

SPECIAL REPORT: AUCKLAND'S HOUSING CRISIS

mana

127

THE MĀORI PERSPECTIVE

www.mana.co.nz

BRIGHT YOUNG THINGS

HUNT FOR THE
WILDERPEOPLE STAR
JULIAN DENNISON

THE
GUARDIANS
OF WAIPOUA
FOREST

100 LITTLE
TREATIES

+
MORE
INSPIRING
RANGATAHI

FEB/MAR 2010
\$8.90



GUARDIANS OF THE FOREST

Northland iwi Te Roroa and Waipoua Forest Trust are fighting to save Waipoua Forest and create a legacy for future generations.

BY SARAH SPARKS

"OUR KAUMĀTUA HAVE always said that we belong to the forest and the forest belongs to us," says Will Ngakuru (Te Roroa, Ngāpuhi, Te Rarawa), a sculptor, artist, and spokesperson for Te Roroa.

The iwi's ancestral land is the home of Tāne Māhuta, 'Lord of the Forest'. It's the largest Kauri tree on earth with an estimated age of 2,500 years and a must-see for thousands of tourists annually.

Te Roroa is on a mission to grow, to achieve self-sufficiency and be socially responsible by providing better opportunities for its whānau and future generations. Listening to Ngakuru, it appears his iwi have been busy since settlement in 2008.

Seven businesses have been established in the areas of farming, asset management, forestry, tourism, transportation, environs and honey. These are overseen by Te Roroa Commercial Development, whose current chairman is former wicket-keeper and batsman for the New Zealand cricket team, Adam Parore.

Aside from day-to-day commercial obligations and tourism pressures, 900 hectares of land along the Waipoua River, that

includes wāhi tapu and archaeological sites, is being regenerated back into native forest and a new sustainable honey operation has been launched.

Looming on the horizon is the government's proposal of creating a national park. It's an idea first mooted back in the 1950s. Now back in vogue (although media reports call it "hasty") the iwi say they need time to gather their thoughts and are opposing it until they have a level of confidence. They aim to complete an assessment identifying what the impacts might be on Te Roroa before the next election.

"The responsibility is overwhelming at times," says Ngakuru.

Te Roroa's primary focus is their kaitiakitanga obligations to Waipoua Forest, about 50 kilometres southwest of Kaikohe in Northland. Ngakuru clarifies that it's not only for descendants but also for other tribes that have lost access to precious knowledge because their forests have been destroyed.

"All of New Zealand should definitely be interested in what's happening with our forest, there is so little left of it remaining," he says.

Waipoua Forest is projected to receive →



TE ROROA

Tane Mahuta in Waipoua is the world's largest Kauri tree, attracting over 100,000 visits a year.



a significant increase in visitor numbers this year and a \$6.6 million infrastructural facelift within the next two years. After 15 years working within Te Roroa, Ngakuru is aware of the both the potential risk and opportunity in the immediate future.

He admits that the cloak of leadership is perhaps one that Te Roroa is not always comfortable wearing due to the significant obligation that falls on the whānau. Balancing the needs of many with the needs of the forest as kaitiaki can be testing.

"You are always negotiating that space between looking after 'home' whilst looking after it on behalf of the nation and obviously overcoming all the issues and dynamics that arise from working with government departments. Central government expectations and lack of engagement can be challenging at times and seriously impacts the whānau."

Te Roroa has witnessed the toll of deforestation on Waipoua and also the heavy impact it has had on tribal lands throughout Aotearoa. They sympathise with other tribes that now have so little ngahere due to it being highly modified and cut over.

"The importance of Waipoua lies with the foundation of our whakapapa which ties us to the forest. The range and breadth of relationships contained within the forest gives a certain richness and fullness. The age of some of those ancient trees creates a whole other ecosystem and different set of concepts to be explored that perhaps you don't find in a younger forest," he explains.

Sue Reed-Thomas, the newly appointed Director of Conservation Services for the Northern North Island, says DOC shares the same goals as Te Roroa, to preserve and protect for future generations.

"Sometimes the things we want to preserve are slightly different but having a shared set of eyes, a shared set of stories around the table really adds value to what's possible for the future."

She acknowledges the significance and rare value of Te Roroa's taonga. "There are pockets in the forest literally untouched by man that give a really great picture of what the ancient forest was like in New Zealand

"There are pockets in the forest literally untouched by man that give a really great picture of what the ancient forest was like in New Zealand before any of us were here and the rich history of how Te Roroa has used the forest for centuries."

before any of us were here and the rich history of how Te Roroa has used the forest for centuries."

The co-management partnership with iwi she says "is really like a marriage, you have to keep working at it constantly to be successful."

Ngakuru says the tribe is still addressing co-governance as a key condition of the Kauri National Park, which was achieved as part of settlement. "It's been a little bit slow to get to a level that we feel comfortable with."

He suggests that iwi values sometimes differ from government values. "I think with DOC we're seeing a need to focus on tourism, mining and other things which sometimes

is at odds with the forest," says Ngakuru.

Reed-Thomas reflects on the partnership that Te Roroa delicately frames as being "strained" at times. The new boss is optimistic, countering, "It's evolving. We're still working on it as we each change and grow. It isn't static and you need to be prepared to try new things."

DOC have committed "in principle" is to be part of a wananga in the first quarter of 2016—a suggestion made by Te Roroa. It's a new idea for the department and an optimistic step in the right direction.

"Personally one of the things I'm learning with Te Roroa is about the value of having a mātauranga Māori perspective that adds to shaping the possible and potential direction you can go," Reed-Thomas says.

Her focus is trying to get the date with the right mix of people present that will add value and support DOC and iwi to shape and take the next steps forward. She mentions





Millennium Kauri Forest Project kauri nursery. Since 1999 the Waipoua Forest Trust has purchased 241 hectares of milled land for native forest regeneration. The Millennium Forest now occupies much of the Trust's land.

Visitors to Waipoua must use a spray station at the forest's entrance to reduce the spread of the deadly Kauri dieback disease, *Phytophthora agathidicida*.



'Rākau Rangitira', the \$6.6 million project to upgrade tracks and potentially change the overall visitor experience in the forest. Currently at the feasibility stage, DOC says it's an opportunity to incorporate the artistic views of Te Roroa quite strongly.

"I'm excited to explore this through wananga. Personally I've never been involved in this kind of way. Te Roroa has really taken the lead about how we might go through the process."

One of the challenges Te Roroa faces when dealing with the agencies is conveying the importance of whakapapa—in this case, the practise of recognising a place or landmark as an ancestor.

Te Roroa is concerned that a mind-set may settle in where government departments believe "this forest is either defendable or not defendable" based on a set of values that more often than not are based on economics.

Observing other iwi that have taken the lead in safeguarding whakapapa does offer some hope.

Ngakuru praises Tūhoe leader Tamati Kruger's approach. "We've been watching Tūhoe for a long time now and like how the nation was invited to help with its 10-year management plan on the understanding that it was agreed that the Ureweras are an entity and should be given rights, basically like a human being."

In South America they've done the same for rivers and other ecosystems he says, but it was the first time he'd actually heard it being applied to a forest. "It's consistent with our concepts around whakapapa. If you look at the Māori concept of whakapapa there is no separation or hierarchy in our position as humans."

Kauri dieback is another real concern for Te Roroa, both ecologically and culturally. The deadly disease known as *Phytophthora*

agathidicida is specific to New Zealand kauri, having been first discovered on Great Barrier Island in the 1970s. It's a killer.

Ngakuru refers to a chilling statement by 'the father of New Zealand geology' Christian Gottlieb Ferdinand von Hochstetter in the 1860s, who said the decline of Kauri and the decline of Māori were linked and that "at some point we will see them both die".

Ngakuru is seeing it play out in reality. "We've got these diminishing forests with ill health and holders of the conceptual knowledge related to the forest in similar decline. Mana whenua is really concerned about the conceptual knowledge dying every time one of our kaumatua dies."

Part of Te Roroa's treaty settlement was cultural harvest and it was excited to regain the ability to interact with the forest. Unfortunately the impact of Kauri dieback has meant that freedom has not been possible.

"There's been a huge loss in terms of the

number of people we've had operating in the ngahere and that's why we're saying to DOC that iwi would like to be the contractors, the service providers, the kaitiaki of the forest because if we're not it doesn't stem that loss of precious knowledge—it exacerbates it,” warns Ngakuru.

To mitigate this risk Te Roroa is clearly focussed on building capacity and building knowledge, partnering with the scientific community on key projects ranging from kauri dieback to Kaitiaki Kiwi, a project to boost the kiwi population to its former levels in the forest.

“It's been quite a journey working with the science community—at the moment there's a real willingness to look at how they can support us. We plan to have more of our tamariki involved in these partnerships by combining career paths with Western science to regenerate and sustain our own mātauranga. This disease has really made us realise how vulnerable it is—both the knowledge and the forest.”

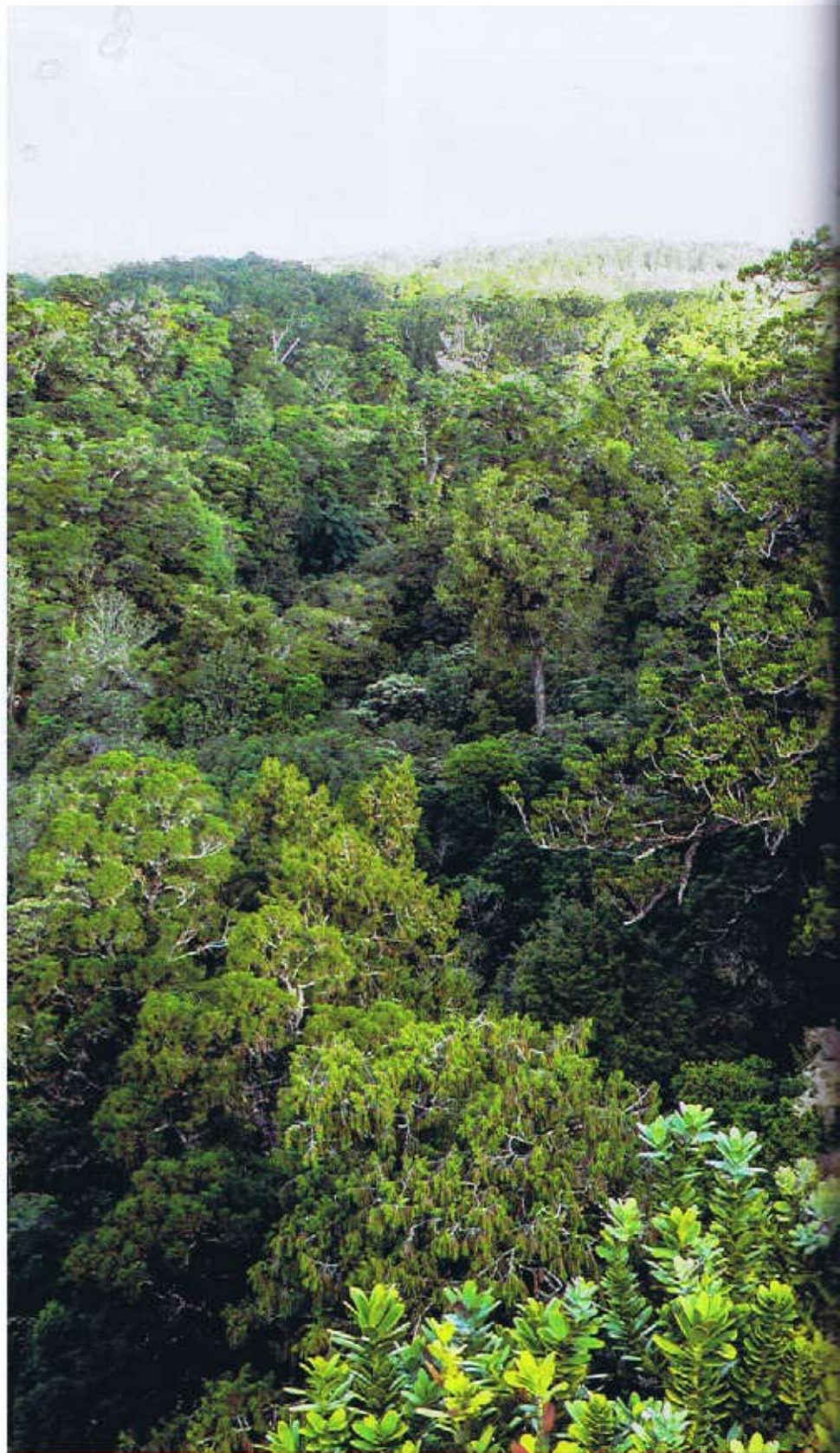
They've joined forces with Scion (Crown Research Institute) and Landcare on Healthy Tree, Healthy Future. It's a \$10 million collaborative programme funded by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) and run by Scion, involving many parties nationwide to address the threat of *Phytophthora* and identify resistance in kauri.

Participating in the National Science Challenge is another commitment arising from a partnership with Lincoln University.

“We're really grateful to be working together with Lincoln to record and effectively gather the mātauranga-a-iwi. At the moment it's looking like a series of kaumatua interviews and other information gathering exercises.”

Iwi are adamant though that they should be the ones doing the work in the forest. Last year they successfully acquired the roading contract within the forest that was previously managed by a private entity, the Waipoua Forest Trust.

Ancient kauris Tāne Mahuta and Tāne Roroa tower above the forest canopy. Te Roroa say there is much to learn about the ecosystems of ancient forests, which are different to younger forests. Gathering mātauranga from kaumatua will help aid the iwi and DOC in their regeneration plans.







Te Roroa spokesman Will Ngakuru and son Roan.

Set up in 1999, the Waipoua Forest Trust is also committed to the forest's restoration and has been vocal about it. The chairman, Alex Nathan, is from Te Roroa. He was involved in settlement negotiations at the time the trust was established. During his tenure it has acquired \$1.4 million of Crown funding to set up the Millennium Kauri Forest Project and purchase land around Waipoua Forest. At times he admits he despairs about the forest. The trust wants the whole forest to be restored to its former glory—all the birds brought back and the pests dealt with.

"We've converted what used to be pasture back into regenerating forest using mānuka as a primary pioneer crop. In our capacity we have provided a lot of the technical knowhow to DOC on matters ecological and our project manager has few peers in that regard."



kaitiakitanga – guardianship; custodianship
hononga – union; connection
ngahere – trees; bush; forest
mana whenua – territorial rights; authority over land
mātaranga – skill; experience
mātauranga Māori – Māori knowledge; the body of knowledge originating from Māori ancestors
mātauranga a-iwi – tribal or regional knowledge
rākau – tree; wood
wāhitapu – sacred site

However it's been a tough, hand-to-mouth existence for the trust, he says. It has pragmatically chosen to carry the cost of pest eradication because that's what is required. At the moment it says not even the basics are being addressed—possum control is not being sustained and there's an invasion of weeds.

"Ultimately in many respects the Crown is abdicating its responsibilities by suggesting that volunteer organisations such as ours can undertake that work, knowing full well that we don't have the resources."

Ngakuru says that Waipoua Forest Trust have done great work in native forest regeneration. "Te

Roroa is certainly looking at what lessons can be learned from their experience in terms of our own 900 hectares that we've got to regenerate."

Globally, Te Roroa is branching out through sister tree partnerships. One is in Japan and approaches have been made to First Nation peoples from America. Iwi call the project Te Hononga Rākau; it's a long-term vision to share wisdom amongst other indigenous forest people about ancient forest management through the development of science and art residences.

"Ultimately promoting and understanding the forest as a very special entity, much like ourselves—that's the core message we'd like to share with the world." ☺

"In many respects the Crown is abdicating its responsibilities by suggesting that volunteer organisations such as ours can undertake that work, knowing full well that we don't have the resources."

LIQUID GOLD

LAST YEAR THE honeybees of Waipoua Forest hit the headlines after an inaugural joint venture was announced between Te Roroa and Trade Aid New Zealand.

Like its native blossoms, the enterprise seems to be flourishing. Honey is now sold in 31 Trade Aid shops across the country, at the Waipoua Visitor Centre, through Fine Food Wholesalers NZ online and supplied wholesale.

"What we're building here is strong, sustainable, and self-sufficient. We're giving back to our community and our iwi board are very supportive of that initiative," says Erana Clarkson, Honey Manager at Te Roroa Honey.

The iwi business started in 2014 and employs its own young people. Currently two are being trained up professionally in the art of beekeeping through an apiculture partnership with Telford, a division of Lincoln University, and a rūnanga based in Kaitiaki. By 2017 the mana whenua beekeepers will be fully qualified and employed as Te Roroa beekeepers full time.

For now Te Roroa outsources beekeeping expertise to a specialist with a decade of experience and a huge team that manage the tribe's 257 hives.

The aim is to build up to 1000 within two years, says Clarkson. Production will reach 30,000 kilograms per annum based on industry standards. Each 500 gram jar sells for \$35.99 so a quick calculation reveals that this is a multi-million dollar revenue opportunity.

The honey is made from three native blossoms in the Waipoua forest: mānuka, kānuka and towai, although surprisingly the

bees are Italian imports. "They're hardier and stronger than our bees, last longer and produce more honey," she says.

At a glance the gold and black branding suggests a premium product. The intention was to capture the whakapapa of Te Roroa in the design. It proudly shows Tāne Māhuta with six kauri leaves representing all six marae of Te Roroa. "It all ties back into the iwi because we're the kaitiaki of this area after occupying the Waipoua Forest for over 1000 years."

Why honey? A TV item about indigenous trade first got Clarkson thinking. She tracked down one of the interviewees, Graeme Everton, who was consulting with a First Nation tribe on its maple syrup operation in Toronto.

"I thought maple syrup, honey, there could be something we could do there," she smiles.

Out of that link came a relationship with Trade Aid that's taken a year of meaningful dialogue and hard work to bring to fruition.

"They were a perfect match because Trade Aid and Māori values line up really well," says Everton, CEO of Aria Foods.

Both parties share the view that a successful apiculture business will increase the ability of Te Roroa to regenerate ex-forestry land in native bush and provide much needed income and employment opportunities in Northland.

"The need for trade justice does not just exist in developing countries," says Trade Aid's CEO Geoff White. "Te Roroa has become Trade Aid's 66th trading partner, and New Zealand is the 29th country on the Trade Aid map



Top: Te Roroa Honey manager Erana Clarkson and Trade Aid NZ CEO Geoff White take a walk through Waipoua Forest.

Above: The towai blossom, along with Mānuka and Kānuka, produce Waipoua Honey.

from which products are sourced."

Everton explains that Trade Aid pay half up-front and any profits go back into the communities that they partner with. This global initiative works locally. He believes the joint venture is a good role model for social enterprise and an open-minded partnership about Māori engagement.

"On the flipside, Trade Aid themselves were recognising that they'd always wanted to do something at home. They wanted to be able to show an opportunity to aid in people's development back here."

Everton is confident that in

the long term when Te Roroa is ready to export, they'll have built up a brand proposition of scale. He mentions targeting Ten Thousand Villages, a chain of 2000 stores across the US and Canada that stock unique fair-trade, handmade lifestyle products from around the world.

For now, Clarkson and her team have the breathing space to build up capacity and concentrate on the honey production.

"We're developing a robust plan and making sure it's on track. We'll be self-sufficient in one place ultimately. It's all part of building up an apiary—and a successful one at that."

