NGĀ WHENUA RĀHUI

Our nature, our people, our future.

Twenty-five years of achievements by Ngā Whenua Rāhui.

Taio ora, Tangata ora

Healthy environment, healthy people

Whatungarongaro te tangata, toitū te whenua

People disappear, the land remains

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Jason Murray and Aroha Armstrong who are restoring the mana of Matakana Island that guards the entrance to Tauranga Harbour. *Photo: Herb Christophers*

Back cover:
The Te Hākari wetland which is being restored to ecological health. *Photo: Rob Suisted*

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Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Foreword for Ngā Whenua Rāhui from the Chair, and Paramount Chief of Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Sir Tumu te Heuheu

Photo: Brian Sheppard

Ko Tongariro te Maunga
Ko Taupō te Moana
Ko Tūwharetoa te Iwi
Ko te Heuheu te Tangata

Tongariro is my ancestral mountain – the fount of my spirituality

Taupō-nui-a-Tia is my sacred, ancestral waters – my connectivity with Ranginui and Papatūānuku and all the entities of their realms

Ngāti Tūwharetoa are the tangata whenua – the people of our precinct

I am te Heuheu.

What has Ngā Whenua Rāhui achieved over its 25 years?

I believe it has provided Māori landowners with a viable option for lands that have been considered as being unproductive for many years. In essence, it has provided the owners with an opportunity to enhance two values that are intrinsic to tikanga Māori.

The first is in the capacity to maintain mana whenua and rangatiratanga over their lands. The second opportunity relates to their capacity to apply the principles and implement their kaitiakitanga over their whenua and the taonga tuku iho relating to their whenua and water bodies.

Both of these values are possible through the kawenata (covenants). It is my experience that Māori landowners who firmly uphold these values have been the best placed in developing consequential benefit flows for their owners and the community.

So let us understand these two values and how they are supported by the kawenata under Ngā Whenua Rāhui. I need to emphasise the importance of exercising tino rangatiratanga and mana whenua over our lands to ensure the proper and effective exercise of our obligations as kaitiaki. Without sufficient authority, decision-making and control, we often experience a limited capacity only to exercise our role as kaitiaki over our taonga tuku iho (including the land). Ngā Whenua Rāhui does not provide a perfect solution but it is a leading initiative in this direction and I am committed to the kaupapa of improvement.

One of the primary reasons for the establishment of Ngā Whenua Rāhui in 1990 was to counter the alienation pressures that Māori land was facing. In many cases, it has removed the fear of the land being removed for the non-payment of rates and local authority zoning changes.

Under Ngā Whenua Rāhui, Māori landowners are provided with an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to uphold their kaitiaki obligations to their land and its related taonga. The kawenata supports this long held tikanga.

Importantly, it provides the platform for traditional and conventional scientific knowledge to interface and be applied to a landscape where the strengths of both sets of disciplines are able to be better understood. This platform will give New Zealand a collective strength from which a unique brand will eventually emerge.

The merging of these disciplines is only just starting to take place and a reflection on this is urgently required.

I believe such a focus will have significant implications for the future of Māori landowners, local communities and the scientific and research houses. This may help build a community of support around climate change policies that are meaningful for the long term and for the communities most affected by them. My view is that our current preoccupation with climate change policy provides only scant recognition to those who are making a positive and long term contribution to improved climate outcomes. Māori landowners, in particular, provide a disproportionate contribution to ecosystems services in New Zealand. I believe that progressing the interchange of knowledge of tikanga and modern science under Te Kawenata and similar initiatives will enable us to better understand and realise the full range of benefits that are possible.

Understanding and applying kaitiakitanga as a value creates new meaning to the concept of conservation.

In essence, kaitiakitanga is holistic and it embraces the natural, physical, cultural, spiritual and social realm in a web of relationships through an extended network which we refer to as whakapapa.

When we reflect on what Ngā Whenua Rāhui has achieved over the past 25 years, I believe it would be a mistake to measure such achievement only in terms of land that has been covenanted or even just to look at the outcome of conservation or the training programmes that have produced some impressive results.

I would rather we acknowledge the platform provided to establish a foundation for the key tikanga Māori. In addition, we need to acknowledge that this platform has provided an opportunity for the meeting of tikanga and scientific knowledge, a unique and extremely beneficial action for our future. ■

He Maumaharatanga Aroha

He maumaharatanga aroha ki enei rangatira kua taka atu ki tua o te arai. Na ratou i whakato te kakano, kia tupu ai, kia puawai ai, kia tutuki ai te kaupapa o Ngā Whenua Rāhui.

In loving memory of these leaders who have fallen beyond the divide (between life and death). They contributed to planting the seed to grow, to blossom and fulfil the Ngā Whenua Rāhui kaupapa.

Tom Parore (Ngāti Whātua/Ngāpuhi)
The inspiration for Ngā Whenua Rāhui and whose advice always was: "Whakapakari ki te hua o te kawariki"; "Go forth and never give in!"

Te Aue Davis (Ngāti Uekaha/Maniapoto)
Komiti Member

Eru Manuera (Te Aupōuri)
Komiti Member

Rangi Te Maiharoa (Waitaha)
Komiti Member

Ninja Sen Herewini (Ngāti Hine)
Ngā Whenua Rāhui Ranger

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"When you go to the gym you feel tired when you've finished, but when you go for a run in the forest you feel energised. There is something about the mauri, the smell of the forest, the smell of the fresh air, the sound of the birds, and the noise of the water running." Kevin Prime, Komiti Member.

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Nobody ever died of boredom listening to Mike Mohi, and his ability to think on his feet has been invaluable, as has been his ability to engender trust from a suspicious clientele!

Seeing the smile on the landowner's face 23

"The big thing for me is that we are working on Māori land already and building good relationships with Māori landowners," says Whakarae Henare of Ngā Whenua Rāhui.

A mayor of many parts 26

"Well it's a win-win combining farming and conservation. It's just a 'no-brainer'. The return of the birdlife in the wake of the revegetation has been huge, it's very significant." Alfred Preece, the Mayor of the Chatham Islands, farmer and conservationist.

She's a hard road building the perfect marae 30

"If the kaupapa is right then the vision will materialise," says Bill Rawiri, who has been a prime mover in the huge efforts over 25 years of building a pan-tribal urban marae in Newlands, Wellington.

A legacy of lost relationships 36

Dr Huhana Smith has been one of the awesome forces behind the attempts to rebuild wetlands on the Horowhenua coast, and facing up to the challenges of rebuilding a legacy of lost relationships.

A real riverbank regeneration project 42

What started out as an attempt to clean up the back end of the marae and plant a few trees has ended up as something much more significant on the banks of the Ngaruroro (Clive) River in Hawke's Bay.

Very suspicious of these fellas with chequebooks 46

Kaumātua Alex Reedy of Ruatoria has seen many "government fellas with cheque books" come and go over the years, so why should Ngā Whenua Rāhui be any different?

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An inspiring effort to regenerate significant areas, especially the wetlands, on Matakana Island, which stands guard on the western flanks of Tauranga Harbour and to do it by harnessing the knowledge of the old people.

A river rules his life 56

"You didn't need to be a rocket scientist to analyse the state of the water. You could see it and smell it; the effects of cattle grazing on the state of the rivers were very obvious." Millan Ruka on his outstanding efforts to control pollution on some significant Northland waterways.

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Blandy Witehira recalls a rather tumultuous day on the marae, trying to persuade his people of the benefits of a kawenata on Rawhiti/Cape Brett and being called all sorts of rude and nasty names while trying to do so!

A white cloak of respect 66

"The other thing with the NWR Fund is that there has to be consultation because we, the owners, are in control and you have got the say in what happens on your land and that is very important to us."Sonny George, Chair of Waikare Lands Trust in Northland.

New technology keeps overtaking itself 69

"Technology is the language of tomorrow. It's not just about working on the land anymore, it's about land management, land optimisation and being Māori land leaders," Roland Pomana of Ngā Whenua Rāhui.

Full of confidence about the future 72

Over the next 25 years there will emerge a shared vision with the landowners of what they want with their whenua and empowering the owners to take more responsibility for their lands, the stories associated with it and the pest and weed control measures needed for protection. Mavis Mullins, Komiti Member.

Fact file

PROTECTING THE NATURAL INTEGRITY OF MĀORI LAND AND PRESERVING MĀTAURANGA MĀORI.

- "Ngā Whenua Rāhui (NWR) exists to protect the natural integrity of Māori land and to preserve mātauranga Māori, so that the values, stories and history associated with our natural taonga are not lost to the world," says Sir Tumu te Heuheu, inaugural Chair of Ngā Whenua Rāhui.

- Ngā Whenua Rāhui Fund was formed in 1990. It was initially managed as part of the Forest Heritage Funds, but later had its own manager and has always had an independent Komiti which reports directly to the Minister of Conservation. The current members are Sir Tumu (Chair), Kevin Prime, Piri Prentice, Mavis Mullins, Paki Nikora and John Paki.

- The Fund provides protection for Māori landowners through the use of 25-year reviewable kawenata (covenants). In the late 1990s it was realised that legal agreements alone were not enough to save native species. It now provides significant support for the landowners, including pest control programmes, monitoring, and consequent operational support. Its Mātauranga Kura Taiao Fund (founded in 2002) seeks to preserve the customs, the history and stories associated with Māori land and tikanga.

- The NWR Fund has protected a significant segment of Māori land with around 234 agreements protecting 171,733 hectares (which represents 25% of Māori land with significant natural values). It has approved 238 mātauranga Māori projects.

- But it is not just a matter of hectares. "Success for me is that more iwi now understand and are aware about what is happening on their land, and are now making use of that knowledge. To me that is what success is. The ability of the shareholders to return to the land and know they are part of it. They value it; they believe in it and they say, 'That's us'," says Kevin Prime.

- "I have thought about it and it isn't about the number of hectares. If we were able to get everyone thinking about protecting the land, even if it wasn't covenanted, to me that is far more successful. Of course I can understand about the government saying it's about how many hectares have been protected but to me, it is the identity, of being part of the whenua, the moana, the restoration of the mauri of the forest," he says.

- There has been an increasing emphasis on the resuscitation of wetlands and providing nature with a much improved set of lungs. These are the most active restoration programmes, and involve clearing out the debris, the car wrecks and old tractors, and then having an active eco-sourced replanting and fencing programme.

- The cultural context is critical to how Māori interpret nature. "Fundamentally it's all about reconnecting our people with their lands," says Ngā Whenua Rāhui Manager, Trevor Lambert.

- "Our unique contribution is to use the best of Western science methods and marry them to the Māori view of the natural world. We work with landowners to clarify what the mauri of the land means to them, so they can tell their own stories relating to their cultural histories while still protecting the land with pest control operations," he says.

- The Fund has three elements: legal protection, operational management and monitoring, and administrative support. Staff report through the Kāh-ui Kaupapa Atawhai division of the Department of Conservation. The Fund has a permanent staff of nine, a number of temporary employees and an annual budget of $6 million.

- Increasing capability and growing leadership is important to the Fund. It has been a strong supporter of the Māori cadet scheme, Tauira Kaitiaki Taiao, and is continually upgrading its digital training for the biodiversity monitoring teams. The Fund places an increasing emphasis on the use of technology to benefit landowners, including the use of story maps that allow them to appreciate their whenua in an easily accessible digital form.

- There is a tendency by some to see land protected by kawenata as "unproductive". This is quite simply wrong because the conservation option of land use is a conscious choice by the Māori landowners, usually with spiritual and cultural harvesting benefits and with soil conservation contributions. The land itself, far from being "unproductive", will be teeming with life and hugely productive in terms of native trees, shrubs, birds and all manner of bugs, bees and beetles! Of course if the land happens to have mānuka growing on it, then honey extraction will add even more value to the balance sheet!

- For the next 25 years the Fund is committed to empowering landowners to manage their own whenua with support from NWR as a strategic advisor.

The graduates perform their haka at the Tauira Kaitiaki Taiao Conservation Cadetship graduation in November 2012 at Hopuhopu, Ngaruawahia. *Photo: Brian Sheppard*

How Ngā Whenua Rāhui *came to be*

A RATHER EXTRAORDINARY COMMITTEE WAS SET UP...

PHOTOGRAPHY | *Rob Suisted and Herb Christophers*

Tom Parore (Ngāti Whātua/Ngāpuhi)

"Really how it arose was from the people out at Waikare in Northland, they wanted to sell their lands and mill their bush to pay their rates. Tom Parore, who was the Director of Māori Affairs for Northland (who has since passed away), wasn't happy with that and was trying to look at creating a fund to help Māori pay their rates and keep their land," recalls Ngāti Hine's Kevin Prime.

So kaumātua Tom Parore was really the founding father of the fund and he brought a paper down to Wellington outlining his ideas. It became part of the then Labour Government's Indigenous Forest Policy, which was looking to protect the remnant areas of native bush on private land and allow only sustainable harvesting.

A rather extraordinary committee was set up to progress the idea in 1990. Former Māori Affairs Minister, Koro Wetere, was a strong supporter of the Komiti.

"There were no terms of reference, no criteria and nothing to point the way apart from the overall purpose of trying to protect the conservation values on Māori land. We were just told to figure out what we were there for and that was the start. There were Tumu and I, Di Lucas, John Ruru and Rangi Te Maiharoa and a blank sheet of paper," Kevin recalls.

"There was also a strong feeling that Māori cultural dimensions were ignored in existing covenants. It was really for the protection and preservation of indigenous biodiversity; the word wasn't biodiversity at the time, I think we used some of the Māori equivalents. We thought it was part of the land. There was that Māori concept that we are part of the land, of the river and the maunga, all things which are hard to put into the Pākehā construct.

"There wasn't an area that recognised the Māori component, things to do with the mauri of the forest which is so important to Māori. Everything centred on high ecological criteria. You can register a wāhi tapu but you can't see it and it's not part of the landscape. And the mountainous part of a landscape which is our identity, the place where the chief might have sat and composed a song – that becomes something that people remember.

"That is part of a landscape which Māori would remember but to Pākehā it is not really that important. Tauranga waka, the place where the canoes came in traditionally for years and years and then suddenly a storm happens and you had to shift elsewhere; all those memories for the Māori landscape weren't recognised in the covenants," says Kevin.

A series of hui were held to put the concept to Māori and there was a lot of suspicion that this was the last of the great Māori land grabs in disguise.

"There was a great deal of cynicism right at the start. In fact at the first hui we had at Tūwharetoa, Tumu's dad was still alive then and it wasn't them who were opposed but it was people from up home, who felt it was the last Māori land grab.

"I said in my opinion it wasn't a land grab but it was going to be hard to convince people even in Northland because the Māori Land Court judge up there wasn't keen on it.

"The only place it took well was on the East Coast because the Māori Land Court judge Ken Hingston understood it very quickly and maybe because I had a word in his ear at a hui some years before, and he was approving all these things," says Kevin.

PREVIOUS PAGE Northland kaumātua Tom Parore holding a toki pounamu, a greenstone adze. Tom Parore was really the founding father of the Ngā Whenua Rāhui Fund.

BELOW Regenerating native flax on the East Coast of the North Island. Flax is part of the staple diet for many of our nectar-loving native birds. *Photo: Herb Christophers*

OPPOSITE Wainupo Komene who works in Nairi's Nursery, Matauri Bay, a project that has been supported by Ngā Whenua Rāhui. *Photo: Rob Suisted*

"There was that Māori concept that we are part of the land, of the river and the maunga, all things which are hard to put into the Pākehā construct."

KEVIN PRIME

But despite the suspicions, the committee was formed under the guidance of Sir Tumu. It reported directly to the Minister of Conservation and Mike Mohi was hired as the executive officer, reporting through the DOC system to Allan McKenzie who was manager of the Forest Heritage Funds. It began operating in 1991 and offered consideration payments (mainly to those with larger blocks) to owners in return for protection of their land. There was provision for public access in the kawenata but it was to be in discussion with the landowners as to timing and the protection of sacred sites.

"Allan did a wonderful job managing the two funds. His geographic and statutory knowledge and his people contacts were phenomenal and he brought high levels of professionalism and empathy with the landowners so he was a very good support manager," says Kōmiti member Di Lucas, who made a major contribution over the ten years she was on the Fund.

"I recall it as a wonderful time. I had been elected by the Conservation Authority to be Chair of the Forest Heritage Funds and it was decided that John Ruru and I should be on both funds to ensure parity. I had a lot of involvement with the criteria and with working to overcome the suspicions of iwi and gain their confidence. I was also very keen to get professional free investment advice available to the landowners to help them with their considerations but the rest of the committee didn't support that," says Di.

"The only way to overcome the mistrust was to perform; to do the fencing, have the covenants and give cash considerations with no strings attached so long as you promise not to cut the trees down, and look after them together with us. It worked first on the East Coast and there were only a few in Northland," says Kevin.

"One was in Ngāti Hei forest, and that was only because I was there, but even then we had some of our own trustees who

RIGHT Millie Takimoana sharing a joke with fellow workmate Sue Vea at Nairi's Nursery. *Photo: Rob Suisted*

BELOW RIGHT Mānuka is regenerating rapidly all over the East Coast as its economic value for honey gains increasing recognition. *Photo: Herb Christophers*

served an injunction on the Board to try and prevent us taking the money. These are our trustees and they said, 'We are going to lose our forests' and that was misinformation, because I pointed them to the words where it is still in our name," says Kevin.

"I remember Nukutere in the Bay of Plenty area was one of our first covenants and I still remember those for the discussions, having the hui on the marae first and talking to the landowners and the trustees. Still that cynicism and people saying, 'What's the catch?' and 'How come you are giving us all of this money?' and working it through with them and saying get your lawyer to check it out; your name is still on the title.

"So the early challenges were just trying to convince the people of the value. Doing some of those early kawenata with the Minister, Denis Marshall, and it was often a situation where this bush which may have been in the family for hundreds of years and they have never done anything with it, and then suddenly somebody is giving them money and they can still own it and keep it," Kevin concludes. ■

Four big changes

There have been four big changes since the Ngā Whenua Rāhui Fund was formed, and a host of smaller ones!

More independence

In 1998 it was decided the time had come for Ngā Whenua Rāhui to be more independent within the DOC system and to have its own manager rather than being accountable through the Nature Heritage Fund. "Julie Black was appointed manager and she had a really good grasp of paperwork and the systems. Julie was effective at pushing things along a bit and delivered to the committee. She rocked the boat quite a bit and we started getting things signed off," says Kevin.

Active pest control protection

"We quickly realised that formal protection doesn't do a bloody thing to actually protect the land. Iwi started saying things like, 'Well the possums don't know it's protected land and they can't actually read the piece of paper which says it is!' It's easy to grasp that sort of concept and that's when we started allocating money for pest control in the mid-90s, a small amount at first and then up to $500,000 and because there were more forests in the Eastern Bay of Plenty/East Coast area, it made sense to have a centre there.

"Fortuitously we had someone like Denis Peters committed to it and we started doing the training. We hoped the trainees would go back to their own areas and start using that knowledge. The pest control has worked really well and we prioritised the work on a national basis to focus on the areas that were worst affected," says Kevin.

Mountains to the sea

The brief was extended out beyond the forest margins in Nick Smith's first term as Conservation Minister in the late 1990s. "At our original consultation hui the people were telling us that our land is not just the forests, it starts at the mountain tops and goes right down to the seas. So it aligned with what Minister Nick Smith was telling us, that we should be fitting in with all indigenous biodiversity and we didn't disagree with that," says Kevin.

It was very easy to shift the criteria to cover dunelands, wetlands and tussocklands. "We learned the lesson that Nick Smith was right and we were happy to accommodate that but it did have some impacts on the Fund and we soon realised that wetlands are costly to maintain, especially with restoration projects," he says.

Capturing the stories before they disappeared

The formation of the Mātauranga Kura Taio Fund, that supports initiatives to retain and promote traditional Māori knowledge and its use in biodiversity management, was a hugely significant development. "Initially what we put to Sandra Lee as Conservation Minister in 2000, was that a lot of the original knowledge was disappearing as the old people were dying out.

"People were saying that an old kaumātua was dying and once he died the knowledge was going with him and what was needed was a fund to gather that traditional knowledge before it was lost forever. The knowledge stays with the people who were doing it," says Kevin.

"The whole purpose was to retain it for them and that went down very well. We still see their reports so that we can still be accountable back to the government. Iwi are becoming more innovative about how they distribute that knowledge, using websites etc," says Kevin.

Ata Te Kanawa and the logo she created for Ngā Whenua Rāhui in 1990.
Photo: Herb Christophers

THE LOGO THAT HAS ENDURED

NGĀ WHENUA RĀHUI'S LOGO HAS CERTAINLY STOOD THE TEST OF TIME AND ITS CREATOR, ATA TE KANAWA, REMEMBERS THE LOGO WITH REAL AFFECTION.

It's rare that after 25 years a logo still looks really sharp, but the one created by Ata Te Kanawa does. So how did it come about?

"Well I had no formal training or anything like that.

"When I worked as the advertising sales manager on the *Waitomo News*, there were only three of us, a typographer, the editor and me. Unusually for that time, we were all Māori. So when it came to laying out the paper of an evening, we'd get some kai, put on the music and help out. Over time I learned how to use a scalpel and move copy around and just be a bit creative," recalls Ata.

"When I moved to the Hawke's Bay I met Mike Mohi who was doing Access schemes through the Labour Department and he was keen for me to be a tutor. One day he came to me; he now had the NWR job and he was really excited. He needed a logo for this new organisation and he needed it in a hurry."

She was a bit taken aback, especially as he needed it that week, but decided to rise to the challenge.

"So I sat down with him and got him to explain what NWR was all about and what the logo needed to cover.

"It was all about protection of the whenua. The triangular background represents land as a whole, of which there are obvious stylised trees (native forests) and the wavy bits at the sides are the waterways (rivers and lakes).

"Central to the logo is a stylised 'C' which stands for conservation to make the DOC or Conservation connection. In retrospect, the koru feature is probably a little tokenistic, giving it a Māori essence, nevertheless I think it looks embracing and perhaps I was having a 'hug a tree' moment at the time! What's really important is the 'C' calls for the 'awhi' needed from people to provide protection of whenua and all that it embodies. The concept of 'awhi' in this context is to support, to look after, and value.

"It was a really pragmatic response. It only took me about 10 minutes to draw up the concept and then a couple of days to finish it. I always said it was the best paid 10 minutes of creative work I have ever done, but Mike was really pleased with it and I can't believe they are still using it."

Since then, 25 years later, Ata has gone on to a successful career in publishing and communications, including design, but she remembers this logo with real affection.

Ata's mother Diggeress Te Kanawa and grandmother Dame Rangimarie Hetet were nationally recognised tohunga for their weaving expertise, so she has an incredible whakapapa to call on.

Her kids have never forgotten Mike and his ability to connect with youth because he would turn up at their place, tell the kids to go and clean his "expletive deleted" car and pay them $20 when the going rate was around $2!

"And you don't want to know what they found there," jokes Ata. ■

Between the sheep dip and the briefcase

"Conservation Minister Denis Marshall was up in the north and instead of going in his ministerial car I told him to jump in my Toyota Corolla. I had sheep dip in the front seat and I had to shift that to fit him and his briefcase in but then he couldn't run away, so I could lecture him as to why Māori would only accept a 25-year renewable covenant," recalls Kevin Prime.

"Denis was a good pragmatic guy, a farmer, and we talked about farming things and I started saying: 'All we are offering Māori really is just to fence off their block of land and then tying up the place in perpetuity. A fence lasts for 25 years and near the sea it lasts for 10 or 12 years. Surely that is enough reason to just have the covenants for 25 years'," Kevin said.

Kevin's wife was horrified at him putting a Minister of the Crown in the grotty old Corolla which was full of "farmy" stuff, but as Kevin says: "As a farmer, Denis would have travelled in a lot of grubby old vehicles in his time and he didn't seem to mind."

"The concept when we started in the early 90s was to put a kawenata/covenant over these forested areas to protect them forever. But of course once we started doing the agreements we realised the concept of 'in perpetuity' wasn't a goer, whereas the Minister was insisting on perpetuity; he wanted to do the right thing," says Mike Mohi.

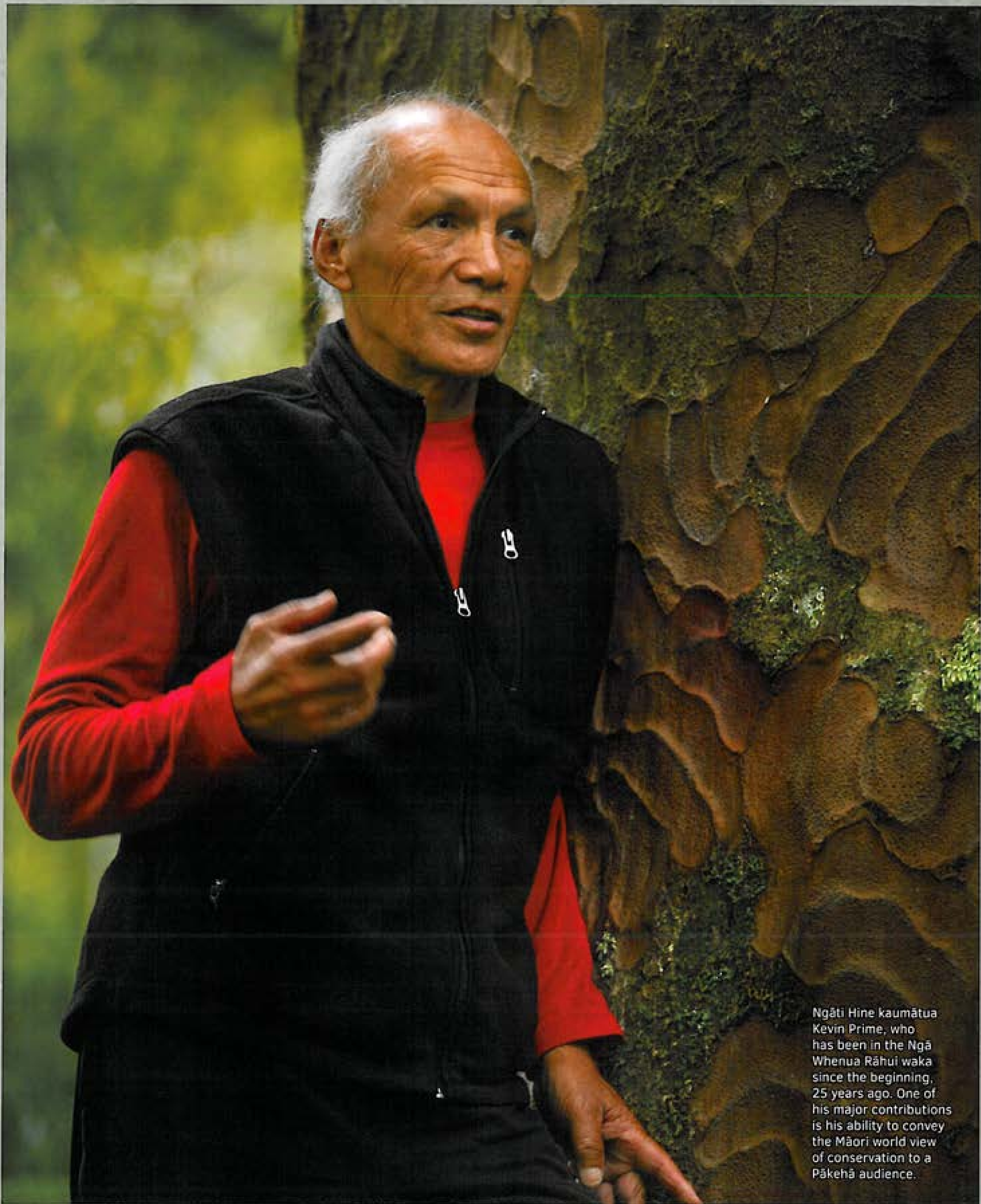
Arguments about the length of the covenant were going to be crucial to the success of the Fund and Sir Tumu te Heuheu and Mike Mohi had also been arguing vigorously with the Minister in the Beehive.

"Tumu and I were in his office in the early days, and he said that one of the things that would determine whether we got funding was that the covenants had to be in perpetuity. But Tumu was quite firm and said: 'We will come and talk to you about it at the end of the week, Minister'. When we got out the door he said to me: 'What do you reckon?' and I said, 'Well it's just a no-goer for our people'.

"We finally got the 25-years thing sorted. We went back after the consultations and Tumu said: 'We will agree to the perpetuity', and Denis said: 'I knew you would see it my way'. And Tumu said: 'But our perpetuity only lasts 25 years'. And Denis said: 'Well how do you work that out?'

"Tumu said: 'Well we worked out there is a chap who is a trustee who is 50 years old and sitting there is his 25-year old son. So when the old man is 75 and sitting there in his rocking chair, then his son is 50 and that generation is the time for the review and if the sons can agree, their sons can make the same decision when they reach maturity age'," says Mike.

There was provision for a review clause after 25 years. As current Komiti member Mavis Mullins explains: "It is not for this generation to make decisions for future generations. But this is a perpetual arrangement. The 25-year thing just gives all parties the opportunity to revisit the aspiration and values of conservation. Our expectation is that this is forever but we want people to recommit to that." ■



Ngāti Hine kaumātua Kevin Prime, who has been in the Ngā Whenua Rāhui waka since the beginning, 25 years ago. One of his major contributions is his ability to convey the Māori world view of conservation to a Pākehā audience.

Still in his Prime

KEVIN PRIME, ALONG WITH SIR TUMU, HAS BEEN IN THE NGĀ WHENUA RĀHUI WAKA FOR THE WHOLE 25 YEARS OF ITS EXISTENCE.

PHOTOGRAPHY | *Rob Suisted*

"'Ma te wera o te rae – the sweat from our own forehead.' My parents never wanted us holding our hands out for money. Rewards came from hard work and not from holding your hand out."

It's a little ironic that Kevin Prime has played such a decisive role in the success of Ngā Whenua Rāhui because his mum would probably never have allowed him to take a consideration to protect the forest!

"There was an activist on some working group for Internal Affairs and he was encouraging us to apply for money to build a confidence course at our camp. I didn't want to because in my heart I didn't agree, so I asked my mum who was still alive and she said very strongly, 'No you don't do that, if you want it, just build it yourself'. The reason we built a marae was because my mum wanted to hold Christian children's holiday camps there so Prime Holdings funded it all.

"She would just book up a piano to Prime Holdings and the shop would sell it to her because she was such a lovely old lady, so we had to explain to the accountant how come the natural resources company Prime Holdings was buying a piano!

"It was those values she was passing down so I tend to encourage people, if they can, to do it for themselves, rather than be beholden to a regional council. We still want to retain that independence."

Kevin Prime, along with Sir Tumu, has been in the Ngā Whenua Rāhui waka for the whole 25 years of its existence. He is a modest man with a great sense of humour, an inclusive style and the hunger to listen and learn. He brings his whole background as a successful farmer in the north to the range of practical problems in front of the Komiti. He is widely respected in both the Māori and Pākehā world and moves easily between them. But as well as respect, there is a real affection for him, despite his taste in Tony Ryall-type ties!

While proud of the past, of his tikanga and tupuna, he is also encouraging of change where it is mutually beneficial.

One of his major contributions to conservation is his ability to convey the Māori world.

"You can be very tired, absolutely buggered, and yet you go for a walk and feel energised. When you go the gym you feel tired when you've finished, but when you go for a run in the forest you feel energised. There is something about the mauri, the sensorial aspect – the smell of the forest, the smell of the fresh air, the sound of the birds, the noise of the water running. This is one of the maungatapu where you identify yourself so it is your cultural landscape.

"There are a whole lot of maunga that have a name linked to a chief, or maunga may have had their names changed after some historic incident at a certain time. You have trees that are used for waka, for making carvings, for weapons, the cultural materials, the food that you get. Most berries are edible or used for medicinal purposes, whether it is the bark, the roots or the leaves; the question is how you do it.

"Take the karaka, which is poisonous. You can eat the skin when it is orange but you can't eat the kernel, although you can boil that kernel for about 5 hours, then you put it in a sack into the creek for about a week or 2 weeks and then it becomes a really tasty nut. All those are part of the culture that Māori people associate with the forest."

Kevin is a great family man and his numerous kids are not above playing a trick on him. A DOC staff member recalls a meeting with Kevin who was explaining the Māori world view to them when his cellphone went off to the ring tone of "God Save the Queen"! Everybody laughed, including Kevin.

Kevin confesses to be hugely excited about the success of the Fund.

"Because I am a farmer as well, and pragmatic, I can understand the limitations on funding and what you can achieve and that you have to try to make it stretch further. The value of collaborative funding also means working in with district and regional councils and NGOs and community trusts and private trusts and companies.

"My hope is that we can all learn from the experiences and knowledge of each contributing individual, be it staff, committee member, landowner, iwi member, government servant or other." ■

MOHI – THE STRONG

"IT IS FAIR TO SAY THAT NGĀ WHENUA RĀHUI IS MIKE MOHI RATHER THAN ANYBODY ELSE, AND HE CAME INTO THE ORGANISATION NOT TOO LONG AFTER WE HAD PUT THINGS TOGETHER," SAYS SIR TUMU TE HEUHEU.

PHOTOGRAPHY | *Herb Christophers*

"Mind you I remember Mike had come straight from the shearing shed and when we sat down to interview him, Kevin Prime and I both wondered how Mike would make the transition. He didn't have a huge vocabulary and didn't speak the Wellington language," recalls Sir Tumu, Ngā Whenua Rāhui inaugural Chair.

"I was thinking it was a bit of gamble at the beginning, but I have to say that over the years, without his tenacity and commitment to the kaupapa and the direct language he used, it would have been very difficult for the committee to do its job. He was able to speak not only to the young people but also to the kaumātua," says Sir Tumu.

Mohi has certainly been the strong man in the scrum for the committee and despite being a gold carder, he keeps himself in good physical shape by going in from his little pig farm to the gym at Waipukurau at 6 am. He is always happy to whip off his shirt to show the results that have been achieved, which are impressive for his age.

He also has a hugely irreverent sense of humour which has stood him in good stead in tricky situations on the marae, although it does get him into strife on occasions!

But for a number of years in the 1990s he really was a solo operator out in the field signing significant numbers of covenants through sheer persistence, hard work, humour and credibility. He did what he said he would and his policy of kanohi ki te kanohi or working face to face with people meant they could make their own assessments of his promises. Nobody ever died of boredom listening to him and his ability to think on his feet has been invaluable as has been the ability to engender trust from a suspicious clientele!

Mike is the first to admit how green he was when he started in 1991.

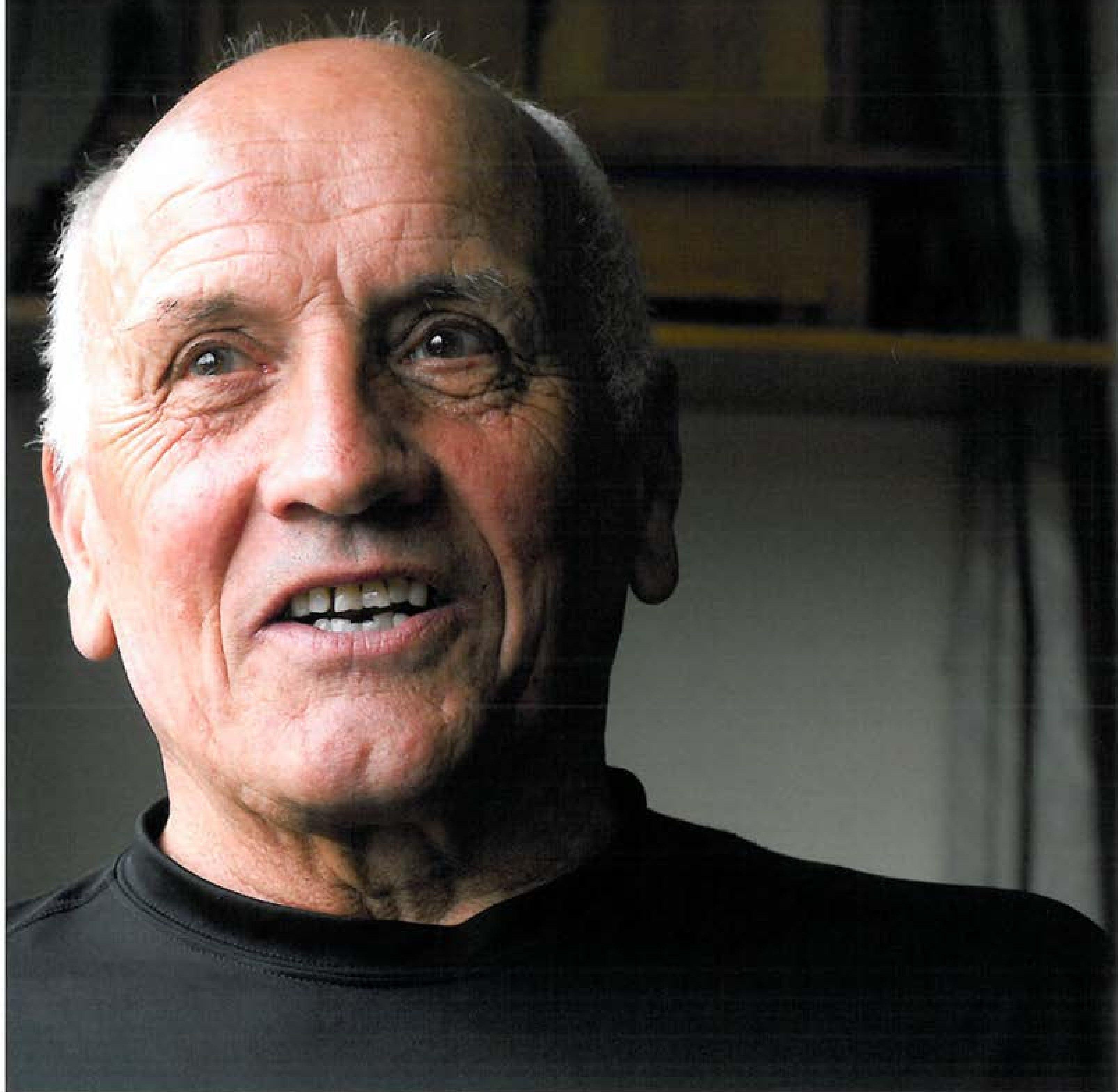
"So I got the job as the executive officer and quite frankly I didn't have a clue. We didn't have personal computers in those days and I didn't know how to use the photocopier. I was standing in front of it and this nice woman came up to me and asked if she could help. I said I needed two copies and we fed it into the shredding machine!"

When he joined there was the newly created Ngā Whenua Rāhui Committee and the Forest Heritage Fund, with both funds managed by Allan McKenzie and a number of directors on both funds to help continuity.

One fundamental point, which has never really gone away, was the suspicion that this scheme would be a confiscation scheme in disguise and DOC was often the most evident fall guy for a host of Māori

Mike Mohi, who for at least 10 years was the face of the Ngā Whenua Rāhui Fund out in the field and who has done more than anyone else to sign up around 150,000 hectares of Māori land for legal protection.

MAN IN THE SCRUM



"It is ironic that after 20 years the areas we turned down then are the ones most sought after now."

MIKE MOHI

LEFT Mike Mohi and Kaitakawaenga (field representative) Meryl Carter enjoying the funny side of the story.

BELOW RIGHT Mike Mohi (standing extreme right) and NWR business analyst Roland Pomana (bottom right) taking the Māori conservation message out to the next generation.

grievances with the Crown dating back 150 years.

"I emphasised that the NWR Fund was separate from DOC, and that the directors of our Komiti reported directly to the Minister of Conservation and the owners would always stay in control of their own land. Once we started to get a few runs on the board and had built up a bit of a track record we could say, 'Well you go and ask those fellas'. Or 'Do you know somebody from there?'

"What some Pākehā didn't understand was just how bitter the feeling was by Māori landowners towards Pākehā institutions as a symbol of the Crown. I used to say to the Māori landowners that you will find that once you get on to managing land, if you have DOC as a neighbour you will get on well with them, they are good people, but you will find that out for yourselves.

"The money never distracted people from protesting and we had a lot of 'anti' people. 'I don't care how much money you give us, you are pinching nanny's land and she'd be rolling over in her grave,' was a common refrain. So we had to get around that by saying, 'Nothing will change. So go back and talk to other people who have signed up and see what they say.' We did have some nice people within each trust who had a better vision of things, and they helped."

The most receptive areas to the concept of the new fund were on the East Coast and the first big one was Nukutere. Even here, Mike couldn't resist letting his mischievous sense of humour out for a run!

"Denis Marshall came along and asked me to do a bit of a speech for him as it was on the marae. So he went through the speech and of course his pronunciation was terrible and they're all going 'Ooh aah' and they are clapping him all loudly. He says to me afterwards, 'What did I say?' and I told him he'd said the Crown was giving them all their land back! He said, 'Did I really say that?' and I said, 'Don't worry about it'.

"There was a set of criteria and it is ironic that after 20 years the areas we turned down then are the ones most sought after now.

Mānuka and kānuka were a waste of time to covenant in the 1990s and we were looking for more mature forest. But now, with carbon sequestration and honey, these are the best areas. Plus with wetlands, Dr Smith changed the criteria to widen it and it was virtually from mountains to the sea.

"We were definitely getting our biggest hits in the early days from the East Coast and I must acknowledge the help from DOC officials there like Dave Para and Chris Ward.

"Then in 1996-97 it was decided that NWR should have its own management structure and a new manager, Julie Black, was brought in to do that. Julie was very clued up with Māoridom, and was a very good native speaker. If people came into the office to see her she would go and make the tea. She would never tell me to do it like I was the underling. She would do those sorts of things and then ask me to greet them.

"By that stage we had brought Denis Peters on and started to honour the things about pest control. He was an absolute godsend – an incredible man. He had been working for DOC as a contractor for pest control and he got far better value for us for the pest control dollar than we had achieved before.

"Up to 2001 Mike was the only person, with his manager, servicing the Fund," says current NWR Manager Trevor Lambert. "For the first 10 years there were only two people, the manager and the donkey. My view is that if it wasn't for his sheer gumption and tenacity and stubbornness, the Fund wouldn't have been a success. He established the first lot of protected lands all by his damned self.

"I still can't believe how much he has achieved. Some years ago I tried to work out how much Mike had protected and it was around 150,000 hectares, an outstanding feat by any individual," says Trevor, with genuine admiration.

Over time and as the staff numbers have grown, Mike has become more of a consultant and advisor to other staff, although still doing some of the most significant negotiations himself, including

"...if it wasn't for his sheer gumption and tenacity and stubbornness, the Fund wouldn't have been a success."

TREVOR LAMBERT

the landmark protection of a thousand hectares of Tūhoe's sacred mountain Maungapohatu.

"Our priorities are moving away from the big forested areas and we are now more focused on smaller areas like wetlands and restoration/replanting projects which can be really expensive, but it's where we have got to go. And those restoration projects that are under threat because of the surrounding farmland, they need constant funding because of weed control and pest control. That is where the money should go."

As NWR has become more professional and better able to assess the land portfolio according to the latest ecological criteria and electronic tools, what is remarkable is that Mike's early judgements on the biodiversity values, based on back of the envelope calculations, have proved remarkably sound and stood the Fund in really good stead.

Mike has always been a strong supporter of the Fund-sponsored nurseries, seeing them as a way of both generating employment and providing plants of a high quality from the right areas. He is very pleased with the progress they are making towards self-sufficiency.

He has also been an advocate of building allies and getting leverage, but he does appreciate "The Gambler" lyrics, "You've got to know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em, know when to walk away, know when to run...".

"We did a really good deal with Environment Bay of Plenty about 12 years ago for an outstanding area of bush. I went to see them and they were very reluctant to come in, they wanted a 99-year agreement. I explained the reasons for the 25-year lease, and told them they have the most amount of productive Māori land in the country. There were two senior managers there and they said they would only go with 99 years.

"So I said goodbye. Then they came after me and said, 'Can we just have a little meeting by ourselves' and they came back and said they would agree to 25 years. I met one of those senior managers before he retired and he said that was the best thing they ever did. I said, 'I am sorry for swearing at you!'

"In terms of success, there is a Māori saying that 'The kūmara doesn't say how sweet it is'. I did a tour of eight blocks last year, and I generally try and keep myself out of it but it was quite flattering that they all said, 'Where's Mike?' The success is having people say, even on this little tour, how great it has been. All the apprehensions have gone and I have found this work really satisfying to do and being part of Ngā Whenua Rāhui."

There is no need to mention the word retirement because he never does! ■

BELOW
"Our priorities are moving away from the big forested areas and we are now more focused on smaller areas like wetlands and restoration/ replanting projects."

Seeing the smile on the landowner's face

"THE CHANCE TO DO WORK ON MĀORI LAND AND TO BUILD STRONG RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE MĀORI LANDOWNERS IS ONE OF THE BIG THINGS ABOUT WORKING FOR NGĀ WHENUA RĀHUI," SAYS WHAKARAE HENARE.

PHOTOGRAPHY | *Herb Christophers*

ABOVE The ability to leave something behind for the younger generations is a key part of the work for Whakarae Henare.

"How do I know my work is of value? It's seeing the smile on the land-owner's face with the reports we do and him knowing that somebody else cares about that land and is trying to protect it, not only for him but for the generations to follow," says Whakarae Henare, supervisor of the Biodiversity Impact Monitoring teams.

"I've always thought about how the old people used to have it. They used to live off the land and so I think back to those times but also for the younger generations. If we don't leave something for them, then they are not going to be able to carry on," says Whakarae ("Huck" to his mates).

So how did Whakarae end up in the biodiversity protection business?

"I come from a little rural town on the East Coast, Te Araroa. I went to a primary school there, and worked on the farm with my grandfather since I started walking. I was into rugby, hunting, horse riding, diving, fishing, all those things and then boarded at Gisborne Boys' High.

"It was good. It was quite hard being away from home but I had an older brother and cousins who had been through it, so I thought well, if they can do it so can I. Eventually mum moved to town for work so I lived with her. I had just finished school and my auntie told me about the Māori cadet scheme, so everything just sort of fell into place," says Whakarae.

The cadetship was based around the course they were running at the Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology, and the key behind it was trying to get more young Māori into conservation at the time.

"The good thing about this one was that you got paid to train, so I didn't have to get a student loan, which was a real bonus for me.

"I thought the course would be about working in the bush doing the grunt work; it would be just track cutting, killing pests, and so on. We got our basic tickets for what they call in DOC an A band ranger, but there was more to it. The bonus for me was that all the training was being done on the marae so it was still trying to keep that link to the culture and it did that well.

"There wasn't a guaranteed job after the cadetship, but NWR then came into the picture and offered me a 2-year placement with them in the Biodiversity Impact Monitoring team. This included ongoing training and one of the things they put me on was the possum monitoring course run by the National Possum Control Agencies, so we got all our tickets.

"Another big learning thing was getting the GIS (geographic information systems) training. It's getting all our tracking and possum lines and going back and turning it into information for reports. It's quite full on and it took a while to get my head around it, but as they say, you are learning new things every day," says Whakarae.

The Biodiversity Impact Monitoring teams (BIM) have a critical role in helping to evaluate whether NWR is making a difference. Their responsibility is to do biodiversity surveys and monitor the pests on the land blocks. Then to report back to the owners so they know what is going on and to provide the vital information to the operations teams so they know where to focus.

Whakarae is now the manager of the three teams of three people who do the work and so spends more time in the office, but he does vividly recall what a typical day out in the field was like.

"When I wake up I'm praying it's not raining because if it is, it's going to be a long wet day. So we get up, have breakfast, we are either in a hut or tents. If we are on one of the big back blocks, we will camp out in tents. Most days we will be out on the hill around seven or eight o'clock. But if we have a bird count we get up a lot earlier.

"We go out for 10 days at a time and a possum monitor means you have to leave traps out for three nights and you need to get two fine nights, preferably three. I guess it must affect your data because generally possums don't come out in the rain. So we set them the first day and then check each day and put the data in using our data loggers (now we use smartphones).

"It's awesome using these because you get away from using paper and they're really simple to use, just like a computer so they become second nature. We will also do a seedling and pellet protocol, looking for what seedlings are coming through at various heights and the pellets will tell you what animals there are in the bush.

"And that will take you through to mid-afternoon and from there you might get a frog survey which takes about half an hour, and depending on how far you are from the hut, you may need to start coming back.

"We have received ongoing training for frogs and fish/freshwater surveys which are a good indication of your water quality and we enter it into our data loggers, so there is no paper, which is really good in the bush when it rains.

"Of course it's not fine every day but we only stay inside if it's torrential rain. With those possum traps there is a rule that you have to check them every 19 hours, so whether it's rain, hail or shine, you have to go out and check the traps, no matter what.

"For dinner we have a boil-up of steak and chuck in a bit of salad and broccoli. Some of our guys don't go too well with salad so it's a matter of trying to get them used to eating green vegetables and stuff. They tend to just eat the meat and potatoes.

"Willy Ngamoki, our manager, was keen on us eating proper foods and we had a health nutritionist come in and talk to us. Willy said that if you're not eating healthy food, you are going to find, come the afternoon, you are knackered because you're not eating right. He's trying to train us to be Olympics people I guess!" he says.

Whakarae must be getting really tired of it after 10 days?

"Oh yeah, you're looking at your mate and you've had enough, pretty much. It gets hard at times, they are real small huts and when there are three of you, sometimes you're shaking your head and saying 'I just don't know how we cope'."

OPPOSITE NWR Biodiversity Impact Monitoring Supervisor Whakarae Henare, better known as "Huck".

LEFT Our talented Gisborne staff are waiting to serve you! Standing (left to right): Taniora Kaiwai, Roland Pomana, Whakarae Henare and Jonathan Paea. Seated front row: Hori Katipa, Krystal Phillips and David Keefe.

"All the training was being done on the marae so it was still trying to keep that link to the culture and it did that well."

WHAKARAE HENARE

There are the occasional amusing incidents.

"I do remember one time we flew into a block right in the backcountry, we got up there and unloaded everything. Our manager said, 'Use the checklist, have you got everything?'

"'Yeah yeah,' we said and then we got up to the hut and it's like, 'Where's the meat, we've got no meat'. One of the old bros had left the meat behind so it looked like we only had bread and tinned food. But we were lucky; they had to do another flight and got enough meat to last us.

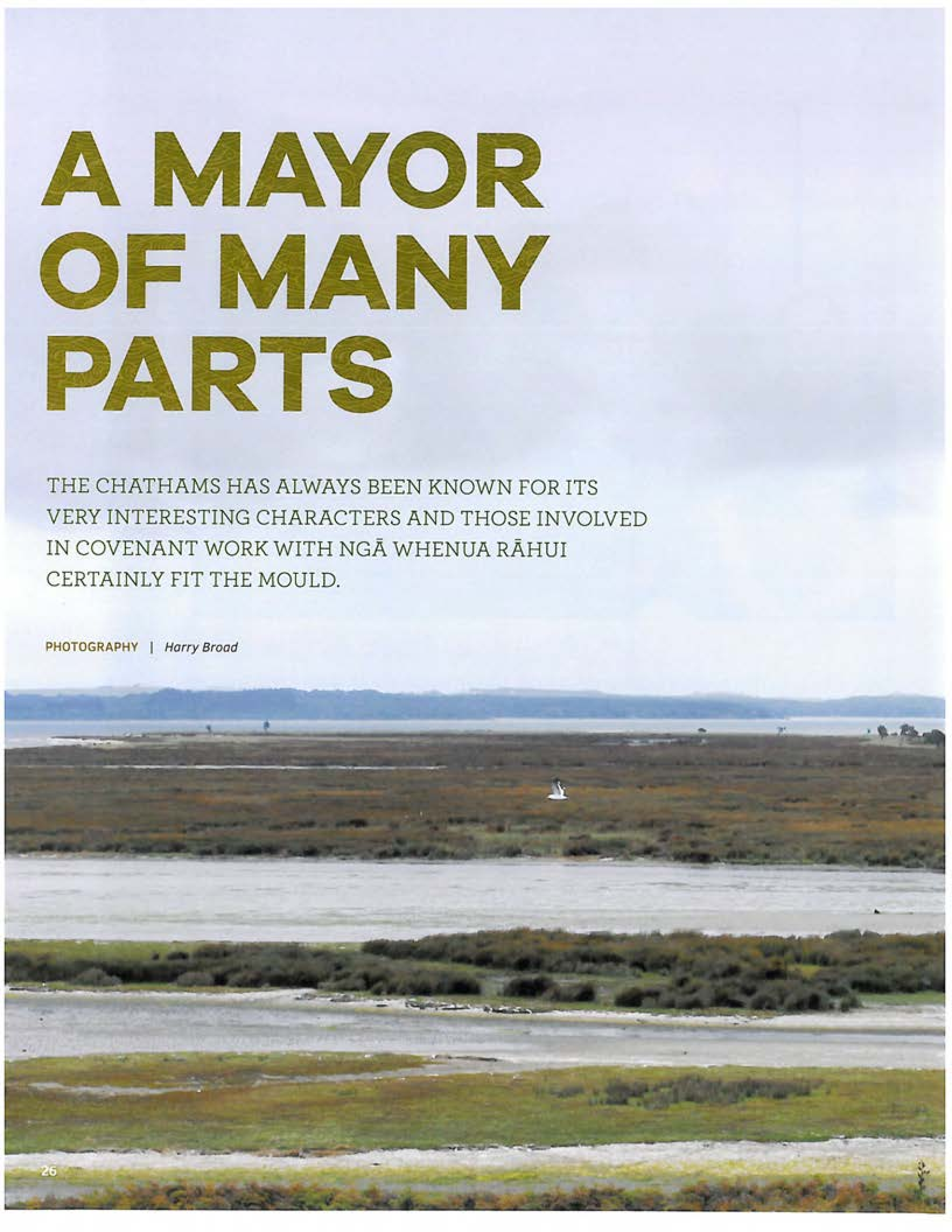
"One time we were walking up this hill, one guy in front and one at the back and I was in the middle. It was right in the thick of the wasp season and then I see one bro doing a bit of a shrug and I say, 'What's wrong bro?'. And then we heard the old wasps and I knew what it was and just took off, but the boys all followed me and the wasps did too and we all fell over and we all got stung. That was a memorable trip.

"The nature of the work is changing as well. We used to do a large number of big blocks and 10-day runs. We are now doing more observational blocks over a few days, we do a cruise, you still do the seedling and pellet count, and all the protocols you do in a big block you still do in a small observational block. We appraise the condition of the bush and its general health rather than just counting possum numbers. We check on the browsing using the Foliar Browsing Index," he says.

Now that he is a manager, what makes a good leader? "I think the ability to communicate well, sometimes to lead from the front but other times to sit back and observe what's going on.

"He can talk the talk but also walk the walk. It has been good to see how the two systems work, the DOC systems and then coming to NWR and their systems. They have a few little different things but they are all working towards the same goal.

"The big thing for me is that we are working on Māori land already and building good relationships with Māori landowners. What I am doing with NWR now is exactly what I want to go back to my iwi, Ngāti Porou, and do. Even before that I would like to be a kaitakawaenga to engage with the landowners and build more relationships," says Whakarae with that shy smile of his. ■



A MAYOR OF MANY PARTS

THE CHATHAMS HAS ALWAYS BEEN KNOWN FOR ITS VERY INTERESTING CHARACTERS AND THOSE INVOLVED IN COVENANT WORK WITH NGĀ WHENUA RĀHUI CERTAINLY FIT THE MOULD.

PHOTOGRAPHY | *Harry Broad*

Alfred Preece, the mayor of the Chathams and the owner of some significant covenants on his farm is a very interesting character, but he is the first to admit that his old dad Bunty, a veteran of the legendary 28th Māori Battalion, is the real star.

After a tiki tour of the farm, Alfred suggested we pop in for cup of tea with his dad. Cup of tea be blowed. The old chap produced a wonderful feed of mutton, spuds and salad, washed down with a cup of tea you could stand your spoon in. Then this lively 90-year-old proceeded to entertain us with the whole of the battle plan for Monte Cassino!

Bunty and son Alfred are what might be termed happily married bachelors, as their wives both live off the Chathams for long periods of time working elsewhere in the world, so Bunty's cooking skills come in real handy!

The really significant covenant on Alfred's farm is a cultural one, Te Awapatiki, the pathway of flounder, where the lake mouth enters the sea and it is a very significant site for Moriori out on the coastal area.

Not only was it was the central meeting place of the island and a significant food gathering area, but it was also the site where Moriori met to discuss how they would handle the Ngāti Mutunga invasion, so it is regarded as the last meeting place for all the Moriori tribes on the Chathams.

"Certainly it's a place that has been part of our family since my father purchased it from the Crown after the war. A lease had been granted to him of 3500 acres (1416 ha) and he undertook to purchase the property. Since then it has been in our family and there has always been a desire to protect it," says Alfred.

The other key covenant is Wairoa Bush which is regenerating extremely well now it has been fenced off from stock, and there is also a great area on the headland of the farm of regenerating flax, none of which has been planted but which has simply reasserted itself in the absence of cattle.

"There has been a lot of focus in recent years on replanting. I think it is an excellent idea but you must have a nursery environment to get trees to grow. The best way to do that is to encourage the flax to grow naturally and then once the flax has grown you can do some planting if you want to add to it," says Alfred.

Personal contacts and word of mouth were important in setting up the Ngā Whenua Rāhui kawenata.

Waikawa Island, which is just off the end of Te Awapatiki, the pathway of the flounder, where the lake mouth enters the sea.

"I first heard about Ngā Whenua Rāhui through a DOC guy, Allan Munn, who was always looking for ways to protect bush on the Chathams. I would regard him as one of the better field centre managers ever to come here. He had a great feel for the people and their willingness to conserve what bush was left, and he just made it happen.

"I found working in the initial stages of the kawenatas with Mike Mohi, it was positive and proactive is the best way I can explain it. He would tell you straight whether it was a goer, the application went in, the response was given in a reasonable time frame, and a lot of the responsibility around getting the job done was handed to us. It worked extremely well, " says Alfred.

Alfred isn't the largest farmer on the Chathams but he is one of the better ones and his property is extremely well maintained, especially the covenanted areas. The farm has a well-cared-for feel about it and despite the extremes of climate the stock are in very good condition.

"I am very enthusiastic about farming, but I like conservation as well and my own way of doing things. Well, it is a win-win, combining farming and conservation. You get to fence off the bush, which cattle love hiding away in when you are trying to muster them, and it puts some boundaries to your properties. It's just a 'no-brainer.' The return of the birdlife in the wake of the re-vegetation has been huge, it's very significant. We rarely had tūīs or parea/ pigeons here and we have them regularly now.

"There are three properties here where the house is. I bought the 110 acres (44 ha) here with the house when I was 17, I bought the main farm in 1989, that was 8000 acres (3237 ha) and then I bought my father's farm in 1994. I had saved a bit but I borrowed some money from my mother to buy the first block at 17, in fact it was family land." In total he owns, along with wife Robyn, around 11500 acres (4653 ha).

"Money is pretty important but the challenge and seeing something improve over the course of your life's work is more important. When you wake up each morning, there is always something different to do."

While he has had other covenants on the property he does like the Ngā Whenua Rāhui model.

"The 25-year term is a sensible logical arrangement. I think the word perpetuity is important in the sense of conserving things long term, but I think the provision for renegotiations every 25 years is respectful, and it gives each generation the opportunity to improve things and make their own decisions.

"I have given each of my children the chance to be part of these projects because when the time comes for them to own the land, it gives them a legacy to hang their hats on."

He is also generous in his acknowledgment of the growth of interest in conservation on the Chathams.

"Yes, it has evolved over time; it hasn't been something that has just happened overnight. There has been a lot of good work done by the Conservation Department and I think they have really made an effort, and the landowners I talk to seem happy with the NWR covenants."

The really significant covenant on Alfred's farm is a cultural one, Te Awapatiki, the pathway of flounder, where the lake mouth enters the sea

Alfred is proud of his mixed heritage whakapapa.

"On my father's side I am descended from Moriori and Ngāi Tahu, and with a name like Preece, which is a derivative of Reece, part of my father's family came from a little town called Dudley in Worcestershire, prior to coming out to NZ in the late 1850s. There is also a Welsh connection as well.

"My grandfather Charlie was an interesting chap; he'd had a pretty colourful life prior to coming to the Chathams. He was a tailor by trade and they had quite an affluent life in Christchurch. Charlie was a little bit of an embarrassment to the family and he got a job here tutoring when he was 40, and he married my grandmother who was three-quarters Moriori, but part Ngāi Tahu too.

"That was his third wife, and we have spread far and wide since then." Alfred's mum was Ngāti Mutunga so he is very well placed in terms of the island's history to provide leadership for the future.

"There is no doubt the early relations between Mutunga and Moriori were brutal. We can't change history, it is what it is. The important thing is that we live for today, as we have seen with the inspiring example of Nelson Mandela. His greatest asset was his ability to forgive and move on.

"I am pretty optimistic about the Chathams. It has good resources in the sea and there are vast areas of land that could be developed. It is not hard to see the potential. I have been focused as mayor in trying to make some big improvements in key transport infrastructure and energy which I think will change the financial dynamics of the island.

"The port is the main thing; the port we have now is an open roadstead port that doesn't have a breakwater and is vulnerable to the weather. By putting in an all-weather port it gives the transport operators more opportunity to be part of a scheduled operation, because you can't run shipping services these days without schedules and currently we can't.

"The sea and land resources are giving us exports worth $200 million a year but we also have a fledgling tourist industry. People are curious about us and it's on everyone's bucket list, 'I must go to the Chathams!' is the cry!" he concludes.

FAR LEFT Alfred Preece, the mayor of the Chathams and a strong advocate for conservation.

CENTRE The value of a covenant is shown in this photo where the forest behind the fence is flourishing while the forest outside is not.

RIGHT A memorial statue to the legendary Tame Horomona Rehe, better known by his anglicised name Tommy Solomon, believed by some to be the last full-blooded Moriori. The statue looks over a kawenata at Manukau near his farm on the Chathams.

She's a hard road building the perfect marae

WHEN BILL RAWIRI TALKS ABOUT "NEEDING PERSEVERANCE" TO GET A COMMUNITY BASED PAN-TRIBAL MARAE OPEN IN THE WELLINGTON SUBURB OF NEWLANDS, IT WOULD HAVE TO BE THE UNDERSTATEMENT OF THE CENTURY.

PHOTOGRAPHY | *Harry Meinders*

Elements in the community were hostile, the Wellington City Council was rather ambivalent and even those sympathetic were pointing out there was already a project to build a large community centre in Newlands, so why did they need two?

"Many of us met at the Newlands Arms and we thought, 'Well what can we do for our young ones?' Some of the kids were going astray and ending up in prison, and we didn't even have a place for a 3-day tangi."

With a military background, Bill Rawiri was keen to create order out of chaos, and with support from staunch locals such as Vern Hoeata and Phil Edmonds, a committee was formed in 1989 to do something about it.

Looking around for a site was also daunting. The best one available was reclaimed land from a tip site which still operated, being dusty and smelly with seagulls and rodents in abundance. In fact the tip carried on for many years but a ridgeline recommended by the local farmer just above the tip was good and the views spectacular.

However some of the residents were not happy and Bill doesn't mince words as to why.

"They figured it would devalue their properties and also they were very cautious about, as they saw it, Māoris related to gangs, patches, drugs, booze and motorbikes; all the negative side of it was what came to the fore then, and there were developers who wanted to use the land too.

"So there were many submissions against us developing a marae here, but Council held up in our favour and said that we could go ahead, so we set about fundraising, established housie nights, hangis and all sorts of things like that, and Joe Gates, a landscaper, put his heart and soul into levelling out the site."

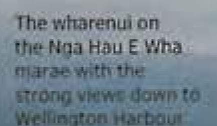
But, sadly, community antagonism did not evaporate.

"A lot of it was us being naive about the requirements to get it going, we didn't have a project manager or the expertise.

"We got a building, brought it up here, and it was blessed and working fine, but it wasn't very long before it was torched and completely burnt down. Some people didn't want us here and it was a major setback with the loss of time, money and so on."

Back then, some parts of the Council were less than encouraging.

"It seemed that every time we did something, Council moved the goal posts, without us knowing, because they had initially given us permission. We had some people on side and some that weren't. One or two people in senior positions in Council were not supportive and, unbeknown to us at the time, all the correspondence stopped with them. It never went any further and so our efforts would repeatedly grind to a halt.



The wharenui on the Nga Hau E Wha marae with the strong views down to Wellington Harbour

The real turnaround came when the marae had the chance to help some of the victims of the Christchurch earthquake.

"For example they'd say, 'Oh you need to have resource consents for this', and so the effort went in to getting that and as soon as we submitted that, they would say, 'Oh, and you should have done this first and you also need this.' We had put a lot of time and effort into fundraising which wasn't completely wasted but, had we known exactly what was required in the beginning, we could have saved a lot of time, effort and money. It just kept changing and changing because some people didn't want us to have this particular land.

"But we were blessed in having one chap, a Pākehā guy called Lawson Robertson, who was supported by his wife Lois. He came with us and he said to the council: 'Had this been a Pākehā project you would have approved it about 12 years ago, so what's going on here?' Lawson worked a lot with council and had been developing walking tracks and parks in our area so he understood how things worked and our frustrations. It really was Lawson who got us over a lot of hurdles," says Bill.

Then the firebug struck again.

"We lost our first building to arson, and it wasn't long after we had secured a new one before this building was torched as well. We still didn't know who had done it. It may have been racist but there may have been other motivations. Whatever the reason, it was very frustrating. Trying to keep our supporters positive after having done so much work fundraising, just to see it go up in smoke twice, tore the heart out of a lot of the members.

Bill is quick to point out that over time the relationship with the Council has changed and the current Council is very supportive of the fully established marae and value it as an asset that is there for all of us, Pākehā and Māori alike.

"Fortunately, now, the doors have opened up and it's such a wonderful change around. It's unbelievable, and if this could have happened back then, where could we have been now if we'd had that cooperation?

"The Newlands community centre was opened in 2003, thanks to the efforts of many locals including us but, sadly, we weren't making great progress on our own marae project," says Bill.

The years of volunteering, fundraising, huge workloads, along with the numerous setbacks and continuing barriers, had really started to take a toll on the volunteers.

"By this time Phil Edmonds had stood down as Chair, we had other chairpeople in but the building had declined and was in dire need of repair. There was no money for maintenance, and little was being achieved. People had donated all sorts of things but they were sitting outside or under tarpaulins, and the site looked like a dumping ground.

"We had two-and-a-half years to go before the 20-year lease came up for renewal, and one of the women who worked for Council had given us a warning to 'use it or lose it'."

The real turnaround came when the marae had the chance to help some of the victims of the February 2011 Christchurch earthquake.

"One of the members, Paul Sampson, who had been on the committee before he had moved with members of his family to Christchurch, rang up after they had lost their house and said, 'Can our whānau stay on the marae?' So Paul brought his family up here and it wasn't long before the word went out and others were invited to come. So we went from one family, to two families, to three families, and at 42 people, we had to cut it off," says Bill.

They were all really one large Tūhoe whānau, and when they came onto the marae, the raw emotion displayed was unforgettable.

"This is what we are here for, to help one another and that's when it struck me that we hadn't completed our journey of having our marae up and running," says Bill.

"If the kaupapa is right, then the vision will materialise. There may be a lot of heartaches and bridges and barriers to overcome, but persevere," says Bill Rawiri who has been at the heart of the struggle to get this pan-tribal marae established in the Wellington suburb of Newlands.

Out of this evolved a real civil defence resilience function for the marae, for which Bill took over the leadership. They also work with 10 other marae developing their resilience skills.

"But this all contributed to a much stronger view of what the marae was capable of. So we had the meeting here to discuss our next 20-year plan. We looked at the meanings of the old local place names 'Horokiwi' (breeding ground of the kiwi, or the kiwi in abundance), and 'Pukehuia' (hill of the sacred huia birds).

"Our ancestors saw what was here and gave these beautiful names for this area, but now there are no kiwi here and no huia birds left in New Zealand. So what has man done in his progress forward? In fact, all we have done in this beautiful place, where the huia and kiwi thrived, is that we have filled it with rubbish and made it toxic.

"So we thought 'let's reverse that cycle'. We know what we have done, but if we can plant enough trees and put the land back to what nature had before, then at least we are giving back and people will have an affinity with the land. So whilst we are Nga Hau e Wha, meaning 'people of the four winds', we could use this land and be able to instil in our children those things we learned when we were children in our marae at home, which is the importance of the land, the water, the rivers, the birds and the people. If you heal the land, you heal the people.

Did Ngā Whenua Rāhui play a critical role here with technical advice and support and a certain inspiration?

"Absolutely they did," says Bill. "They brought professionalism and financial support, but even more, a belief in us. They said that if we did this they would financially support it, so they helped with the momentum to get us up and going.

"The project is fundamentally about conservation and there are four key elements to it," says NWR Manager, Trevor Lambert.

- Rongoā, traditional Māori medicine
- Maara Kai, traditional Māori food
- Raranga, traditional Māori weaving
- The Nursery. "This is the key one because it binds all the other elements together and the people as well. It's a community facility. We are using the nursery as the springboard for the other elements. It is the common fact. We know that plants are lacking from the mix and what we need to grow to cover the full range of plants for rongoā, maara kai and raranga. We are not talking about just growing plants for when you are sick, we want to integrate them into daily life so they become part of healthy living and the same is true with the traditional plants grown for food," says Trevor.

It had originally been planned to introduce these 4 elements in 5-year segments over 20 years, but the members were too impatient and wanted much faster action. And volunteers flowed in, from community to corporate, and even the

"If the kaupapa is right, then the vision will materialise."

BILL RAWIRI

OPPOSITE
Z Energy workers, and others, lending a hand on regenerating hillsides.

ABOVE LEFT
Chef Joe McLeod preparing to whip up a storm of great food.

LEFT
The nursery is where all the good work starts.
Photo: Peter Gilberd

Church of the Latter Day Saints made a big contribution.

Suddenly, everybody wanted a piece of the action on a marae which had looked headed for oblivion. It has a busy order book of groups wanting to hire the marae and Bill is very keen to pay tribute to the large number of Pākehā volunteers, as well as Māori, who have caught the spring tide and got the craft fully afloat and sailing away.

Māori chef Joe McLeod, who has been a part of the marae in later years, likes nothing better than cooking up a storm using Māori ingredients and the kai goes down very well indeed.

Pa Rob McGowan is a real taonga as far as the rongoā is concerned. His classes are always full with students travelling long distances to attend his presentations, to assimilate and carry forward this vital knowledge.

Sani Scott, the raranga tutor, has taught his students to create a whole range of items using different techniques, with the intention of the students graduating as tutors to carry on these skills.

"When we have our 'Meet the Neighbours day', we now work with the Newlands Community Centre. They use all their networks and it is an annual event now. We work with them and the Newlands Paparangi Progressive Association for resilience work and we've run first aid medical courses here. We've got the schools, churches, scouts, radio hams, doctors and pharmacists involved too," says Bill.

Trevor Lambert puts the wider strategic vision for the marae.

"The drive is to own the land and have it as a marae that all are welcome to come to, not just Māori, and that is what we are achieving right now. We are having ongoing discussions with the Wellington City Council about this and they are supportive. It is also about reconnecting Māori, urban Māori, with cultural values and the land, in an inclusive way. It is not tribally based and it is about restoration in the community. And it's about resilience and finding a way back to the culture."

Bill sums up the struggles well: "If the kaupapa is right then the vision will materialise. There may be a lot of heartaches and bridges or barriers to overcome, but persevere. The vision was right, back in the beginning, we knew what we wanted to be here for, and finally we are getting there. We have been given community awards.

"And now the community want to come in here and be a part of it. The kapa haka group went to Rarotonga, which is a first time for a lot of the kids and recently the better students went on to represent Newlands and Onslow in the regional competitions. It's helping to make sure that kids have a purpose in their life.

"Overall it is just really wonderful," says Bill. ■

A legacy of lost relationships

THE AWESOME FORCES BEHIND A 15-YEAR STRUGGLE TO RESTORE THE TE HĀKARI WETLAND TO ECOLOGICAL HEALTH.

PHOTOGRAPHY | *Rob Suisted*

"I think with this kind of work, wetland restoration, I can safely say we had Māori who were kaitiaki and Māori who weren't. And that was just part of a legacy of lost relationships. I mean if you don't go fishing any more than you don't know what fishing is. We'd be down doing some dune planting and somebody would say: 'Why are we doing this?'

"And that's OK because we have become so used to modification. I think that modification has had massive effects on people and caused dysfunction between people because of us having a really wrecked region, when really it used to be amazing."

Local woman Dr Huhana Smith has been one of the awesome forces behind a 15-year struggle to restore the 14 hectare Te Hākari wetland to ecological health, a process that has thrown into sharp relief the competing claims for Māori economic bases versus nature restoration.

She is a woman of great strength, with considerable charm, wit and wisdom, an ability to get on with many people and with a formidable academic record if anyone gets cheeky!

Te Hākari is one of a raft of dune wetlands on the Horowhenua coast, situated on the foreshore out from Kuku, between Waikawa and Levin. The lower reaches of the Ōhau River (including the "loop")

Dr Huhana Smith, Richard Anderson and Rangimarkus Heke at the regenerating Te Hākari wetland, one of a raft of dune wetlands on the Horowhenua coast.

"We don't just need a group of volunteers, we need an army of them."

DR HUHANA SMITH

are hydrologically linked to the tidal estuary, to Te Hākari dune wetland and the larger contiguous system stretching towards the Waikawa River. The coastal estuarine region remains predominantly in Māori title, either as shareholdings in large dairy farming incorporations or as part of Ahu Whenua, whānau or other trust arrangements.

In 1972 the Ōhau River was diverted as part of a flood protection scheme to allow coastal farmland to be developed, especially for dairying for the benefit of Māori-owned land.

"This has been a project that probably grew out of attempts by kaitiaki of iwi and hapū of Ngāti Tukorehe, my tribe, to get some health back into the Ōhau loop. What you have got in that area is a big stretch of Māori land and particularly the coastline where Tahamata Incorporation farms the coastline on behalf of the Māori shareholders of the hapū of Ngāti Tukorehe.

"There was a certain kind of theme running through my kōrero with most kaumātua I spoke with and that was the great sense of loss, mixed with resignation about: 'Oh well, it's for the sake of the farm and the finances and that kind of stuff.'

"But you could also sense that they were hurting about the loss and what joy and life it gave to them when they were fishing or gathering shellfish. I mean my mum recalled how beautiful it was when you got down to the Kuku beach.

"Customary fishing was a really big thing on this coastline when all the community went down the beach and every family from Kuku, Māori and Pākehā alike, got their fish, divided it up, and off they went. It's all that kind of thing of feeding and sustaining people simply and well. You didn't have to have heaps of money to be well fed.

"Te Hākari and all these related dune wetlands were a huge wetland resource. Essentially here you are talking about a very wet flood plain which had exceptional riches in food. It was full of tōtara (and kahikatea forest behind the dune belt), and now there is only one stand of kahikatea left.

"The biggest concern for locals really came from the healers of Tukorehe, the ones who were into promoting rongoā Māori and Māori spirituality, increasing relationships with whenua and water. They had concerns with the loss of fresh water for healing purposes.

"Agriculture was having an impact and they were concerned they wouldn't be able to access water for healing purposes. The water wasn't fresh enough, it wasn't healthy enough and it wasn't abundant enough. This whole Kuku area between the mountains and the sea had always been renowned for its healing.

Resolving the process hasn't been easy or straightforward but Ngā Whenua Rāhui has been crucial in providing support and advice to getting the wetland protected and at least partially restored to ecological health. The Tahamata Board, which oversees the land, agreed to the wetland area being set aside.

"NWR were the catalyst, they got us going. Getting in tow with NWR was what started all this, so we are most appreciative. They do really well and we have received a lot of support, maybe more than they said they were going to give.

"It wasn't a fight, but it was about finding people who could understand what we were talking about. My uncle Tane Carkeek totally agreed with what we were doing. I mean that paddock near the wetland is always wet anyway so what are we trying to do with that paddock? It is a rainfall recharge area. It is a ground depression wetland so it has an artesian water supply. It never really dried out but the farm did try really hard to dry it out by putting drains in," says Huhana.

Former project manager Richard Anderson admires the prolific flax group around the rims of the wetlands.

Richard Anderson, former project manager for Te Hākari and a man with a lifetime of commitment to conservation, says: "The rise of the dairy industry out here over the past 40 years has had a huge impact on the resource to the point where refuse and whiteware was dumped in a particular part of the loop of the river. I can remember seeing it sticking out and it was terribly bad.

"That's all forgotten now and everybody says what a neat thing we are doing but boy, did they have a go at us at the beginning, and they tried everything to drain Te Hākari."

Huhana says: "I think it is good to know there is a context in which Te Hākari functions and it was the development of the whole environmental arm through the tribe, so you have got a whole operational and governance trust set up, so it shows what an iwi was trying to do. No, it wasn't hard work bringing the people on board but it did take some time because we just kept taking them out to Te Hākari and saying: 'Have a look at this now and you too can have this in the future'."

So if a government auditor were to come by and ask how the investment has been spent, how would Huhana respond?

"We have a revegetated forest around a wetland, planted in tī kōuka, karamū, kahikatea, harakeke, all the appropriate natives. We are looking at a flourishing wetland and we have turned around the health of Te Hākari stream to the estuary.

"We got an electric fence put around it in 2005 and then a proper seven-wire fence in 2006. We raised the water levels from 2004 to 2006 and we did a hydrology research project. We were allowed by the farm to raise it to 800 millimetres, since then it has gone up and down a bit to around 600-650 mm. The farm was concerned about the wetting of the paddocks around it but it's OK now; we just had a lot of learning to do."

Volunteers have always been critical to the success of the project.

"We don't just need a group of volunteers, we need an army of them. I think that is where we are starting to push collaboration. We have had a lot of support, for example our Manaaki Taha Moana research project is collaborative, so we have Cawthron Institute, Massey University, our Taiao Raukawa Environmental Trust, we also have Victoria University's landscape architects come out and play with us now."

Just as important is that they have grown a new young Māori leader as well in Rangimarkus Heke who has done a lot of the hard yards in making the scheme a success. A graduate of the NWR cadet scheme, he has put the training to good use, being the former project manager.

"It was a good course and gave me some good skills, but I think there was just too much baseline stuff that was looking at producing an army of donkeys. The philosophy that we learned from Trevor Lambert was that you can be a manager while also telling us: 'Don't forget to get your hands dirty as well.'

"I have a pretty simple approach... if you want a wetland, just put a fence up and add water."

RANGIMARKUS HEKE

"What are we asking for, well I have a pretty simple approach that I have done my work by, and that is to just add water. If you want a wetland, just put a fence up and add water. I've learnt that some things you can throw money at and you have to ask what the benefit of it is.

"In the time I have been here I've been heavily reliant on a bunch of volunteers. In the first 2 years I was doing my training so I was away a lot. I have identified a few key people and a few of my young cousins were showing potential. I know they are passionate about the place and they take pride in what they come out and help to do but I know I could get them there every day if I was able to turn some silver.

"My personal focus is to try and re-engage my generation," says Rangimarkus.

The problem of hornwort in Te Hākari has also raised its ugly head lately and poses a serious threat to the dune wetland restoration efforts.

"Hornwort is probably the single, biggest most dangerous thing, honestly. It can be so serious that it will kill fish. We put two hīnaki in and one of the tuna had asphyxiated because the hornwort soaks up all the oxygen. It takes a hell of a lot to kill an eel, especially within 24 hours. I was just astonished but there it was," says Richard.

"Hornwort is like an underwater forest and it has an absolutely huge impact on freshwater fish and also birds, divers like dabchicks. They vanished because they couldn't dive down and access the fish through this awful blanket. We spent $15,000 on chopper spraying it a couple of years ago, got all the information, it looked great, the seasons change and then, hello, there it is back again."

But Huhana has built up a momentum for restoration that even hornwort won't stop.

"It's all about action and we have got to get younger ones like Markus to be part of that force, that resource. You still need dough to do things though. We have got more councils on board now with our projects and it's really good to get that push at the local government level.

"We are also not a project to point the finger and say: 'It's all your fault farmer Joe,' but we say we have a project that we are all sharing, so let's just focus on what the solutions are and put our energies into that."

Of course being Huhana she just can't contain herself, another kawenata is already underway and there are plans for some of the neighbouring areas if their people can be brought on board.

"Basically we are looking at growing six more Te Hākaris. We want the wetlands to stretch from Te Hākari through to Waikawa and then Lake Waiorongomai is now on its way. It's not a kawenata but a project with kaitiaki from Ngā Hapū o Ōtaki. They are leading the way and one of my Manaaki Taha Moana team, Aroha Spinks, is doing her PhD on it, with hapū support.

"The important thing is that we have no time to waste, we are in deep doo-doo and it won't just wash away. I've got uncles saying to me: 'Oh the Manawatu River is coming down to pollute our pristine waterways,' and I'm like: 'Excuse me, where is pristine; check your water because your waterway is as bad as the Manawatu'."

LEFT The rapidly regenerating wetland is being fully restored to ecological health.

BELOW Young Māori leader Rangimarkus Heke trying out his cricketing skills!

A REAL RIVERBANK REGENERATION PROJECT

WHAT STARTED OUT AS A USEFUL CONTRIBUTION TO TIDYING UP THE BACK END OF THE MARAE HAS ENDED UP AS SOMETHING MUCH MORE SIGNIFICANT.

PHOTOGRAPHY | *Herb Christophers*

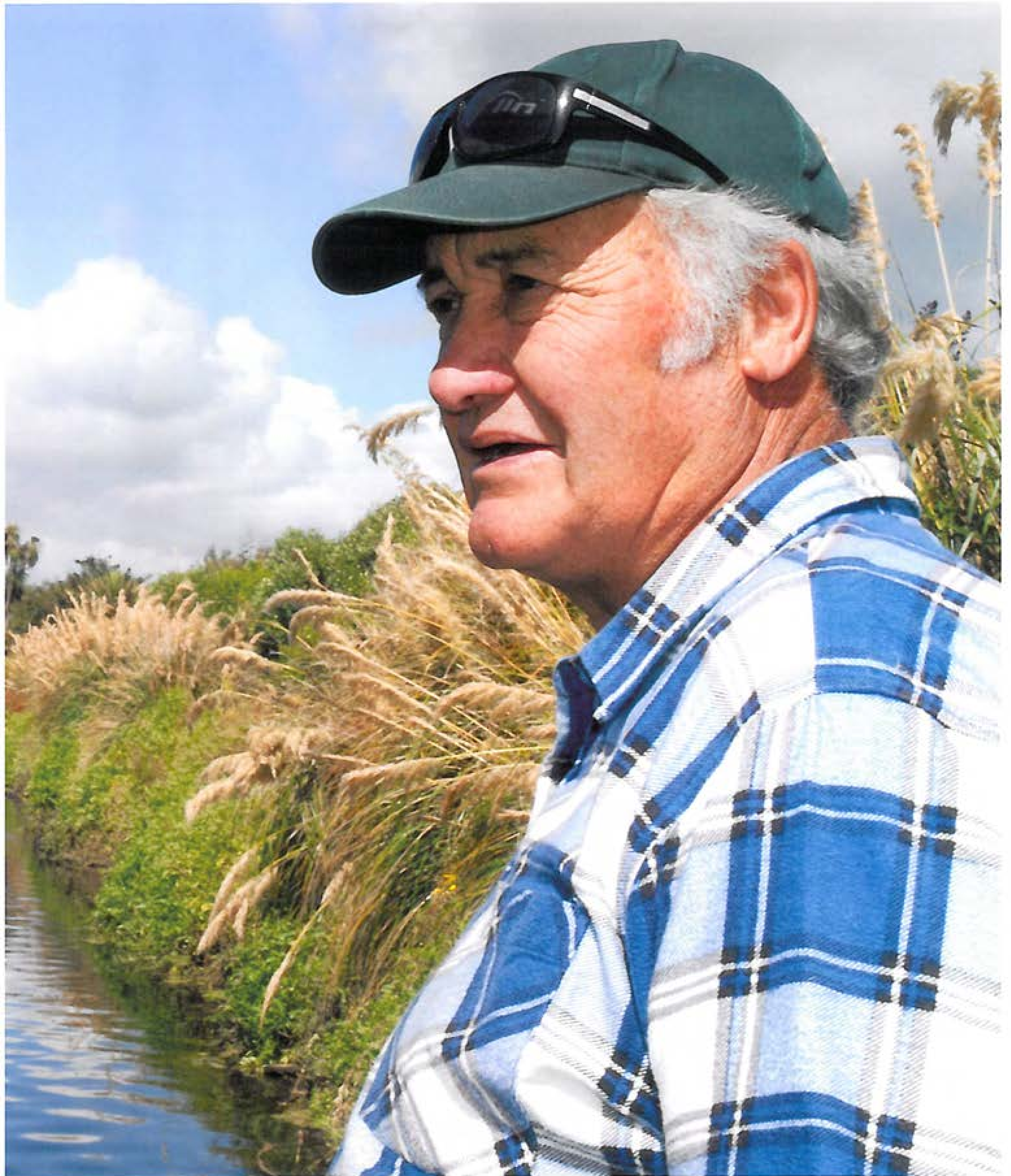
"We were looking at getting rid of all the rubbish trees like the poplars around the place and we thought... why not plant native? And bring back our native birds. We did a plan and we have planted around 2 acres every winter, either side of the stopbank, says kaumātua Tom McGuire, who works alongside his daughter Ani and a host of willing helpers.

"We started planting our little block down the back of the marae in 2008. We didn't have any money but we started off planting harakeke on our whenua and that's what got us started, egging ourselves on.

"Then the kōrero got around and we got a visit from Mike Mohi of Ngā Whenua Rāhui and that was the best visit we ever had. So away we went from there. We had a meeting with them, Mike and Rob McGowan, the plant man supremo, and kaitakawaenga Nema Bartlett.

"We are planting 2 acres every winter, block by block, which is something we can handle, and we are not overcommitted. I think if you try and do too much, then you can't handle it and it gets away on you. We have about seven blocks and next winter will be our eighth block with about 7000 trees each winter. It's working well so far.

Tom McGuire with the marae restoration project on the flanks of the Ngaruroro (Clive) River in Hawke's Bay.



"At first it was a bit of a shock to the whānau, all the rubbish was going and the land was looking bare... now they enjoy it and like walking through the ngahere"

TOM MCGUIRE

We are finding we have to go back to the early plantings and clean them up, clear the weeds away from them.

"Originally we started out to restore our beloved awa, 'the Old Ngaruroro', now known as the Clive/Waimate/Karamu Stream, and that is still our aim; might be a very long journey but we will continue to fulfil our wawata.

"We named our roopu 'Operation Pātiki' after the black river flounder that once was so abundant at the back of our marae Kohupatiki. The river was diverted in 1969 to help mitigate flooding of the Clive township. Operation Pātiki's band of followers resolved to restore the habitat and endemic species, create better river/water flow, and stop the runoff from the town roads, industrial waste and nitrogen pollution flowing into the river.

"Our roopu thought we'll start the plantings, because we need to make decisions on the day and we need that independent ability to act, but it's all good and the whānau like it, and we do come under the marae.

"At first it was a bit of a shock to the whānau, all the rubbish was going, the land was looking bare and then all of a sudden the trees were being planted. The whānau likes it now, they enjoy it and like walking through the ngahere, and seeing it being restored to native bush.

"There are also wāhi tapu sites here from the generations who used to live here on this river before us, because of the abundance of fish and pūhā. I think the plantings are helping the state of the river because we are actually planting right down to the water's edge."

It can be very contagious this tree planting and the project is far from finished.

"There is a lot more to do. If you can think 2 years ahead then you are doing pretty well! A lot of our planting is done by volunteers – for this winter coming up we are going to invite the communities to come in and help us. The kōhanga kids really love coming and they know all the names of the trees they are planting. I don't know how many trees we have planted but it's been a few thousand (probably 50,000).

"When we first started we used to weed around the trees, and keep them weed free all the time but we have changed now and we keep the weeds growing during the summer, as a bit of a shelter to help keep the moisture there. Once you open that soil up the sun gets in there and dries it all out. So after the summer is over we will go through and do our weeding.

"We do have a couple of blocks which have been left to fend for themselves, just to see how they get on, and they are growing. Not as fast as those we have managed but they are producing quite a strong plant and they seem to send their roots down to find the water, whereas with the ones we supply water to, the roots seem to sit just below the surface.

ABOVE Tom points out plantings on the map and there have been plenty of them so far, at least 50,000!

Our trees are sourced from Waimarama, the NWR nursery, and we have had some come from a Wairoa nursery.

"What we have found is that you can't plant the little trees, you need them to be at least a metre high, otherwise they are just not strong enough.

"The native plantings also form a very useful barrier between our orchard and the river, having both shelter belts and the native trees to form very useful riparian plantings. The whānau used to manage its own orchard but that has now changed.

"The orchard is going very well, we have the old varieties of apples in one area and the new varieties planted on land recently purchased back by the whānau. These new varieties aren't even on the market yet and have been grafted onto the old stock.

"They say you have to have over 100 acres or more to be a viable orchard these days and this is one thing the whānau understands and maintains their valuable land mass here at Kohupatiki. For over 140 years the whānau has cropped wheat and potatoes, and then we decided to get into orcharding.

"It is sad that our families used to run the orchard and our people used to work there. When the Whakatu freezing works closed in the 1980s it provided very useful employment for people. When we ran the orchard we were all fruit pickers and were trained to do the jobs, not just picking, but how to prune and how to graft.

"But we found the whānau didn't want to work in the orchard and that's OK, it's one of those social trends that are happening. The next generation are seeking higher education and we are proud that many of them have become successful. We have changed the whole structure of the orchard and contract out its management to a professional manager where everything is monitored daily and it's paying us a good return. A lot of our good young people have gone to Australia. It's totally different now," says Tom. ■

Very suspicious of these government fellas with chequebooks!

KAUMĀTUA ALEX REEDY HAS SEEN A LOT OF "GOVERNMENT FELLAS" COME AND GO IN HIS TIME, OFTEN PROMISING SCHEMES AND THEN DISAPPEARING, SO IT TOOK HIM A LITTLE WHILE TO MAKE UP HIS MIND ABOUT MIKE MOHI OF NGĀ WHENUA RĀHUI.

PHOTOGRAPHY | *Herb Christophers*

"I am very suspicious of these government fellas with chequebooks who turn up wanting to help us, so when Mike Mohi from Ngā Whenua Rāhui arrived in Ruatoria in the mid-1990s I said to him, 'Oh you work for the Government, what tribe are you from boy?' because he wasn't from our tribe.

"I looked at him sideways and let him carry on, and after a few more meetings I thought, 'This fella is genuine'," recalls Ngāti Porou kaumātua, Alex Reedy of Ruatoria, with a chuckle.

Alex is a trustee of Waiorongomai Station, a 6500 ha block of Māori-owned land just out of Ruatoria.

"We still have the front part of it in farming, all the flats and so on, and we have a bull fattening unit. The farming operations for sheep and beef cover around 1500 ha, there are 2000 ha planted in pines, and around 3000 ha is being left to regenerate into native bush and it was parts of this area that were attractive as a kawenata.

"We weren't interested in milling the rimu that remained. The forestry was looking at logging the native rimu, but the percentage they were leaving behind wasn't big enough. It might have been 80/20 or something like that, maybe even less. So there was some millable timber and it's still there and we would like to leave it like that for the generations to come.

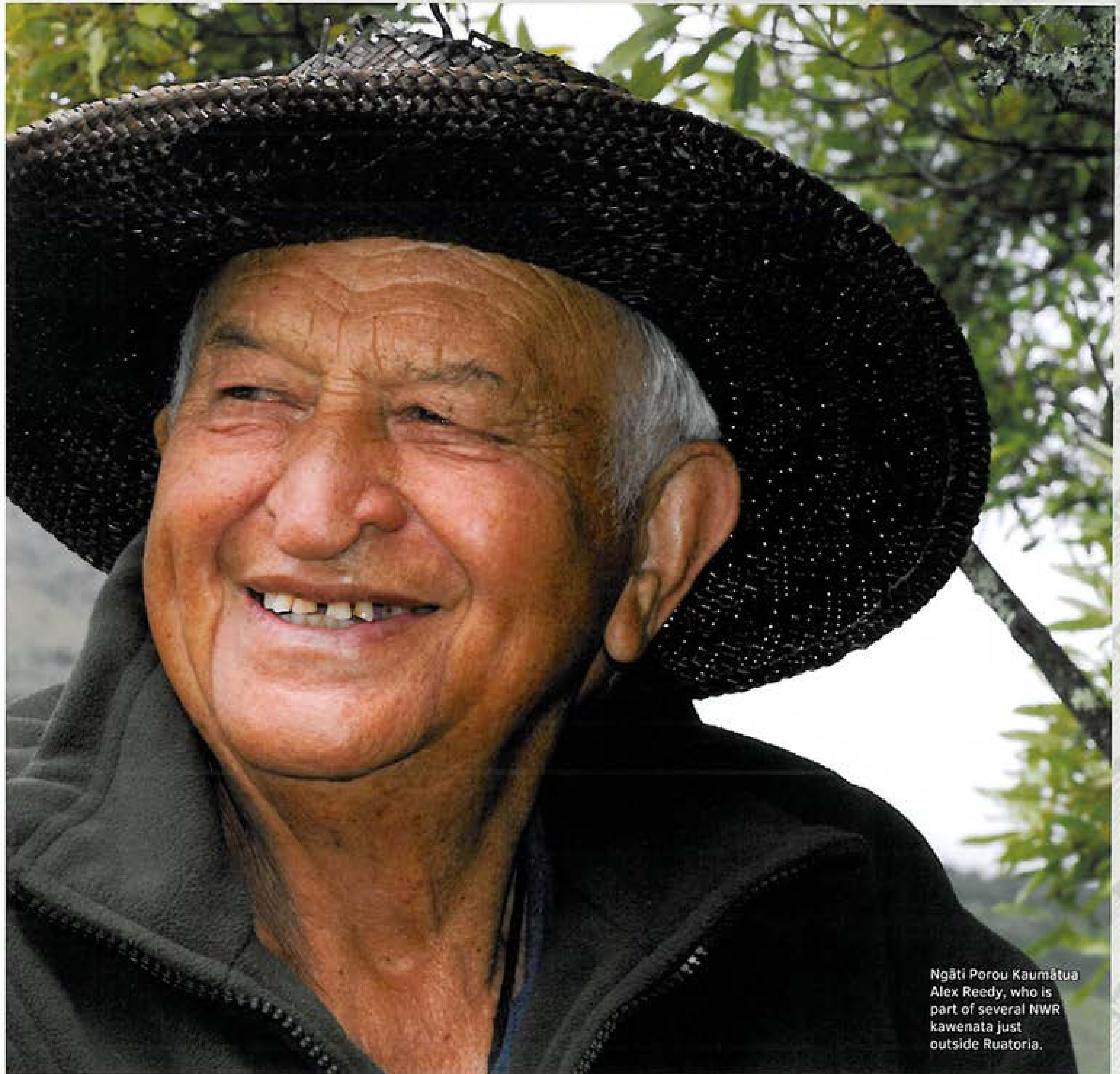
"Mike said, 'Wasn't it better to leave the land in its natural state and he would support us to do that.' I had to convince the old fellas, the trustees of the incorporation on the committee, that this guy was genuine.

"Put it this way, because they didn't trust the Pākehā or the Government, they were saying, 'Oh you are going to tie up this land for so many years, and there is a clause there that we don't understand allowing them to tie it up for a further 5 years with the agreement of the fellas in Wellington.'

"And I said, 'No, no, this guy is genuine and I've listened to him and dreamt about the bugger and he has got a cheque book and is ready to sign.' Everything worked out all right. That was the biggest part, convincing the committee, and they found Mike was a genuine fella, eh. The trustees agreed after the second meeting and then it was off to the legal beagles.

"There was another guy from up north, Kevin Prime, and although we didn't meet him till after, when I heard him speak I thought, 'These fellas are not scam artists.'

"As part of the agreement they agreed to do pest control, such as possums. Goat control is very important as we do have goats there now and they come in from the forestry. The owners are very happy with that pest control and they have put another reserve on another block, the McClutchie block, on the station next door, which has



Ngāti Porou Kaumātua Alex Reedy, who is part of several NWR kawenata just outside Ruatoria.

LEFT One of the kawenata by the roadside, with strong new growth showing the benefits of protection.

RIGHT The homestead on Waiorongomai Station, a 6500 ha Māori property running sheep and beef, pine forests and with nearly half the land remaining in native bush.

the same trustees as Waiorongomai.

"It is a little beauty that one, right next to the road. It's all good, it's working well. We have had no issues with NWR. They keep in touch, eh. They are very good like that and they send us monitoring reports when they have done them."

While the provisions for public access didn't cause any heartburn the illegal release of deer by hunters certainly has.

"Where a problem comes from the public is from people from the outside, and hunters trying to bring in sika deer onto our land and trying to breed up their hunting stock. They are hard to find because they are really shy and nobody knows anything about it. Now that's not fair on us.

"But Mike was on to it, he brought a couple of fellas up from Te Kaha and they came in to shoot the sika. He had a team of guys there and they found them and they come back from time to time, checking, and now the forestry is doing it as well."

Ruatoria of course gained certain notoriety in the 1980s for the fire-burning exploits of some of the Rastafarians who came there, so the interesting question is whether that has settled down.

"Yes there was some action, but they have all got married and they are breeding now. There was a guy who used to be the leader of the group, and when everything settled down he joined the fire brigade and has been putting the fires out! That is a fact eh!"

Alex acknowledges that Ruatoria has struggled over time.

"Ruatoria has gone backwards because of the lack of work and all of the young fellas have gone to Australia. We kicked off the forestry with all the local fellas, eh, they all dropped their jobs on the farms and they were promised big money in the forestry and a job for life.

"But halfway through the exercise, the big forestry company who owned all the forests, they sold up you see and there was a contractor from China and he took over everything but he never paid a soul.

"It's also gone backwards because of the shutdown of the New Zealand Forest Service (which used to hire a lot of locals) and the downturn in farming. All the small villages along the coast had their own ports and all the produce used to go out from there, and then the Government spent a lot of money up there putting roads through.

"Now when you travel on the state highway from Gisborne to Ruatoria you have got to be careful of all the potholes because if you fall in you may never get out! There are roadworks, 7 days a week, because of the amount of logging trucks. So they are still spending lots of money on the roads. We would have preferred to have the little ships still coming in and the East Coast ports still operating," reflects Alex. ■

"Ruatoria has gone backwards because of the lack of work and all of the young fellas have gone to Australia."

ALEX REEDY

Restoring the mana

REDISCOVERING THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE OLD PEOPLE ON MATAKANA AND HARNESSING IT FOR REGENERATION OF THE WETLANDS AND SWAMPS, TO RESTORE THE MAURI OF THE WATERWAYS.

PHOTOGRAPHY | *Herb Christophers*

"The way I look at it is that Matakana Island is like the body of a person and if you don't look after it in one area there are consequences to the health of that body in another. You can live in this world and have all the commercial ventures you want as long as you look after the body."

Jason Murray and his partner Aroha Armstrong have been at the heart of an inspiring effort to regenerate significant areas of Matakana Island, but there is more to it than this. It is also about rediscovering the knowledge of the old people on the island and harnessing it for regeneration, as well as restoring the mauri of the waterways to enhance the health of the fish species. And in a quiet way it has provided some valuable employment opportunities.

Matakana Island has a rich history and stands guard on the western flanks of Tauranga Harbour. It's a long flat shape about 20 kilometres from end to end and never more than 3 kilometres wide. The sawmill closed in the early 1990s but the pine forests are still being harvested. It has a grand population of 255, down from the 600 that lived here when the sawmill was in operation.

BELOW The nursery on Matakana is now growing around 30 species, all sourced as close as possible to the replanting sites.

OPPOSITE Jason Murray and his partner Aroha Armstrong on Matakana Island.

Jason had largely grown up on the island and then went off to Waikato University to study marine biology and earth sciences, which is where he met Aroha who was doing Māori and Pacific development studies. How did they get together?

"I cooked her smoked fish first which had been caught from around here and that might have been the telling factor to tip the scales. It's like trying to attract the tūī to the tree, if you've got the goods you can get the girl!" he laughs.

"We had finished university and were just having a break really and we came back here, wondering what we were going to do. With everybody leaving it was a bit depressing. It was trying to find more work for people and trying to find work for ourselves too.

"I have been brought up in the belief that when you go away and do a degree, you have got to return and give back to the people. Ngāi Te Rangi is my iwi and I whakapapa to all the five hapū here. We hardly ever say we are just from the one (hapū), we are from Matakana and that's it," he says.

The couple's vision of redemption for the island has evolved over time from humble beginnings.

"Initially we just wanted to do something about the wharf and get something started down there to tidy it up and make it look good. So we started growing 50 or so plants in our backyard. We hooked up with Landcare Research and at the time my mother was working for DOC with the

# of Matakana

"A lot of them were dumps for old machinery so we just get a big digger in, get the steelworks fellas to come over and to pull the old stuff out"

JASON MURRAY

banded dotterels just here and so it was a sort of a two-pronged approach. One was the tidying up but then we started looking at the bigger picture, particularly around fishing.

"That was our main focus, protecting breeding grounds of fish with all the swamps. Around here the swamps were used as dumping grounds and in my lifetime the fish numbers were dropping rapidly. All of them – especially mullet, snapper and flounder. Some of them lay eggs in the swamp and others will spend a part of their life cycle in these catchment areas, whether it be for feeding or breeding.

"All our focus on the island is around wetlands and swamps. A lot of them were dumps for old machinery so we just get a big digger in, get the steelworks fellas to come over and to pull the old stuff out and we get a little bit of money from the scrap to pay for the diggers. Then if we have got weeds you get another digger in and clear all the weeds away and it gives you a clean slate to go in and plant. Grey willow is probably the most dominant weed in wetlands here on the island."

They have achieved an enormous amount already and it's been done with understated humour, modesty and the building of productive relationships with Māori and Pākehā stakeholders, so they all feel they have a place on the island.

Most of the knowledge about restoration has come from a judicious blend of Western scientific knowledge and from the mātauranga that was already here.

"I was lucky to learn a lot from some of the old ones who were still here. The whole holistic world of the island, of setting nets, digging gardens and so on, because it is so expensive bringing things in on the barge, so we used to be a quite self-sustaining people.

"We had to do something, because if we carried on down the road we were going it was only a matter of time before we destroyed all our nice areas. That's how we got started really and the nursery grew from there. We picked up some funding from the Mātauranga Kura Taio to interview our older generation about certain wetlands," says Jason.

Nurseries can be notorious sinkholes for money that disappears and never resurfaces so how have they got around that or at least factored it in?

"We didn't; looking after the health of the land was the first and foremost thing to do. We have just been so lucky getting some good funding through Ngā Whenua Rāhui to help us reach those goals and keep our heads above water. So we got the evidence from mātauranga as to what was there before, how many fish we caught and so on and we could then make funding applications to replant these areas.

"I was lucky I had the science background so I could argue the other side of that talk with councils. A lot of them found it hard to understand where we were coming from, but I could straddle both those worlds. Now we feel there is really good support here, we have really good relationships with key people in the council. We have been around long enough and everybody understands what it is we are trying to do," says Jason.

They have initially focused on wetland plants in the nursery: mānuka, flaxes and carex grasses.

"We grow around 30 species in all. Most of them were here but all the bigger trees, the podocarps, had been cleaned off years ago so we were starting from scratch. Matakana used to be the southernmost end of the kauri and there used to be a lot of kauri gum digging on the island.

"We try and get the seeds from as close to the sites as we can or if we can't get them, we go off the island, especially for podocarps from the Kaimai Ecological District.

"What we didn't want was to plant all these plants and have our kids growing up in another world and not understanding

THIS PAGE
TOP LEFT
Coprosma berries (karamū) look ripe for the picking by birds.
TOP RIGHT
Māori kamokamo vegetables (which are similar to courgettes) are in abundance and prove that nurseries are great for growing vegetables as well as trees.
BOTTOM
Smoked fish right out of the harbour makes a splendid lunch.

what we are doing. So we had to find some way to take that mātauranga and transition it to the kids. So we developed like a unique school curriculum particularly for here, all the things I've grown up with, the wisdom of the older people, the tikanga of it all, and it's running now.

"Yes, we have lots and lots of projects on the island. A lot of them are focused on swamp regeneration as well as our planting areas around the island, the school, the maraes etc to raise the awareness. That was our contribution back to the community.

"We are completing pretty much our 5-year plan which is really a 20-year plan to restore all the farm swamps and wetlands. There are probably over 300 freshwater springs here – the water comes over from the Kaimais under the harbour. There would be about 240 ha to regenerate. There are heaps of Māori trusts over here who own the farmland and they have multiple owners.

"If I can't get them on the economics, then I will get them on the science around protecting those breeding grounds for fish, because that is the key to it all. One of those two will be favourable to them.

"We have tried to find a way that's a win-win right across the board. Because the farmers are only using the swamps for summer grazing, we got them to buy

Most of the knowledge about restoration has come from a judicious blend of Western scientific knowledge and from the mātauranga that was already here.

into mānuka, in the hope there will be an economic venture for honey or carbon credits. It's trying to give them an economic avenue on Matakana.

"The (exotic) forestry is in private ownership and we are slowly working towards some sort of partnership to restore the coastline around their properties with natives to form a good buffer zone.

"And you have got the other ones, the shrewd developers who want to develop the bush sites pretty much for retirement houses for rich overseas people. Everyone is against it, there are a lot of cultural and environmental aspects we don't want destroyed and we won our case in the Environment Court."

Perhaps the key to the nursery's success is that not only have they been growing plants for their own purposes but for other blocks of Māori land as well, through the Ngā Whenua Rāhui Kawenata connection funding.

"Mike Mohi will ring and say 'I've got this block' so we will go over and have a look at it, and work out a plan of what kind of plants are needed. We have to work out what will best suit the particular area we are restoring. At the start we relied heavily on Pa McGowan (the Ngā Whenua Rāhui botanist) who was really helpful in assessing suitable plant species, but we've got more comfortable doing it ourselves.

"We do the whole package, and we've got my old man, who was in the forestry doing silviculture, to do the planting out. We took him on so that his boys have got work and we know the plants will be put in properly. We do make a profit but it's not a large amount, it's just enough to run our nursery on.

"We provide some employment on the island, which is just great. We've got five kaimahi working part-time in our nursery. I go out a year ahead and get the forward orders to give us the ability to plan properly and then the kaimahi go and do the seed collection and bring it back and start the growing process. We have only got 20 hours allocated per person but it works out well because the kaimahi come in while the kids are at school.

"We just tell them what needs to be done, and everybody knows what they need to do to fulfil the orders. It's been a really good work environment, there have been no issues, and they have always fulfilled the orders.

"The key thing is to look after our whenua and moana and look for innovative ways of being more sustainable and to put the environment at the top of the list, because of our reliance on the kaimoana here.

"Aroha is probably more the funding guru and she looks after all the nursery side with the kaimahi. My role is to go out and find the covenants and liaise with all the thousands of landowners in multiply-owned land blocks. I do the behind the scenes stuff, arrange all the plantings and talk to the councils before it actually gets on the ground. It's good to see it all come together in the end when you finish the block.

"You are getting paid to work the land but you are leaving something behind for the grandkids that is beneficial, with the trees and all, and leaving behind something of beauty," says Jason. ■

OPPOSITE Ngā Whenua Rāhui supports a number of other nurseries and, often, the whole family gets involved! Buchanan Cullen and daughter Aniwaniwa Cullen at Waimarie Nursery, Poroti, Northland. ***Photo: Rob Suisted***

ABOVE A regenerating wetland set in the heart of farmland provides a colourful contrast to the dry paddocks.

A RIVER RULES HIS LIFE

WHEN MILLAN RUKA RETURNED TO NORTHLAND FROM 10 YEARS WORKING OVERSEAS, HE WAS STUNNED AT THE STATE OF HIS BELOVED WAIRUA RIVER.

PHOTOGRAPHY | *Rob Suisted*

It was stagnant, brown and discoloured and you could smell cattle urine and excrement everywhere, because the cows could wander at will.

"I wanted to reintroduce my boys who had been brought up in Papua New Guinea, back to our rivers. I took them for a paddle out duck shooting in May and our rivers were nothing to what I remembered. Normally you would expect to get 20 ducks on the river but we didn't get one."

So he decided to do something about it.

He got himself a motorboat, started talking to the hapū and the farmers on the river as well as the relevant local bodies, and set up the Environment River Patrol Trust. Even more imaginatively, he worked out his own river monitoring system!

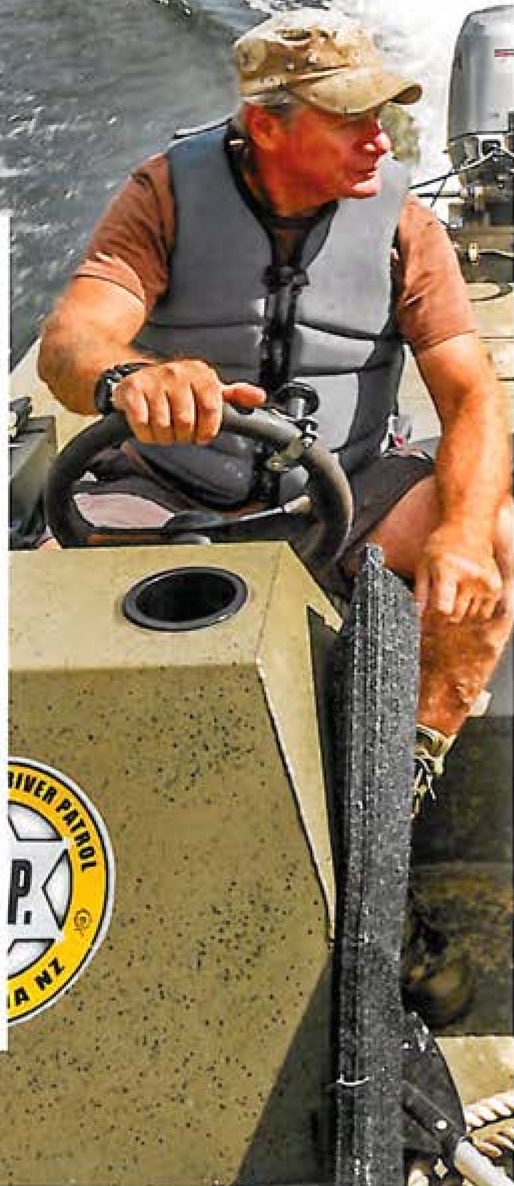
"I'd had 7 years of assessment in the construction industry, dealing with apprentices and then on to licensing, so I got reasonably proficient at presenting a report and working towards the required outcomes, and I used that formula in the river reports. I gained massive traction because the assessment framework was similar.

"So I have been able to formulate a reporting system and while there may be changes through the input of others, it is working and I have developed a 39-point code, which is about the mark six model I think.

"It is telling you how to go down the river and make your own assessments. Is there a fence there? Is it a fence fit for purpose? Are the stock grazing on the right side of it? It covers every contingency. I think I have the right recipe and I have set myself 12 goals, including the health of tuna, encouraging Pākehā and Māori to get back and enjoy the river, fencing reports and standards, and so on.

His work starts with the Hikurangi swamp.

"The upper Hikurangi swamp has about 35 kilometres of intense dairy and beef farming, the Whakapara and the Waiotu rivers come down and they join the Wairua River and flow on till they get to the Purua falls. In the mid-1970s the Government decided to drain the swamplands, using a levy bank and a pump station system.



Millan Ruka and his Uncle Henry out on the river boat patrol in Northland.

"It's become one of our most problematic areas the Hikurangi swamp, and of course it flows right down to the Kaipara Harbour. In the swamp there is the main river of some 40-odd kilometres of intense dairying areas, and there are 80 kilometres of drains, the man-made channels. The Mangakahia River runs for about 70 kilometres and it has intensive dairying down the lower parts of it and intensive beef farming at the top of it.

"It was in early 2011 that I formed the Trust. I wrote up a submission to the Northland Regional Council to tell them exactly what I was going to do and that was to report on the condition of the rivers, get them fenced off and generally take a role of kaitiaki te awa as a guardian. In particular the Wairua River and the Mangakahia River, both of which I whakapapa strongly to," he says.

So he began making his detailed reports and has never stopped, and they have included taking photos and making visual assessments. But he has no formal scientific qualifications so how does he get around that?

"You didn't need to be a rocket scientist to analyse the state of the water. You could see it and smell it; the effects of cattle grazing on the state of the river were very obvious."

So what has he achieved over the past few years in terms of holding river users to account?

"I learned early in the process that it would be the media that did most of the heavy lifting, and that is exactly how it turned out. I came down the top part of the river on my second trip and I picked up three dead cows and sent some photos off to the media and they grasped hold of that and it went national."

So it was a kind of "name and shame" approach?

"No, it was a location and shame process. The camera I use takes GPS-mapped photos, so each photo shows an accurate satellite image of the location on Google. I have to say that my intention has never been to get offside with the farmers or chastise them. I respect the farming community and what they do. I try and avoid individual confrontations like the plague and my intent from day one has been patriotism and compassion, patriotism first.

"There has been a massive amount of media comment and the reaction has been good really. So it really isolates the ones that aren't performing and that includes some leaders who are not on board with what the community wants. It also highlights that there are good farmers who have fenced off and they don't want to be tarred with the same brush as the bad ones.

"I've completed more than a hundred reports to date. The early ones are more site specific to a farm, but the latter ones have been over longer distances, over 100 km for the latest one. That is assessments on both sides so that means 200 km for that last one," says Millan.

Have these reports helped to build a climate of change?

LEFT Gathering evidence at the sharp end of the river. "We need to get people back on our rivers, both Pākehā and Māori. To paddle them, to walk down them and to open them up," says Millan.

RIGHT "Uncle Henry (on the right) is my inspiration really. At 85 he can still put a strainer post up and do the hard graft," says Millan.

"It can be a pretty lonely type of mahi you know. You're not going to make a lot of friends out of it but respect is all I ask for."

MILLAN RUKA

"For sure, you can see those direct results further up in the Wairua because we have nearly 70 km of fencing that wasn't there previously, some de-stocking of cattle.

"NIWA has also done some very detailed reports. What are they telling us? Well the outcome of 200 pages is, 'Clean the awa up!'

"Ideally, the best solution is to restore it and try and get the river back to what it originally was. You can't beat the harakeke there. Sometimes it is not practical but generally flaxes are a good thing to use and that was a big part of the swamp in the old days. There is some mānuka coming back but basically there is little native bush."

What about the Clean Streams Accord?

"I analysed their responsibilities and found that only a few farmers were meeting the Clean Streams Accord. Beef cattle weren't included at all. The other problem is that it has no independent assessment. So I have become the independent assessor by default.

"I mean there is greater commitment now from Fonterra. Out of it we have gained a $500,000 project that Fonterra and Dairy NZ have initiated in the Mangere River catchment area which I am really pleased about. It's not fully tagged for fencing and riparian planting but we hope to convince them that this is the best pathway to take. My hapū Te Uriroroi has embarked on a planting and fencing project here and we hope it inspires others."

Millan pays tribute to his Uncle Henry who has stood staunchly by him the whole time.

"Uncle Henry is my inspiration really. At 85 he can still put a strainer post up and does the hard graft. He is an excellent boatman and is well known for that around Whangarei, and as a top fisherman who can still put kai on the table. He fully understands and supports the work I do. It can be a pretty lonely type of mahi you know. You're not going to make a lot of friends out of it but respect is all I ask for."

The Northland Regional Council has been helpful with the farmers on the fencing, but their relationship with Millan is still challenging.

"There is still some way to go for the kind of cultural shift which the Taranaki Regional Council and Environment Waikato have made with their dairying industry. They won't put up with the kind of pollution we do here; the North is still a bit of a wild frontier.

"But we are making progress, with all the fencing and the Fonterra project. Through our pan-hapū Ngā Kaitiaki O Ngā Wai Māori group, we are trying to get our waka ama groups to have a contest on the rivers, because our waka have not been seen on our rivers for more than 100 years.

"I put up the case that we need to get people back on our rivers, both Pākehā and Māori. To paddle them, to walk down them and open them up because for way too long the farmers have seen them as their rivers," he says.

And while he is very appreciative of the support from Ngā Whenua Rāhui and Meryl Carter in particular, protecting the river for Millan is not so much a career as a lifetime obligation!

There's a tuna tale as well!

It's not just dairy cows and what comes down the rivers he has to deal with but also ensuring that tuna elvers can get up the waterways by getting around physical barriers such as power stations and flood pump stations.

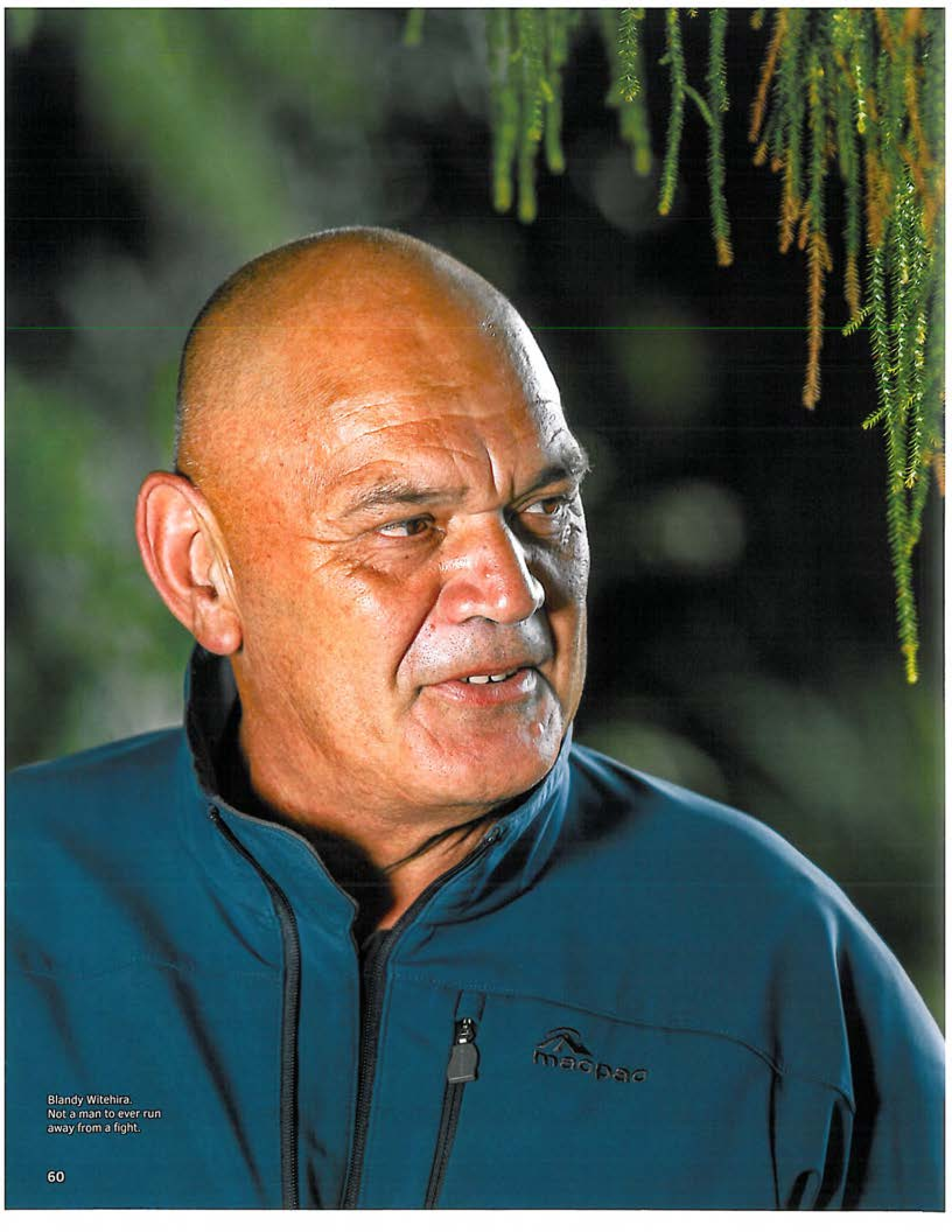
Millan has been working with the companies and councils to get a better deal.

"The power station was commissioned in 1917, and from that day on I would say that no more than 15% of the elvers could get up past the power station through the man-made spillway and the gates.

"At the location they always hug the easy side, the western side of the Wairua Power Station, and we've found that by putting a mussel spat rope there it's just like a natural rope, so when they want to move up they can do it within the rope, gripping it like tree roots, and they can also rest on it.

"It's only about 10 centimetres across but it's the way its fibres are looped. The elvers are attracted by a small water flow down concrete column walls and rope and they sense it as a way to get up-river. They come all the way from the Tongan trenches and once one or two of them have found this particular route, they don't hesitate following the scent trails. They wiggle up onto a concrete channel that leads them into a water tank for transfer up river.

"North Power, which owns the power station, has been very helpful. It's a big learning curve and there is still a lot to be done there. We've had NIWA come on board and they've been fantastic. We have formed a consortium with the five hapū so we all have to work together. After three seasons, George Tuhiwai of Hapū Te Parawhau has now transferred more than 12 million elvers past the power station using the new elver ladder system," Millan concludes.



Blandy Witehira.
Not a man to ever run
away from a fight.

Blandy Witehira: "A thousand arrows in my back"

"I'VE GOT A THOUSAND ARROWS IN MY BACK AND I'M PREPARED TO TAKE A THOUSAND MORE MINISTER, BUT YOU NEED TO BE THERE TOMORROW AS PART OF THE PARTNERSHIP BECAUSE WE STILL WANT TO WORK WITH YOU."

MAIN PHOTOGRAPH | *Rob Suisted*

Cape Brett in the Bay of Islands. *Photo: Brian Dobbie*

Blandy Witehira was recalling one of the toughest days of his life, when he and fellow trustees accompanied then Minister of Conservation Nick Smith on to the Ngāpuhi marae at Rawhiti to try and convince the iwi that it made good sense to sign a Ngā Whenua Rāhui covenant to protect 1600 ha of Māori land, some of which forms part of the Cape Brett Walkway in Northland.

Blandy is one of the great characters of Māoridom, an ex-soldier, a man who has come up the hard way doing physical work and pest control contracting, but also a skilled strategist dedicated to advancing the cause of his Ngāpuhi iwi. He is also a great storyteller.

Suspicion of the Crown's intentions and the fear that a kawenata was just the first stage in land confiscation had created a large upwelling of opposition and it all came to a head the day before Waitangi Day 1998.

"Now I remember that day because it's etched in my memory. I will never forget it. Man there were heaps of people there, the marae was full, it's the biggest hui Rawhiti ever had. It's interesting because right at the beginning, at the taumata in our whare, all of a sudden there were people sitting on there that I had never seen before, and that is a bad sign!

"I sat on the side of the marae and there were a number of people there. I sat right next to Nick Smith, he was on my left side and the Director-General, Hugh Logan was on my right side, and Mike Mohi was sitting next to Hugh Logan.

"We just got shit, we got thrown from pillar to post, the whole same thing. All these kaumātua one after the other stood up saying the same things that a lot of our people say when they don't understand or they can't see, they have no vision and are closed off to anything but what they think.

"So I remember this well because about two-thirds of the way through the hui, Nick Smith leans over to Hugh Logan in front of me, and he says, 'This is not looking good', and this is what I admire about him, he was a real clever politician because he had got shit as well, such as 'Get off our marae' and 'You're a thief'; all those normal things that our people say."

Minister Nick Smith made a very shrewd judgement call on the spot, once he saw the way the debates were going.

"He stood up and I remember his first words, 'I hear what the people say'.

"And I thought here we go, don't you start doing an about-turn bro, and he said, 'The document we are going to sign today, I am not going to sign it and we are going to put the whole project on hold for 3 months and it's obvious to me that the Trustees haven't gone and consulted with the wider Ngāpuhi'.

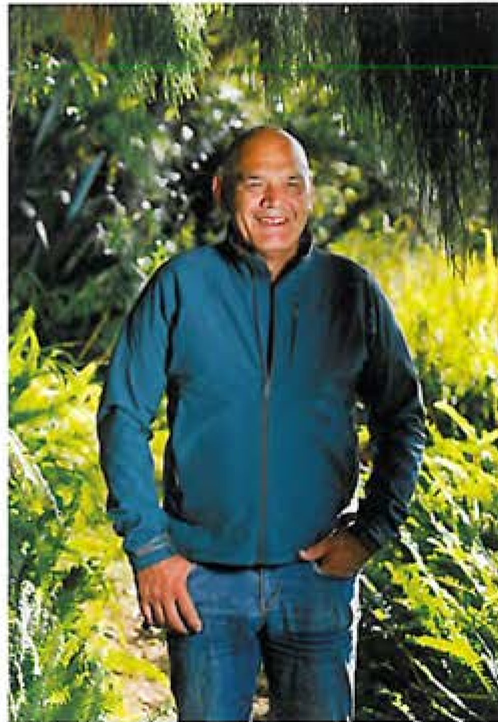
"Everybody was saying, 'Oh that's sounding great; we have stopped them in their tracks'. So at the end of it I was so devastated I said to Mike Mohi, 'That's it, I am finished. I have done my part and I'm finished. I have been abused in my own whare by people I don't even know and who I have never seen in the ngahere when I have been working up there trying to do the pest control'.

"There was only my uncle who was the past Chairman of the Trust, Bishop Ben Te Hara, who stood up and actually fought and said to these people, 'You know if you don't know what is actually happening out on the whenua then you have got no right to accuse anybody of anything. We live here, there are possums galore and the ngahere is dying and here is an opportunity'. It all fell on deaf ears. Anyway as soon as the hui was finished and I'd sat down and said I've had enough, this koroua Eruera Garland said, 'You come back and finish the job' and was very supportive.

"So I worked out a strategy and my mother said, 'Go and see your father's people in Mataraua,' where I was brought up.

"I picked up straight away, their whakaaro and the way they do things is totally different to the mainstream institutions."

BLANDY WITEHIRA



OPPOSITE Part of the Cape Brett Walkway. There are 1600 hectares of Māori land under covenant in the area, and the walkway is partly on Māori land. *Photo: Brian Dobbie*

Now where I come from, my father's people are right in the heartland of Ngāpuhi and that is why I felt very isolated. They never came to the actual hui when Nick Smith was there, and they will never stand up and berate me on the marae, like all the other kaumātua, they just didn't turn up.

"I went out there and had a hui and it was only me and Eruera, our āpotoro, and I explained everything. My father's people supported us.

"I went around all the hapū and I tell you what, as soon as they heard the right story, then bang, they were supportive. We only had to go to four hui and my kaumātua said, 'That's enough, we are going down to Wellington'.

"I rang up Nick Smith and told him we are ready to come and talk to you; we have done the consultation and I am bringing about 15 kaumātua with me so you do get the message and he said, 'That's all right'. So we flew down to Wellington and we sat in his office and said that we all supported it, so he decided to let the kawenata go forward.

"At the Trust AGM now I have great joy in looking the same people who opposed us in the eye and saying we have still got our whenua. They are very quiet now.

"So that's the bad part of the story and I will tell you something. In life you go through a lot of challenges, and that would have been one of the biggest challenges that I ever experienced in my whole life.

"It won't take so long to tell you the good part. So from there, everything settled down and I said to Mike, 'Hey, I've been reading this kawenata and you fellas are supposed to help us with the land because the ngahere is dying', and he says, 'Good idea, we haven't really thought about it'. That's when we started setting up the pest control. I said to him, 'I have taken such a thrashing over this, I want that ngahere brought back to life'.

"So that was the first time I met Denis Peters; he came up and had a hui. He had a look at the land and said, 'I will put up a report advocating an intensively managed area as a project to the committee. First we are going to do a baseline survey to see what's out there.' I have to acknowledge the NWR's Biodiversity Impact Monitoring team that did the baseline survey; they identified the specific values and the state of the ngahere and that gave us a platform to work from.

"And of course it was the kiwi out there that gave Denis the ability to recommend to the committee that an intensively managed site should be set up on our 3B2 Trust lands. We are now in the fifth year of that intensively managed programme. We have got infrastructure out there that is supporting the mahi, and the brown kiwi population has now exploded from a little wee area out on Cape Brett to the

DOC estate, all the way back to Pukehuia which is just above Rawhiti, well outside the intensively managed area.

"So that was done by ground control and we targeted everything that was not indigenous or a human being, put it that way. And also at the start of it we employed 10 of our rangatahi."

Blandy is very happy with the progress being made and notes that the surveys are showing that the ngahere is really healthy. The latest kiwi survey shows around 100 pairs.

Blandy also recalls the early history of the kawenata and the first time he met Mike Mohi.

"It was around 1996 and at that time I was working fulltime for the Te Rawhiti 3B2 Trust Board and that Trust was out on Cape Brett. It was a total of 1600 ha of whenua tipuna with a shareholding of approximately 10,000 owners from 22 hapū of Ngāpuhi that tie into that whenua.

I got involved through Parekura Horomia, in his capacity as CEO of Community Employment Group, and I put in an application for community employment. He came out and had a look at our assets and like a lot of iwi, we were asset rich but totally unorganised, with no money and an outstanding rates bill. So he gave some resources to organise ourselves and develop an economic base for the two hapū out at Rawhiti. I am very grateful for Parekura's support.

"That resourcing gave employment for me and another person to work out a strategy for the tribal lands of 3B2 Trust. The state of them wasn't the greatest, there was intermittent pest control and the ngahere was slowly dying.

"Then I read in the newspaper an advert for NWR. It sounded like the kaupapa that would suit our whenua. So I thought I would make an inquiry. Nothing ventured, nothing gained, and there was this fella called Mike Mohi. He was straight to the point and said, 'I will come up, meet you, take a walk over the whenua and go from there'.

"And of course what he picked up was that Cape Brett is in a very high profile area, the Bay of Islands, especially to the people of Auckland who come up here boating and holidaying during the summer when the population of Rawhiti grows a hundredfold. And he asked if there were any special biodiversity values on the land.

"Well at that time I didn't know what biodiversity was, let alone how to spell it! So he explained and asked if there were any mature native trees and I said, 'Oh, there is kauri galore', and he said, 'Oh that's good, what about any manu?' and I said, 'Oh, there's a small population of kiwi there, brown kiwi, and if we don't do something about it they aren't going to be around in a while'.

"So he suggested we put something together, put it to the trustees and take it from there. Which he did and we had a look at the dynamics of the Trust itself and the issues, in particular the rates, and we looked at how DOC fitted in there.

"We looked at the high profile of the area. In 1993 I had been instrumental in putting in the upgrade of the walking track to the lighthouse and it was a very attractive walk to the greater population and to the tourists. There had been an explosion of interest in people walking out to the lighthouse, at that time, mainly European.

"So all those things started stacking up and I guess it looked a prime piece of real estate for protection and it fitted within the kaupapa of Ngā Whenua Rāhui. I picked up straight away, their whakaaro and the way they do things is totally different to the mainstream institutions.

"When they put the report in front of the trustees, they said here is the state of the forest and here is what you need to do to bring it around. However it's your choice what method you want to use. Whereas mainstream organisations used to come in and say well this is what we are going to do and here is who is going to do it.

"We (the hapū) have a good relationship with DOC. It's testing at times but we are still talking to each other.

So it's like a marriage really?

"Yes it is, and I guess that is a good note to end on."

A white cloak of respect

"MIKE MOHI HAS MADE SEVERAL VISITS AND WHAT IS INTERESTING IS THAT WHEN HE CAME BACK THE LAST TIME, THAT HILL OUT THERE, KAPOWAI, WAS COVERED IN FOG, WHICH IS UNUSUAL HERE," SAYS SONNY GEORGE.

PHOTOGRAPHY | *Rob Suisted*

"It looked like a white cloak and I said to him, 'Our tūpuna are thanking you for what you did, they are paying you their dues for looking after them. They are saying you have put a rāhui on this land and we are happy with what you have done and appreciate it'.

"Because if we hadn't done it then things would have gone way back," says Sonny George, the Chair of the Waikare Lands Trust in Northland. Sonny is also Chair of the Hoori Whanau Trust, which has land that is rāhuied by Ngā Whenua Rāhui.

The Waikare lands and other land blocks played an important role in driving the thinking of Tom Parore, the Director of Māori Affairs in Northland in the mid-1980s, who was very concerned at the possible alienation of Māori land because owners found it hard to pay rates and meet other financial commitments, let alone earn a living off their land.

Tom argued strongly for the setting up of a fund that could recognise the conservation values of the land and help to support landowners financially, hence his role as the godfather of Ngā Whenua Rāhui.

In 1998, after various attempts at assessing possible income from horticulture and forestry ventures, the Waikare lands people decided to explore the protection option offered by the Fund.

"Mike came along and explained what NWR was all about and we told him about the Kapowai land that we were looking at. We were interested in protecting that land and we explained that the land had actually been rāhuied by our tūpuna way back in the 1940s. The forestry people wanted to take the land for kauri regeneration and they felt they were better kaitiaki of the land than we were.

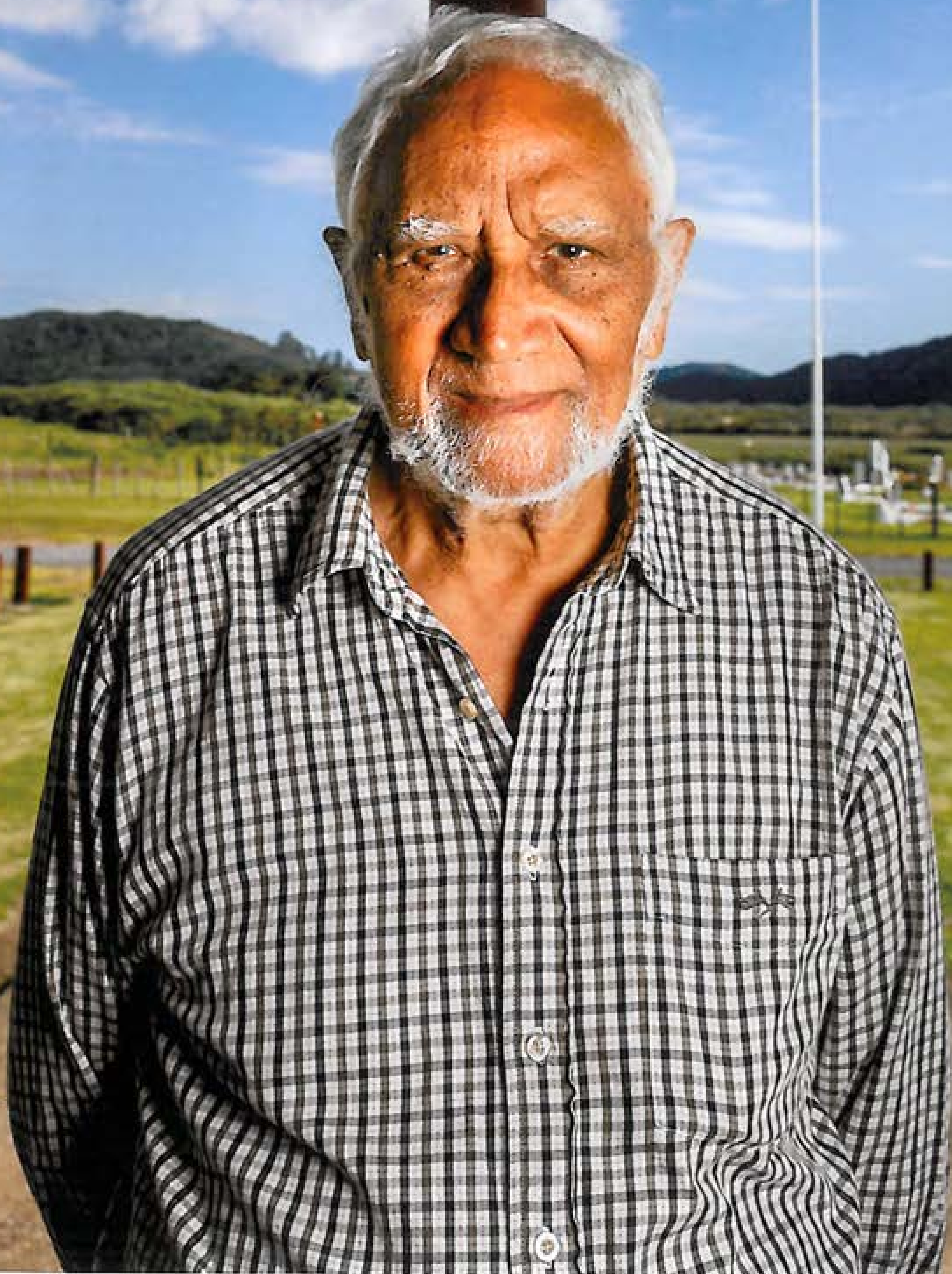
"Our tūpuna didn't want that because on Kapowai are buried hundreds of our ancestors up the top there and they didn't want people to play around with the sites. So they had a hui and they invited old Tau Henare to make some submissions to Parliament to have Kapowai excluded from this forestry block that they were taking.

"They were successful and as a result of that submission it was excluded from the forestry block. As you drive through Waikare you can see some blocks on the right with regenerating kauri and they were part of the blocks they did take for the state forest.

"But there was nothing in writing, so we decided that when we did the rāhui we would put everything in writing. Mike came up and gave an explanation and we asked him to bring a sample copy of a covenant so we could look at it and go through all the clauses.

"We then called a meeting of owners to see if the people agreed to our proposal to rāhui the land and they wanted to go ahead with the proposal for a covenant.

"There are only a few kauri left up there but the main thing was protecting our ancestors, because the tupuna that gave this tribe his name Kapotai was Whiti and



Sonny George, the Chair of the Waikare Lands Trust in Northland.

"The other thing with the Fund is that there has to be consultation because we, the owners, are in control."

SONNY GEORGE

LEFT "The covenant covered all the things we wanted in terms of looking after the forest and the Government assisting us in terms of financing the pest control." Sonny George.

he was buried up there, 400–500 years ago.

"One of the clauses was that once we had rāhuied it, the public could have access to it, and that was a no-no to us, so we decided to have a look at how we could solve this and we decided that anybody wanting to go up there had to seek permission from the trustees or the owners. We didn't want anybody going up there by themselves.

"Otherwise the covenant covered all the things we wanted in terms of looking after the forest, and the Government assisting us in terms of financing the pest control. One of the clauses we inserted was that any meetings having to do with the kawenata, we have them here and not elsewhere like Wellington. The land is here so we talk about it here!

"Sandra Lee was the Minister and we were keen to get it signed before she retired, because she had been a great supporter of NWR. We had a bit of a hitch with some of our hard cases up here but we finally got it signed before she actually retired. Everybody was happy and since then we had possum control supervised by DOC hiring one of our locals, and then the District Council did even more extensive pest control several years later, possums being the main pest.

"I think one of the differences in dealing with the Fund is that Pākehā come out here and ask all sorts of questions which are just bunkum. With a lot of Pākehā organisations you would have spent about 2 days asking who owns it, are you paying your rates, and so on. Whereas NWR just got down to the nitty gritty, saying we are here to rāhui the land and providing the owners are happy with it, then let's just get on with it.

"The other thing with the Fund is that there has to be consultation because we, the owners, are in control. It puts you in control and you have got the say in what happens on your land, and that is very important to us," says Sonny.

There were other unintended but valuable social benefits as well from the Ngā Whenua Rāhui involvement.

"They had a team of six young people who came in here a few years ago and they did an ecological survey, they went around and had a look at the regrowth. The general report was that it was in good condition and they didn't have any hassles. They found there was a lot of new growth and the streams were nice and clean. It showed that it was actually working.

"And they had a good time here. They lived on fish and oysters, and they were lucky because one of our chaps had moved into a new house and he had still had the old house so they moved in and it had a bath and showers, clean facilities, and everything.

"But they did a good job. We took them up to the school because we needed some of our students to be interested in these working young people. They did a very good kōrero and answered all sorts of questions about what qualifications did they have and why did they take this job, and they talked about all the training they had to go through.

"It was good because these young people were able to tell our kids that when you went out into the bush you have got to be a bit hardy, you've got to be fit and still able to use a compass and the main reason for taking on the challenge was that they were outdoor people and they were interested in the bush and in looking after the land.

"Some of them were pig hunters. So they stressed those things to our young people about being fit and able to rough it, to sleep in a tent, or sleep under a tree. You just don't go up there in your high heels!" says Sonny.

And for the future?

"I think we should be looking at extending the 25-year term for another 25 years. I think there should be something in the agreement to make sure that it is extended. What it really does is to enable the owners and the people here to sit down and discuss anything with the Crown regarding the whenua," Sonny concludes. ■

NWR Business Analyst Roland Pomana taking the drones out for a bit of exercise.

New technology keeps overtaking itself!

PHOTOGRAPHY | *Herb Christophers*

DATA LOGGERS ARE OUTDATED BY SMART PHONES USING GPS, AN AIR FORCE OF DRONES PROVIDE UPDATED VIEWS OF THE BUSH AND THE TECHNOLOGY JUGGERNAUT JUST KEEPS RIGHT ON ROLLING!

Ngā Whenua Rāhui is very keen to be at the cutting edge of new technology and Roland Pomana is the business analyst/techie driving this for the fund.

So what is the role of technology in relation to NWR?

"A lot of people ask me about our use of technology, when in fact our focus is about finding efficiency.

"We need to ensure we are relevant in an ever-changing world. Technology allows us to be this. We need to be adaptable and flexible, as the wants and needs of landowners change over time.

"Although I enjoy telling people I'm incredibly lazy, what I am actually trying to do is take something complicated and make it simple. Just because something has always been done a certain way doesn't mean there isn't a better or more efficient way to do it. Technology plays a key role in this."

So how is that efficiency being focussed?

"So, it was more about picking a certain aspect of our work and then looking for efficiencies.

"The first step was shifting from paper data capture to electronic data capture. Then we fine-tuned things so it was not on a clunky device, but on a mobile phone. Mobile phones are no longer just a communication tool. What people have is a state-of-the-art portable computer.

"We can create customised data collection forms which can be modified on-the-fly as a project reveals new data to capture and measure. With the use of mobile phones, staff can send their data directly back to the

"GPS technology gives us that accountability. Basically, it quantifies where the work has taken place or where certain things are."

ROLAND POMANA

office via the Cloud. This flexibility to adapt to ever-changing requirements allows us to be more open-minded and expansive about how we collect data."

And what about the drones, what do they have to offer?

"The drone came about after a conversation with Trevor Lambert, NWR Pou Whakahaere, about how we get up-to-date aerial imagery.

"We usually looked to Regional Councils for available imagery, but this was often inconsistent, with not all councils having suitable imagery.

"Although very few organisations were using drones back then, we decided to initiate a small proof-of-concept project. The focus of the project was to capture aerial images and aerial videos. Considering the number of areas to capture, we quickly realised that even drones would not deliver the frequency of imagery we desired.

"However, the capture of aerial video is still a valued component of our information gathering. The key aspect of this project was to test a number of concepts in a controlled, low-risk and low-cost manner."

What advantages does GPS bestow on NWR?

"One of the biggest questions we ask ourselves is, 'What is happening at a certain place?' GPS technology gives us accountability. Basically, it quantifies where the work has taken place or where certain things are."

To me a GPS unit simply tells you where you are at a certain time.

"Yes, precisely, but it's a little more than that. A GPS is constantly recording – this is where I am now, and now, and now and now...

"A lot of our operational decisions are based on what was seen at a certain place. I think conservation is never going to get away from needing that observational skill.

"Most people think GPS is just about accurate location; it's also capable of recording very accurate time. GPS's operate using Coordinated Universal Time (UTC). This 24-hour time standard is kept using highly precise atomic clocks combined with the Earth's rotation.

"The timestamp on each GPS recording plays a massively important role. It's not just about what and where, it's also about when.

"We can measure a whole variety of things. How long did a journey take? What time did they start? Whether or not they stopped and for how long? You can even determine where they were for lunch."

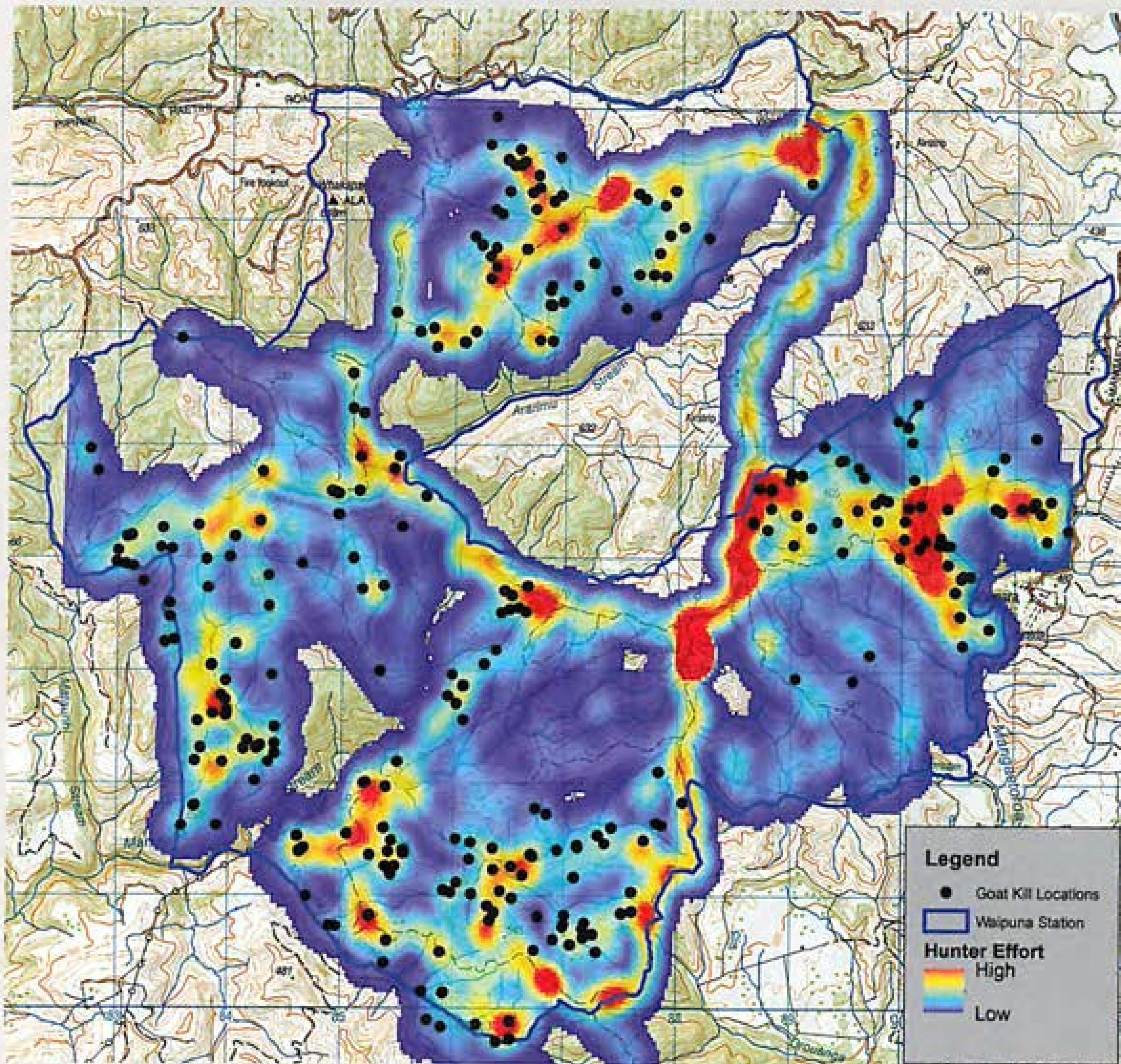
And how does the staff find that?

"Our staff find it very useful, they are very accepting of the fact that the timestamp is a necessary attribute of our data to help us make better decisions. Ultimately, it's about accuracy and integrity."

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) is a large component of your work. How does the use of GIS give benefit to NWR?

"All things we do relate to a place, or more importantly a protected area. GIS is integral to operating effectively. From capturing the boundaries of an area to be protected, including calculating how large the area is, to measuring how long proposed fences are. We are also able to analyse proposed areas against other GIS datasets like the Threatened Environments of NZ to determine an area's significance for protection."

You have been doing a lot of work on Map Journals. How will they help the Fund in its relationships with its landowner clients?



OPPOSITE "Everybody talks to me about technology but what I am on about is efficiency finding... it's not technology for the sake of it," says Roland.

LEFT A GIS map showing hunter effort and goat kill locations on Waipuna Station.

"We have an obligation to provide information to various partners as part of our business, especially our landowner clients. Written reports have been used in the past, but at times can be dull and unengaging.

"We needed a way to portray information in a more meaningful manner that leads to better relationships and greater understanding. We've struggled for a long time to find a way to do this well. Quite simply, we needed to focus on the client – and their information needs.

"Map Journals let us create multimedia stories that combine text, images and video – all linked to a place. It's the connection to places that give the multimedia experience more relevance. The format is simple yet effective.

"They may present a story around just one map, or they may take users through multiple maps and associated videos or images to provide them with in-depth information via an elegant user experience."

What are the benefits of having international connections and where does all this fit within building capability and capacity?

"In the past, GIS was the realm of government departments and corporate entities in New Zealand.

"GIS is one of the fastest growing industries in the world today. We believe it is important for Māori to have access to these tools. It's inspiring to see more and more Māori learning and engaged in GIS.

"We have built relationships with groups like GIS in Conservation (GiC) who are the NZ chapter of the Society for Conservation GIS (SCGIS).

"SCGIS offer 3-week scholarships for GIS training in the USA with a conservation focus. We have also formed a strong relationship with ESRI who are the world's leading GIS software provider.

"We are strong advocates for Te Kahui Manu Hokai (Māori GIS Association) and support their efforts in unifying the Māori GIS community.

"We are also very mindful of upskilling our own staff in GIS. GIS training is a component for most NWR staff roles."

Where do you see all this in the future?

"Technology is the language of tomorrow. It might be cool for us today, but it will be the norm of tomorrow.

"It's not just about working on the land anymore – it's about land management, land optimisation and being Māori land leaders." ■

Building a shared vision

A REFLECTION FROM KOMITI MEMBER MAVIS MULLINS ON THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE NGĀ WHENUA RĀHUI FUND AND SUBTLE CHANGES AHEAD.

"There will be a subtle but substantial change in direction for Ngā Whenua Rāhui over the next 25 years and it will be built around achieving a shared vision with the owners of what they wish to achieve for their whenua and then empowering them to do so," says Komiti Member Mavis Mullins, reflecting on the future of the Fund.

"It is not something to be afraid of, we need to embrace change and harness it for all to benefit. We need to drive the change rather than having the change drive us!

"Our kawenata have been very successful in protecting biodiversity values, reconnecting owners with their lands, and establishing trust and credibility between the owners and the Fund. We need to recognise and reflect on those achievements.

"However the next stage will be to encourage and empower the owners to take more responsibility for their lands, the stories associated with it and the pest and weed control measures needed for protection.

"The key will be to build productive partnerships and involve the owners more in the practical management of their lands, rather than just coming in and doing the

"However the next stage will be to encourage and empower the owners to take more responsibility for their lands, the stories associated with it and the pest and weed control measures needed for protection."

MAVIS MULLINS

OPPOSITE Mavis puts all those wool handling skills learned in the shearing shed to good use at the Golden Shears in Masterton. *Photo: Pete Nikolaisen*

LEFT From shearing shed hand to corporate strategist to company director – it has been quite a journey for Mavis Mullins. *Photo: Fairfax Media*

for the future

pest control job for them.

"We can perhaps start with agreeing a management plan as part of the kawenata so that the pest control and all the other management activities take place as part of the overall vision, with goals to tick off along the way.

"An important part of this will be to reconfigure the Fund so that a proportion of the money we spend may be helping the owners with education or trying for pest control operations where they do much of the work for themselves to enable a greater sense of ownership. This may mean the Fund becomes more of an advisor, facilitator and a source of knowledge than carrying out the actual implementation, but doing it in a cooperative way and being realistic about what can be achieved in the short term.

"We will be there for the owners. One area that I am particularly keen on is how to be an entry or transition point for the incredible changes in technology, which keep outdating themselves! The use of GIS and map journals is a case in point.

"Map journals let us create multimedia stories that combine text, images and video all linked to a place. It is the connection of multimedia to the locations that make map journals effective. Their format is simple but very flexible. It may present a story around just one map, or it may take users through multiple maps and associated videos and images to provide them with engaging, in-depth information on their place.

"I am the Chair of a very large Whanganui Māori land incorporation and we developed a map journal presentation to the owners who were just blown away, a bird's eye view, they were 'flying' over their own land and could see everything. They loved it!

"So I am very optimistic about the future for Māori conservation and the Fund has a key role to play in enhancing that future." ■