the entry of Rakiura, Maukahuka and the Chatham Islands into the Island-Ocean Connection Challenge (IOCC). The IOCC is a volunteer collective of non-governmental organisations, governments, funders, scientists, individuals and island communities dedicated to restoring and rewilding 40 globally significant island-ocean ecosystems by 2030.

While there is much support within the local community on Rakiura for the project's goal of removing possums, feral cats, rats and hedgehogs from the island, the use of toxins such as 1080 is opposed by some despite scientific evidence the poison is biodegradable, breaks down quickly and is rapidly diluted to undetectable levels in water.

"There has been Kāi Tahu representation right throughout this project and Tāne has been present at every consultation held with the local community on the island," Estelle says. "We carry the responsibility to do this work with our tīpuna on our shoulders and for our mokopuna."

CONNECTING THROUGH WORDS

Listen closely to Robert Sullivan's poetry and you'll hear more than his voice – you'll hear the language of his tūpuna breathing through the lines. The Tāmaki Makaurau-born and raised, newly crowned New Zealand Poet Laureate 2025, has been on a journey of self-discovery. Kaituhi **JODY O'CALLAHAN** reports.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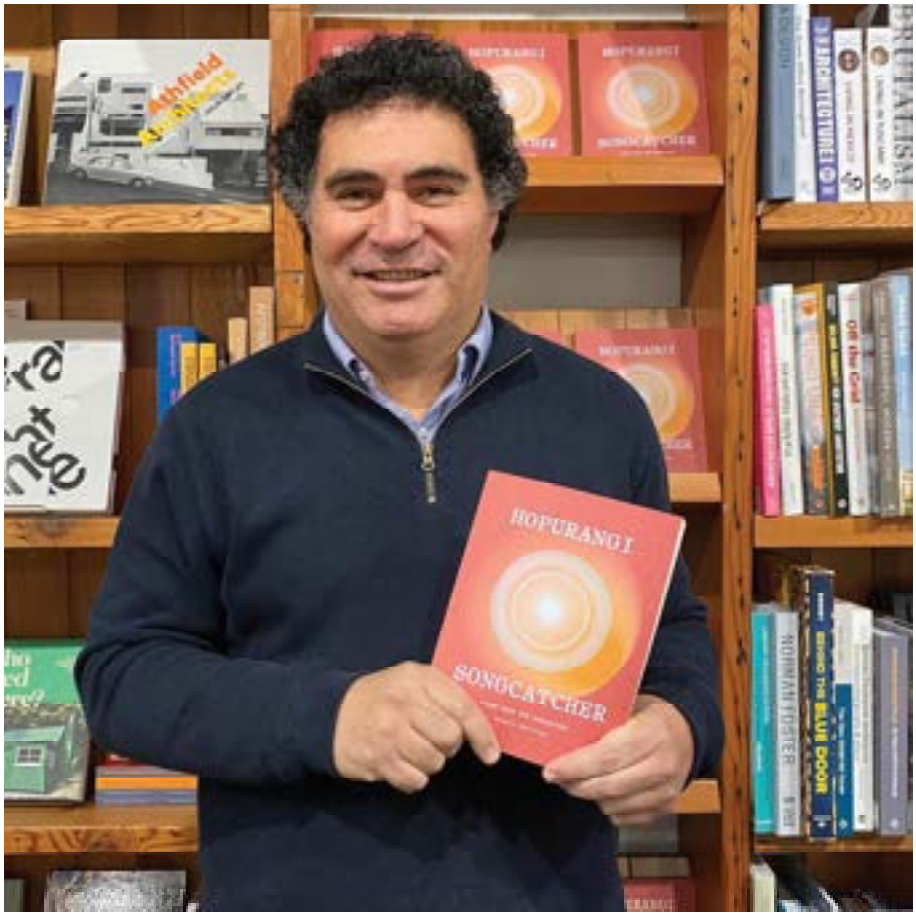

SWAPPING THE HUSTLE OF THE BIG SMOKE WITH A SOUTHERN TOWN

famous for the shuffle of penguins, Sullivan says connecting with the Ōamaru whenua of his Nana and father Bob "does feed the soul".

"It's been quite a moving journey for me personally. I'm the first in the whānau to have gone back."

He has been embraced by his Kāti Huirapa people and hopes to help his wider whānau connect too, through his books. This reconnection comes to the fore in his latest bestselling book of poetry, *Hopurangi - Song Catcher*, which adds to his considerable collection, including nine published poetry books.

His favourite piece in that collection is one dedicated to his father – *Te Awa e Rere nei* – at Puketeraki Marae, where Robert now spends time bonding with his whanauka.

"It was healing at Karitane," he writes.

Robert also has Ngāpuhi Nui Tonu whakapapa, affiliations to Ngāti Raukawa, and Ngāi Tai, and is of Irish, Scottish and English descent. While deeply connecting with his Kāi Tahu roots in the South Otago coastal town, he is learning waiata and local mōteatea.

He loves the beautiful Hauteruruku ki Puketeraki Waka Club and has even tried his hand at a different form of art there, helping to sand the exhibited, double-hulled coastal voyaging waka tuarua, *Kuramātakitaki*.

It was as a young boy growing up in Auckland that Robert recalls his Onehunga Primary School teacher telling them to lie on the grass, look at the sky, and write about the clouds. His classmates wrote about candy floss and other fluffy items ... he composed a chronicle about an alligator. It was then he first started seeing the beauty in writing.

Then, aged about 20, he attended his first writers' festival in Mt Eden in Tāmaki Makaurau. He was asked who he writes for. His response was: "I write for posterity."

"I think a poet is a kind of witness for the times. A poem is a message in a bottle, and it's a bottle that travels through time and space."

When things get oppressive in a society it's often poets who flourish – despite also facing persecution – even gaining Nobel Prizes under severe regimes.

"It is my job to record what I see and feel."

"To hear the beautiful words and learn the moves that speak of our places of home, Hikaroroa, Pahatea, Ka Iwi a Weka", he writes.

"I've always known I was Kāi Tahu because of Nana. But I didn't know she was fluent in Māori until she got dementia and started speaking it fluently to me. It was moving to hear that voice I hadn't heard before."

After 40 years of learning te reo Māori himself, almost as long as he has been writing poetry, it still "ain't easy" and he admits his writing may be full of hapa. But these days he is less whakamā about that (it's OK in the modern times) whereas it felt less so in the past. While his reo Māori confidence ebbs and flows, there is a soulfulness in the kupu that has always given them a home in his poetry.

Many people question why he uses Māori in his English poetry – "I can't understand what he is saying!"

"But for me it's a transmission of knowledge and it's an acknowledgment of our tūpuna. To use te reo Māori even in an English context has a resonance. We all have mauri and hard hau. It's those energies that the language carries."

MANY PEOPLE QUESTION WHY HE USES MĀORI IN HIS ENGLISH POETRY – "I CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT HE IS SAYING!"

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ROBERT SULLIVAN

"It's OK to make mistakes and smile about them with others who are your relations and just carry on carrying the airs and graces of our whānau nui", he writes.

While in India attending an indigenous writers' conference, Robert was told by Adivasi attendees they didn't want to hear his English poems, they wanted to hear his haka. "They wanted to connect on the soulfulness plane. They understand what indigenous people understand everywhere."

There are similarities in their stories, both unfortunately with a lot of shared mamae. But he's glad he lives in Aotearoa with a founding document, Te Tiriti, which most indigenous people don't have.

Decolonisation is a common theme of his work, and he finds it strange that not everyone sees "decolonisation is cool." After all, colonisation is essentially one group of people thinking they are better than another group, and "they try to run the show and not as equals."

To decolonise, both groups need to see the humanity in each other, he believes.

Former colleague, the late kaumātua Kukupa Tirikatene, used to describe Te Tiriti o Waitangi as a wonderful feast, and he thought a lot about his whakaaro.

"We all bring our different, favourite dishes to the table. That's what Te Tiriti enables us to do, to sit around a table and enjoy a wonderful meal together … instead of a family feud on Christmas Day."

He has no easy answers to what feels like unequal times and a not so harmonious meal, but his mahi is just to bear witness to the times.

"I've eaten shellfish and muttonbirds in the weekend (at Hone Tuwhare's) and my fill of happiness at Puketeraki. This kai is kōrero, from our whenua too", he writes.

On announcing his Poet Laureate Award, National Library of New Zealand Acting National Librarian Gina Smith commended Robert for his distinctive and important voice as a poet in Aotearoa. He amplifies Māori and Pacific voices in complex cultural narratives.

"He has great standing as a poet, teacher and scholar, he holds considerable māna and leads with grace and humility," she says.

The position's tenure is for three years, during which the laureate is supported to create new work and is expected to advocate for New Zealand poetry and inspire current and future readers. Robert aims to spend that time staying close to marae – either at Puketeraki or at that of his mother's Ngāpuhi people, Kāretu in the Bay of Islands – and run wānaka there with an emphasis on being regional.

He has a writing space at The Crucible Gallery in the old iron foundry in the historic precinct of Ōamaru, "which offers a beautiful simile, where poetry is like a machine."

He plans to hold regular sessions inviting the public to bring their poems, because poetry is for everyone.

"It's not an elite art form. We are all poets."

The following poem, Robert says, most reflects his reconnection with his Puketeraki whānau, dedicated to his dad, Bob:

MUTUWHENUA: TE AWA E RERE NEI

This evening, we practised our waiata-ā-ringa with their composer,
Waiariki, at Puketeraki Marae. It was healing at Karitane
to hear the beautiful words and learn the moves that speak
of our places of home, Hikaroroa, Pahatea, Ka Iwi a Weka. It's OK
to make mistakes and smile about them with others
who are your relations, and just carry on carrying the airs
and graces of our whānau nui. Kāi Tahu, Kāti Māmoe, Waitaha,
Rapuwai, Kāti Huirapa. I've eaten shellfish
and muttonbirds
in the weekend (at Hone Tuwhare's) and my fill of happiness
at Puketeraki. This kai is kōrero, from our whenua too.

DECOLONISATION IS A COMMON THEME OF HIS WORK, AND HE FINDS IT STRANGE THAT NOT EVERYONE SEES "DECOLONISATION IS COOL." AFTER ALL, COLONISATION IS ESSENTIALLY ONE GROUP OF PEOPLE THINKING THEY ARE BETTER THAN ANOTHER GROUP, AND "THEY TRY TO RUN THE SHOW AND NOT AS EQUALS."

TO DECOLONISE, BOTH GROUPS NEED TO SEE THE HUMANITY IN EACH OTHER, HE BELIEVES.

WHĀIA TE ARA O TE KAREAO

TAOKA FROM THE NGĀI TAHU ARCHIVE

Kareao is the official website of the Ngāi Tahu Archive. Named after the ubiquitous supplejack, *Kareao* is an apt metaphor for the website which leads from one point to another, linking, connecting, and ultimately taking explorers in directions of discovery. *Whāia te ara o te Kareao* is a regular *TE KARAKA* feature sharing important and interesting stories from the Ngāi Tahu Archive with our readers, which they can explore further on *Kareao*.

The Kāi Tahu Deeds of Purchase

Between 1844 and 1864, most of Te Waipounamu – 34.5 million acres – was 'sold' to the Crown in exchange for what Kāi Tahu rakatira later described as the "crumbs that fell from the white man's table."

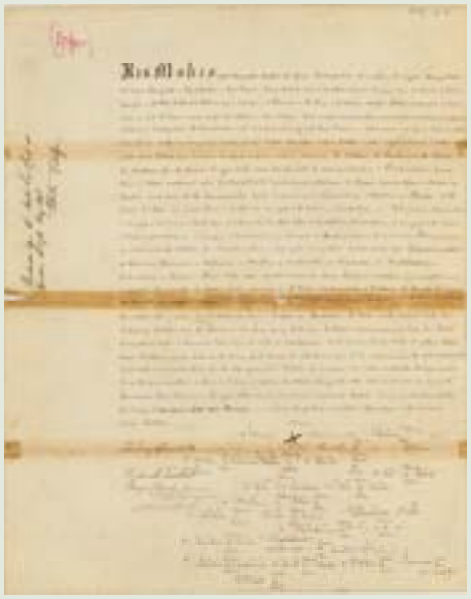
In negotiating these 10 large-scale land purchases, Crown officials offered Kāi Tahu miserly sums in payment, applied time pressure, described land boundaries with ambiguity, and threatened to purchase territory from other iwi who were not the rightful owners.

Kāi Tahu understood that in addition to the small sums of money they received in payment, significant reserves would be set aside, they would have ongoing access to their mahika kai, schools and hospitals would be built, and at least a tenth of some purchase areas would be reserved.

However, the Crown defaulted on the terms of these transactions. Tiny reserves amounting to only one-thousandth of the tribe's original land holdings were granted, and Kāi Tahu were denied access to their customary food resources. From the 1850s, colonists quickly outnumbered Kāi Tahu on their traditional lands, and by the close of the nineteenth century, 90 percent of tribal members were considered landless.

The Ngāi Tahu Archive holds digital copies of the historic Kāi Tahu deeds, now accessible on *Kareao*. Photographs of the deeds and accompanying documents were first compiled by historian Harry Evison for his landmark book *The Ngāi Tahu Deeds: A Window on New Zealand History* (2006).

Evison gifted his film transparencies and digital scans to the Ngāi Tahu Archive, and they have recently been refreshed with high-definition scans from Archives New Zealand Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga.



OTAGO DEED

Signed on 31 July 1844, the Otago Deed was the earliest of the official Kāi Tahu land purchase agreements. It transferred land to the New Zealand Company for the planned Scottish settlement of New Edinburgh, later known as Otago.

Unlike many later purchases, the boundaries were carefully defined by leading chiefs Karetai, Taiaroa and Tūhawaiki, who marked them with prominent landmarks and reserved sites at Otago Heads, Maitāpapa and Te Karoro. Kgāi Tahu understood that a further one-tenth of the land sold within the New Edinburgh block would also be reserved for the iwi. This was never done.

OTAGO DEED 1844
533,000 acres purchased for £2,400
(Equivalent to $364,586 or 68 cents per acre today)

Image (above): R12153214, Archives New Zealand

KEMP'S DEED

The Canterbury Deed, also known as the 'Ngaitahu Deed', and commonly referred to as Kemp's Deed, was signed by a group of Kāi Tahu chiefs on board the war ship HMS *Fly* in Akaroa Harbour on 12 June 1848. It was the largest of all the Crown purchases from Kāi Tahu and the least carefully transacted. The failure of the Crown to fulfil its contractual obligations under Kemp's Deed had such widespread and devastating consequences for Kāi Tahu that for most of the twentieth century (1909–66) it was the sole focus of Te Kerēme (the Kāi Tahu Claim).

CANTERBURY (KEMP'S) DEED 1848
13.5 million acres purchased for £2,000
(Equivalent to $303,822 or 2 cents per acre today)

Image (below): R12153209, Archives New Zealand

PORT COOPER DEED

The Port Cooper Deed was signed on 10 August 1849 by Kāi Tahu chief Tiemi Nohomutu and 17 others at 'Ōketeupoko', later known as Ōhinehou (now Lyttelton) in Whakaraupō Lyttelton Harbour. Crown Commissioner Walter Mantell had been instructed to secure the harbour for the new Canterbury settlement. When Nohomutu insisted it would cost £2 million and include large reserves, Mantell rejected the offer and threatened that Kāi Tahu would lose all claim to reserves if they refused to sign. After bitter negotiations and fearing they would receive nothing, the chiefs relented. In 1991, the Waitangi Tribunal upheld that the Port Cooper Deed represented a forced sale.

PORT COOPER DEED 1849
65,000 acres purchased for £200
(Equivalent to $30,382 or 47 cents per acre today)

Image (below): R23505338, Archives New Zealand

PORT LEVY DEED

Signed at Koukourarata Port Levy on 25 September 1849, the Port Levy Deed transferred 40,000 hectares, two-fifths of Te Pātaka-o-Rākaihautū Banks Peninsula to the Crown. After six weeks of wrangling and deception by the Crown's commissioner Walter Mantell, he secured the signatures of Apera Pukenui, twenty of his supporters and five 'proxies'. Though Pukenui sought £1,000 and ample reserves, Mantell offered only £300 and one reserve. Twenty years later Mantell admitted to the Native Land Court: "I am not prepared to swear that any single step taken by me or by the Government with respect to these Natives was fair."

PORT LEVY DEED 1849
98,000 acres purchased for £300
(Equivalent to $45,573 or 47 cents per acre today)

Image (above): R12153210, Archives New Zealand

MURIHIKU DEED 1853
7 million acres purchased for £2,600
(Equivalent to $394,968 or 6 cents per acre today)

Image (below): R12153213, Archives New Zealand

MURIHIKU DEED

The Murihiku purchase unfolded over three years, from 1851 to 1854. In 1852, before any agreement had been reached with Kāi Tahu, Crown surveyor Charles Kettle was sent south to mark out reserves. The deed was eventually signed at Ōtepoti Dunedin on 17 August 1853, although many signatories were from Otago rather than Murihiku, casting doubt on its validity. Despite Kāi Tahu protests over inadequate reserves, Mantell ignored requests for more. Promised schools and hospitals were never delivered, and Kāi Tahu have always maintained that Te Rua-o-te-Moko Fiordland was not included in the Murihiku Purchase.

AKAROA DEED

The Akaroa Deed, signed on 10 December 1856, extinguished Kāi Tahu title to Te Pātaka-o-Rākaihautū Banks Peninsula. Vague and lacking a deed plan, it failed to describe the extent of the land to be sold. Kāi Tahu witnesses testified to the Smith-Nairn Commission in 1879 that they were threatened – told the payment would be given to Murihiku people if they refused. The scanty reserves that were allocated proved inadequate, and most peninsula Kāi Tahu were ultimately driven off their land.

AKAROA DEED 1856
82,000 acres purchased for £150
(Equivalent to $22,786 or 30 cents per acre today)

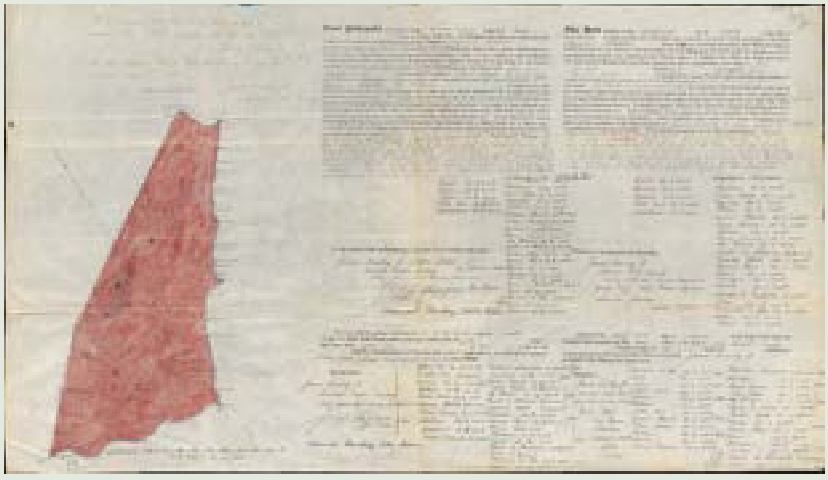
Image (above): R23505337, Archives New Zealand

NORTH CANTERBURY DEED

For years the Crown refused to consider the Kāi Tahu claim north of Kaiapoi up to Te Parinui-o-Whiti, having accepted the claim of Ngāti Toa in the Wairau Purchase of 1847. Kāi Tahu never relinquished their claim and the North Canterbury Deed, also known as the 'Kaiapoi Deed,' was signed at Tuahiwi on 5 February 1857. By then all the best land had already been sold or leased by the Canterbury Association or the Crown, although Kāi Tahu had never received payment. Despite Kāi Tahu requesting reserves that would support their participation in pastoral farming, no provision was made for Kāi Tahu to retain any of its land.

NORTH CANTERBURY DEED 1857
2.1 million acres purchased for £500
(Equivalent to $75,955 or 4 cents per acre today)

Image (right): R12153211, Archives New Zealand



KAIKŌURA DEED

The Kaikōura Deed was signed on 29 March 1859 by 25 Kāi Tahu chiefs led by Kaikōura Whakatau. Like in North Canterbury, the Crown considered it had already purchased the land from Ngāti Toa and had subsequently leased most of it to settlers, thus reducing the leverage Kāi Tahu had to negotiate terms. When negotiations finally occurred, the claims of Kaikōura Whakatau were dismissed. Kāi Tahu was forced to sell 2,817,000 acres for a token sum of £300. Although coastal reserves of 5,558 acres provided valuable access to mahika kai, Crown agent James Mackay Jr described them as being of the "most useless and worthless description."

ARAHURA DEED

The Arahura Deed was signed at Māwhera on 21 May 1860 by leading Poutini Kāi Tahu including two wāhine, Pūrua and Meri Te Aowhāngai, surrendering nearly three million hectares to the Crown in return for £300 and 10,224 acres in reserves. Mackay Jr had been instructed to secure the land as cheaply as possible, especially after gold was discovered on the West Coast. Despite initial resistance, Kāi Tahu were pressured into accepting the offer. The Kāi Tahu vendors retained the Arahura River and limited reserves. The deed was almost lost the next day when Mackay's waka capsized on the Māwhera River.

KAIKŌURA DEED 1859
2.47 million acres purchased for £300
(Equivalent to $45,573 or 2 cents per acre today)

Image (top): R12153304, Archives New Zealand

ARAHURA DEED 1860
7.4 million acres purchased for £300
(Equivalent to $45,573 or 1 cent per acre today)

Image (above): R12153539, Archives New Zealand

RAKIURA DEED 1864
420,000 acres purchased for £6,000
(Equivalent to $911,466 or $2.20 per acre today)

Image (left): 2014-104, Harry Evison Collection, Ngāi Tahu Archive

RAKIURA DEED

The Rakiura Stewart Island Purchase was the last of the major land purchases from Kāi Tahu by the Crown. The Rakiura Deed was signed by 34 Kāi Tahu and Kāti Māmoe representatives at Awarua Bluff on 29 June 1864. It conveyed Rakiura to the Queen along with "all the large islands and all the small islands adjacent." Nine reserves amounting to about 935 acres were set aside on the island, plus an unspecified amount at "The Neck" for those of 'mixed descent.' The Crown also agreed to protect and preserve the rights of Rakiura Māori to access the nearby islands used for harvesting tītī.

EXPLORE THE DEEDS FURTHER ON KAREAO

www.kareao.nz

These important records feature in *Kā Whakatauraki: The Promises*, a new exhibition at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū (15 November 2025 – 7 March 2027). For the first time since the mid-1800s, the 10 original land purchase agreements and accompanying documents are on public display, illuminating the promises made and the injustices wrought upon Kāi Tahu during a critical and formative period in New Zealand history.

Kā Whakatauraki: The Promises
Dates: 15 November 2025 – 7 March 2027
Venue: Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū

This large-scale topographic map of Te Waipounamu (right) annotated with the boundaries of the Kāi Tahu land purchases hung on the wall as a visual aid and backdrop to the Kāi Tahu Waitangi Tribunal hearings held at various locations throughout Te Waipounamu between 1987 and 1991.

NT9-S61, Ngaitahu Maori Trust Board Collection, Ngāi Tahu Archive

Photographs and words **nā PHIL TUMATAROA**

Te Ao o te Māori

A WINDOW INTO THE RICH LIFESTYLES OF CONTEMPORARY MĀORI

If you're lucky enough to spend any time at Ōnuku it's highly likely you'll bump into Bruce Rhodes ... for the past 79 years the small Kāi Tahu kāik at the end of the road has been his home.

Bruce has lived in the whānau homestead across the road from the marae all his life. It's where he was raised by his parents, Hilda and Ron, where he shared 50 years of marriage with his wife, Polly, and where his mother was raised by Bruce's great-grandmother, Amiria Puhirere Hokianga.

His daughter, Hilda, lives a few metres away in the former native school house just on the other side of the narrow dirt driveway wedged between the homestead and the diminutive Ōnuku Church. On the opposite side of the property lives his son Ron; Hilda's two teenage children have their own space to the rear of the main house.

"I've been here from day one. I was born out here in Akaroa and I haven't gone very far," admits Bruce.

There was a stint working up north in his younger days placing concrete for a power company, but it wasn't for long – the urge to be at home on his whenua was never far from his thoughts.

Bruce's working life was mostly spent as a builder: 57 years working on Banks Peninsula for the various district councils and Fulton Hogan, much of that time building and maintaining the network of road bridges. Today he still works most days; his official role at the marae is caretaker, but that humble title belies a lifetime dedicated to the care and protection of a place and people who call Ōnuku home.

"In the 60s we started thinking about building a marae. The old people talked about it, about having a place to hold tangi. Back then they were always held in houses," he says.

Whānau fundraised to buy seven acres to acquire the flat land where the marae sits today – the balance is steep and bush-clad on the other side of the fast-flowing creek. At first a hall was built utilising a structure intended for a shearing shed.

"It was enough to get us going, and although there was a lot wrong with it, it lasted for years until we could start on the marae we have today."

As Bruce reflects on the changes, he marks the incremental improvements by simple things such as having carpet on the floor, thick mattresses for manuhiri, and a reliable freshwater supply for the marae and the kāik.

"We've got a good team – we've always had a good team – that's what's important. They're working hard behind the scenes, it's what you want.

"You know, I've done my time. You need people to step forward and take these roles; we need 'em. The building does not function without the people – the home people keep the fires burning.

"When they come across that bridge there, we're all ready to go. The spuds are cooked, the bloody meat's cooked and the watercress is in the pot. We've got the pae all ready, so just keep coming, you don't have to do anything, all you have to do is bring your people on.

"That's the main thing: take leadership with your family and welcome them on to this place."

Winnie Catherine: Threads of Legacy

Nā **SASCHA WALL**

The streets of Pōneke hum with a unique sartorial rhythm – where vintage gems and op shops sit comfortably alongside emerging New Zealand designers as well as established labels with legacy.

Unlike other major cities in Aotearoa, which often lean into trend conformity, Pōneke fosters individuality. You're less likely to spot the same pair of gazelles or a stripy lioness T-shirt repeating their patterns along the high street.

Instead, you'll find a celebration of diverse silhouettes and personal expression woven into the city's fashion fabric.

A standout brand embracing individuality is the work of rakatahi Kāi Tahu designer Winifred (Winnie) Solomon, owner of the fashion label Winnie Catherine.

At just 24, Winnie is carving out space in the fashion world with quiet determination and a clear vision. She carries her values – sustainability, care, elevation and comfort – like notes tucked into her shirt pocket: always within reach, guiding her hand.

The brand's name is a thoughtful homage to her great-grandmothers – Winnifred and Catherine – a merging of kuia whose presence Winnie carries with her daily. Winnie recalls that neither had much, but they made do. They made things last. They made things beautiful. That wairua now lives in the seams and silhouettes of every piece she creates, offering inter-generational quality.

Winnie studied fashion design at Massey University, completing a four-year honours degree – a whole half of it during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. "It was a wild time to be learning something so hands-on," she laughs. "Especially when all you had was a laptop and no access to industrial machinery."

Alongside this already challenging environment, Winnie was born with profound hearing loss, receiving her diagnosis at two and relying on hearing aids ever since.

Right: Winnie Catherine's 25 Autumn/Winter Collection.
PHOTOGRAPH: MOLLY DOYLE

WINNIE SOLOMON'S DESIGNS RESONATE IN A CITY THAT PRIZES ORIGINALITY OVER UNIFORMITY. HER KĀKAHU OFFER SOMETHING RARE: GARMENTS THAT CARRY MEMORY, INTENTION AND MANA. PIECES THAT FEEL LIKE A QUIET CONVERSATION BETWEEN GENERATIONS, SPEAKING TO CONTEMPORARY WĀHINE.

Above: Winnie Solomon taking a bow after her Āhua Aotearoa debut.
Left: Winnie Solomon, and Vince Ropitini, Massey Graduate and Designer at NZFW.
Right: Winnie with her whānau, the Solomons, at the World Rugby U20 Championships, supporting brother, Stanley.
PHOTOGRAPHS: SUPPLIED

"During COVID face masks made lip-reading impossible – I was missing the visual cues I usually rely on," she says. "But I found ways around it. I'm a deeply observant person. That's definitely a strength."

Winnie runs the business solo, supported by her lovely intern. Her studio is her sanctuary, filled with fabric, quiet focus, and the pulse of creativity.

Winnie's haereka into te ao Māori didn't begin at birth but was sparked during her time at university by a curiosity that led her to explore kākahu and the stories woven into them.

When we spoke about her whakapapa, what stood out was her openness and honesty. Winnie was not trying to have it all figured out, but listened, asked questions, and leant into spaces that felt safe for connection and growth.

Winnie has whakapapa to Kāi Tahu, Kāti Māmoe, Waitaha and Kāti Ruahikihiki through her father's side, with ties to Ōtākou and descent from H.K. Taiaroa. It's a journey she's still on, and one that continues to shape her creative practice in quiet, meaningful ways.

"I want to create clothes that feel like armour," she says, "but also like home."

In August, Winnie stepped onto the runway as part of Āhua Aotearoa's group show at New Zealand Fashion Week – a milestone that marked her debut in the event's anticipated return. It was a milestone that marked her immersion into the scene as well as a continuation of something deeply rooted.

Winnie Solomon's designs resonate in a city that prizes originality over uniformity. Her kākahu offer something rare: garments that carry memory, intention and mana. Pieces that feel like a quiet conversation between generations, speaking to contemporary wāhine.

As Pōneke's fashion scene continues to evolve, Winnie's presence signals not just a new name to watch, but a deeper shift towards clothing that holds meaning, and towards makers who honour where they've come from as much as where they're going.

‘KUA MARARA HOKI NGĀ MANA O TŌNA KAHA KI RUNGA I TE KATOA’ HK TAIAROA

DUNEDIN PUBLIC ART GALLERY
4 August – 23 November 2025

REVIEW nā HANNAH WALLACE

Celebrating the life and legacy of Kāi Tahu rakatira “H.K. (Hōri Kerei) Tairaoa through kōrero, taoka tuku iho and contemporary art, *Kua marara hoki ngā mana o tōna kaha ki runga i te katoa* is a recent exhibition at Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Opened on 4 August to coincide with the 120th anniversary of his passing, the exhibition offered a space to learn and reflect on his life’s work and how this endures for the benefit of future generations. The exhibition’s title *Kua marara hoki ngā mana o tōna kaha ki runga i te katoa* is a quote from H.K.’s personal writing which can be translated as ‘His authority and strength is dispersed to all’.

A sense of being uplifted was immediately apparent on entering the exhibition with birdsong from Orokonui Ecosanctuary on the mauka Mihiwaka and the call of pūtātara calling visitors in. A pōhatu mauri sits at the entrance, presented by the Taiaroa whānau. It was brought down from Taumutu, where Hori Kerei once lived – out on the shores of Te Waihora.

As you round the first corner, you are greeted by a double-wall display of crashing waves at Taiaroa head. This was inspired by a diary entry written by H.K. Taiaroa in 1892. He wrote about observing the waves coming in as he reflected on his name.

If you take your time to stand by the dark gallery walls, listening to the waves and the karaka, you can picture how he must have felt out on Taiaroa Head, surrounded by the fierceness of the environment. A brilliant opportunity to immerse yourself in his world.

As you move through the exhibition, H.K. Taiaroa’s leadership as a member of the House of Representatives for Southern Māori, along with his relentless advocacy for Kāi Tahu, is brought to life.

You encounter archival materials, taoka tuku iho, and artworks by other Māori artists, contemporary and historical.

Each piece on display adds another layer to the story, showing how his influence has carried through time.

The exhibition traces the legacy of Hōri Kerei Taiaroa and the whakapapa that continues to uphold his mana today. It stands as a beautiful reminder of the lives of both H.K. and his wife Tini Kerei, and how they continue to impact Kāi Tahu whānui today.

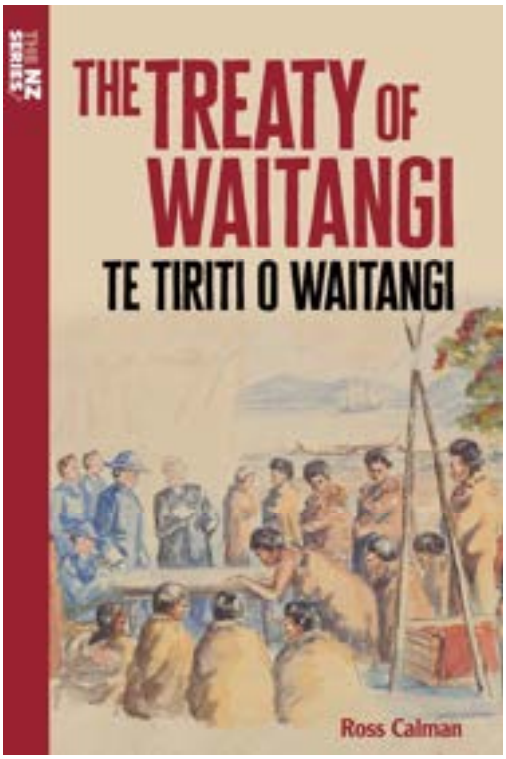
Presented in collaboration with descendants of H.K. Taiaroa through the Riki Te Mairaki Ellison Taiaroa Whānau Trust and Te Rūnaka o Ōtākou, the exhibition was well worth the time to visit. The exhibition closed on 23 November 2025.

Above: H.K. Taiaroa with his wife Tini Kerei Taiaroa and their grandchildren Tini Taiaroa Ellison and Ria Mohiko Wineera, c.1900. PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN, HOCKEN COLLECTIONS – UARE TAOKA O HĀKENA, P1951-004/1-021.

THE TREATY OF WAITANGI – TE TIRITI O WAITANGI

Nā ROSS CALMAN
PUBLISHER: ORATIA
RRP $29.99

REVIEW nā HINEĀTEA ALEXANDER



The Treaty of Waitangi – Te Tiriti o Waitangi by Ross Calman is an engaging and effective resource on the document. It's an incredibly digestible book making it an easy and informative read which I enjoyed thoroughly.

The book is broken up into several sections each outlining the timeline from the early events that led up to Te Tiriti, all the way to today and the key events in that timeline. It begins with outlining the events leading up to the creation and signing of the Treaty including parts of the history often excluded, such as Māori literacy rates and how that came about.

Calman gives a brief but objective insight on the events at the Waitangi signing of the document before outlining its travels across Aotearoa for other signings, and includes a labelled map of the signing locations.

What I particularly liked about the book was that it includes the document's texts in te reo Māori, an English translation of the text in reo, and the original English in the document. I found this to be an effective way to show the differences in wording between the documents given to the Māori and Pākehā signatories.

Another part of the book that stood out to me was the short section about Te Tiriti in the 20th century. Even though Waitangi Day did not become an official holiday until 1973, by 1960 Waitangi Day had become a nation-wide celebration for Māori. Showing even through the suppression by the Pākehā government Māori didn't forget. Overall I really enjoyed reading this book and I'm sure many other young people or anyone else looking to learn more about Te Tiriti would enjoy it as well. It's informative and well researched and provides further reading on Te Tiriti.

Hannah Wallace (Kāi Tahu, Kāti Mamoe, Waitaha – Ngāti Wheke, Moeraki Rūnaka, Kāti Huirapa ki Puketeraki) is a writer who lives in Ōtepoti, Dunedin, currently working in Social Sciences at the University of Otago.

Hineātea Alexander (Kāi Tahu, Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Whitikaupeka, Pākehā) is a student at Rudolf Steiner in Ōtautahi and currently holds the position of the youth MP for Duncan Webb (Labour – Christchurch Central). She has a passion for ensuring that rakatahi have a voice in our communities and are active participants in all that matters to them about their futures.

HE TAKATA

PHOTOGRAPH: SUPPLIED

SUZANNE ELLISON

(Kāi Tahu, Kāti Mamoe me Waitaha, Kāi te Ruahikihiki me Kāti Huirapa ōku hapū. Ngāti Mutunga me Te Āti Awa etahi o ōku iwi)

Kō Suzanne tōku ikoa. I've been living the Kāi Tahu dream since the 80s (reminiscent of Cher, I mean the 1980s not the 1880s!), being part of settlement times and supporting the development of our iwi and hapū through to the present. I grew up in Karitāne and returned here around 25 years ago after working for the Ngāi Tahu Māori Trust Board (NTMTB) and later the Ngāi Tahu Development Corporation while based in Ōtautahi and Ōtepoti. In my first role for the NTMTB I was lucky enough to regularly travel the length and breadth of the tribal rohe, and further afield to meet our emergent papatipu rūnaka, getting to know iwi members and their challenges. I was privileged to spend time with our kaumātua and tribal leaders as well as the roving van loads of whānau travelling to hui and meetings all around the motu. These days you'll usually find me at the Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka ki Puketeraki office where I'm Rūnaka Manager. I'm lucky to have close to me, and often working alongside, my brother, nieces, nephews, cousins – it's a family affair, plus many other dedicated and talented hapū and hapori members. And, from time to time I escape to arts festivals and gigs to remind myself about life outside the iwi.

Above, left to right – Members of the Ellison whānau, Matapura & Maria, Melissa, Governor- General Dame Patsy Reddy, Suzanne, Aroha, Kathryn & Rani.

WHAT CONSTITUTES A GOOD DAY?

The best days are those hanging out with the whānau at holiday times. However, as most days are work days for me, a good day is when I am up early, been for a swim at the local pool, and ready for the challenges of the day, of which there are generally plenty.

ONE THING YOU COULD NOT LIVE WITHOUT?

Music – listening to it, having it running around in my head (which can be annoying), making music with mates.

WHO OR WHAT INSPIRES YOU AND WHY?

I was unexpectedly inspired by Herbie Hancock, who played alongside many of the jazz greats from the 50s and 60s. I went along thinking it would be good to hear one of the 'greats' before 'kua mate ia' and didn't have high expectations. Eighty-four-year-old Herbie at his Wellington concert was energised, still playing like a true pro, giving an excellent performance as someone who is still finding inspiration to keep taking jazz into the stratosphere. It was very cool.

HIGHLIGHT IN THE LAST YEAR AND WHY?

A 'moko-nui' made an unexpected arrival in our whānau and has reminded me of the joy we get from pēpi. We've lost whānau this year, so the arrival of our latest pēpi helps us look to the future and not dwell too much on who and what we've lost.

WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST EXTRAVAGANCE?

Can a family member be an extravagance? If so, the answer is Liam, my great-nephew! However, aside from whānau I love a nice piece of art and our Kāi Tahu artists create fabulous works that are hard to resist.

FAVOURITE WAY TO CHILL OUT? FAVOURITE PLACE?

Taku whare with the view across the Waikouaiti awa and bay over to Ōhineamio (Cornish Head).

DANCE OR WALLFLOWER?

Dance, though usually I'd be in the band at a dance.

WHAT FOOD COULD YOU NOT LIVE WITHOUT?

For day-to-day eating yummy, crunchy greens are great. However, kai awa and kai moana are bliss kai, with tuna having a special place, probably because of its scarcity.

WHAT MEAL DO YOU COOK THE MOST?

Most often they are quick meals, unless I've got organised at the weekend and prepared ahead.

GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT?

Still working up to that, haven't achieved a 'greatest' yet.

DO YOU HAVE AN ASPIRATION FOR KĀI TAHU TO ACHIEVE BY 2050?

Kāi Tahu rakatirataka is normalised and underpinned by economic power to transform our rohe back into a vibrant, healthy place for whānau and iwi as well as the wider community.


TE WAIPOUNAMU
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