



## Learning from the First Nations of Canada

nā Brigham Riwai-Couch

On the 27th of April I had the privilege of travelling across the Pacific Ocean to participate and present at the Indigenous Thought Conference at Blue Quills University located near St. Paul in Alberta, Canada.

The most memorable experience was spending time with the First Nation people from the Cree and Dene Nations in Treaty 6 Territory and visiting their reserves. We visited Eagle View High School at Onion Lake Reserve where we performed waiata and haka for the students, and they shared their songs, dances and drum ceremonies with us.

I didn't expect to see the 'situation' some of these students were in was very similar to some indigenous students back home. I was talking to some of them and found that drugs and alcohol were very popular among their age (15-17 years), finances are a big problem with their families, and that a lot of them lacked support and confidence from their parents at home. This made me realise that indigenous students all around the world are facing the same problems.

It seemed to me that their strengths were how they embraced their culture in their school, their learning of Cree language, cultural traditional classes and activities like bow and arrow practice, banic baking (a traditional bread), duck skinning and playing lacrosse, which was invented by the First Nation people of Canada. This is similar to here in New Zealand where as Māori students we are able to express and practice our culture through things like kapahaka, Manu Kōrero, baking our traditional rewana bread and participating in our traditional sport Ki O Rahi.

Life for the First Nations people on the reservations looked pretty rough. There isn't any clean tap water, roads are unsealed, animals rummaged through rubbish that was spread everywhere and it

looked very undeveloped. In other parts of the reservation, however, it was very different. I experienced how many First Nation people lived by staying at my Uncle Kevin Lewis' house.

Life on the reserve farm included: feeding over 40 dogs every day, moving kennels and dogs to new locations, hunting for food (no shops were nearby), protecting your dogs from wolves and bears, and collecting water from the birch tree (that is where they get the majority of their drinking water from). I found it fun and the people were happy to live like that and they enjoyed being at one with nature. We ate food that I never imagined I would taste, like moose, bison, fish tongues, elk, wild berries and wild duck.

We participated in traditional ceremonies that were enchanting, one example was the sweat ceremony. The owner of the sweat lodge, Bill, gifted me my first Cree-made caribou hide drum after surviving my first traditional sweat ceremony. I will never forget that amazing experience.

It was an honour representing Christchurch Boys' High School and travelling with Te Whānau Tahī on this trip of a lifetime.

I will never forget the Cree and Dene First Nations people who made us feel so welcome, the experiences that I had, and the people that made it possible for us to travel: Rangitane Ki Wairau, Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, The University of Canterbury, Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Te Whānau Tahī, Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Kuia and The Blue Quills University. E kore e mimiti te puna o mihi ki a koutou katoa.

*Brigham Riwai-Couch is a Year 12 student at Christchurch Boys High School. He is a descendant of Tupuna #7 Hori Makitanara*



## Matariki gathering

Te Kohi Kai invite you to attend a Matariki gathering to be held at 6am on Sunday 16th July 2017. Meet at the end of the seawall at the Wairau Bar, followed by a light breakfast at Tuamātene.

Please RSVP to the office with numbers attending by Thursday 13th July.

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KEI PUTA TE WAIRAU  
JUNE 2017



## Matariki - New year, new opportunities

Every winter the rising of Puanga and Matariki signals the end of the lunar year and the beginning of the new year in Te Ao Māori. It is a time to farewell those who have passed and the things that have happened and celebrate the arrival of the new year and new opportunities.

Of great significance this Matariki, we farewell the eldest kuia in our iwi – Mary Twinnie Walker (nee Smith) who descends from Tupuna #45 Wiremu Te Mete (Smith). Aunt Mary was in her 91<sup>st</sup> year, the loved mum of Dawn Hart, Mary Landon-Lane and Mark Walker and a treasured nana to three generations of whānau.

E kui, kua haoa nei koe e te kupenga a Taramainuku, kua tōia koe ki Rarohenga, hai te rewanga o Matariki kua whetūrangitia koe ki te uma o Ranginui i te huihuiinga o te kahurangi.

Our thoughts are also with those within our whānau who are battling illness or supporting whānau through illness.

Ko Hiwa-i-te-rangi te whetū whakatinana i ō tātau tūmanako. E Hiwa e, kia tau mai te mauri whakauruora ki runga ki te hunga e māuiui ana, e taumaha ana kia mauru ai te mamae, kia tau ai ko te ora roa.

**Manawa maiea te putanga o Matariki**

**Manawa maiea te ariki o te rangi  
Manawa maiea te mātahi o te tau**

*Hail the rise of Matariki*

*Hail the lord of the sky*

*Hail the New Year*



Lunch with some of our kaumātua after our last Trust hui.

**At this special time, we would like to acknowledge those in our iwi who carry the name Matariki: Matariki Ngatiwai Hodges-MacDonald, Matariki Ataera Hoeroa Kakau and Marie Matariki Cross (nee Patuaka)**



## Our Environment

In the environmental space, we have Geoff Mullen working with us for the next few months, focusing on our environmental policy, systems and processes as well as business as usual activities. Geoff may be in contact with some of you regarding current resource consents and consultation processes.

We are also talking with our whānau at Ngāti Kuia and Ngāti Apa ki te Rā Tō to see if we can reduce duplication and share resources across some of these processes without compromising our own cultural viewpoint.

## Financial Operation

We have worked closely this year with our accountant Kendons and our auditor Deloitte to fill the gaps identified in the audit reports around financial policies, procedures and controls across the organisation. At the Trust hui in June the Trustees approved new financial policies and procedures which will be implemented with internal controls by the end of July.

We are also expecting to be able to share with you the results of the independent review of our settlement structure and transactions in August.

## Commercial Operation

The Trustees are pleased to announce that Judith MacDonald has been reappointed as a Director for Rangitane Holdings Limited and Rangitane Investments Limited. Judith’s knowledge and experience in Rangitane o Wairau matters is second to none and the Trustees look forward to working with her to build the commercial capability of our companies.

The response to our advertisements for Directors was very positive (55 applications). The panel consisting of Leigh MacDonald, Wendy Hynes and Judith MacDonald will interview the shortlisted candidates for the Chair role and the independent Director roles this week. The companies will operate with 7 Directors, as allowed for in the constitution, instead of 5, but the overall cost of the Directors will remain the same due to a reduction in Director’s fees.

## Our People

### Our Staff

At the end of June we farewelled Janine Thompson who has taken care of our people for two years in the key role of Receptionist. The welcoming way she embraced our people and her can do/will do attitude will be missed. Janine is off to work at the new health hub in Blenheim and we wish her all the best in her new role. Kath Grigor will join Jodie Palatchie and Diane Ryan in greeting you at the office until we fill this position.

In May, General Manager Liz McElhinney left and we thank her for her contribution to the organisation over the last year. The Trustees have temporarily expanded the duties of the Chairperson until the recruitment process for a new General Manager has been completed. Both of these roles will be advertised shortly.

### Our Whānau

The Ngā Manu Kōrero Te Taihu regionals were held at the end of May in Nelson. Congratulations to Kiri Pounamu Nepia who came first in the senior Māori impromptu speech, prepared speech, overall winner and the taonga for best female. Also to Lucas Baker who came first in junior English, second in junior Māori and the taonga for combined individual or school in the junior section.

The Waitaha regionals were also held in Ōtautahi at the end of June with great results. Mei Riwai-Couch, winner of the Tā Turi Kara (Junior English) section. Brigham Riwai-Couch, second in Korimako (Senior English) Section.

Our rangatahi now head to Taranaki to represent Te Taihu and Waitaha in the national Ngā Manu Kōrero competition in September and we wish them every success.

## Organisational Management

### Strategic Planning

Work will soon begin on a strategic planning and consultation process. It has been a while since this was done so we will be actively seeking your views on direction and priorities.

### Communication

Over the last two months, we’ve been working on rationalising our communication channels and reviewing their management and content. We’re pleased to announce we will be working with Mark Shaw and his team from Social Guy (who happen to be tenants in Rangitāne House) on communicating effectively with our people. We’d love your feedback on our new and improved communication channels.

## Our Language and Culture

### Rangitāne E Tu! CPR Kit

Our team have been working on collating a ‘kick-start’ CPR kit of foundational language and practices, aptly named Rangitane E Tu! This resource is to support our learning and development, for any and all Iwi members who have a desire to start or progress our cultural journeys. We are aiming for a release date of 25<sup>th</sup> July but hoping for sooner. Watch this space!



Congratulations to Russell Kupa who recently graduated from the Royal New Zealand Police College and is now working as a freshly minted constable in the Hawkes Bay area. After playing and coaching rugby in Germany for almost 10 years, Russ returned to his hometown Ōtāne with his whānau and decided to pursue a career in the police force as a challenge and to make a positive difference in his community.

**If this sounds like you, check out the New Zealand Police recruitment website for more information or to apply: [www.newcops.co.nz/care/14](http://www.newcops.co.nz/care/14)**

### Human Resources

As we indicated earlier this year, it is critical that the board and management are working together as one team to meet your needs. To ensure we have a common understanding of our obligations to each other, we are working through a process of updating our HR framework. Employment agreements, job descriptions, performance expectations and remuneration are all being updated and we look forward to moving together as a cohesive team.

### Health & Safety

A review of Health and Safety framework across the organisation is in progress. Until this is completed the wharenuī at Tuamātene will remain closed. We will update whānau with progress as this nears completion.



Chief Adham and Awhina Twomey hongi after receiving her blessing atop Dun Ad.

Finding a spiritual home away from home is a curious feeling. I’ve always said that I could never live away from New Zealand because I need to feel some sort of familial link to the land (yes, those of you who may know me know I live in Auckland, where I don’t actually have any whakapapa ties, but let’s not get too technical). I have travelled the Continental USA, and have visited Australia, Spain, the UK and Hawaii, and I can honestly say I felt this spiritual link in Hawaii, a place where I heard myself in their language, in their voices, I found myself in their brown skin and slanted eyes, and I felt myself in their traditions and beliefs. However, I was not expecting to feel such a heavy pull to my spirit in Scotland, despite knowing that I descend from there.

I often joke that, in terms of blood quantum, I’m probably more Scottish than Māori. My maternal grandmother (Priscilla Douglas nee MacDonald) has always proudly told us of our Mac Heritage, even going as far as once quoting her father in saying that I’m never to marry a Campbell because of the betrayal at Glencoe (made funny to me by the fact that I went to school with a few Campbells). She’s also spoken of our links to the McGregor clan. She married a Douglas, and to top it off, according to my father’s family, we descend from Robert The Bruce. Given all this, it seems silly that I was surprised to have been brought to my knees with emotion in my recent visit to Scotland with Te Panekiretanga o Te Reo, and yet, the effect was quite staggering.

We met a master swordsmith, who happened to be a MacDonald, who shared with us his martial histories and sword relics. As we travelled the Scottish Highlands, passing Inveraray Castle (the ancient seat of the Campbell clan), we had another MacDonald tell us about how when the castle once caught fire, a Mac at the pub offered free beer to anyone who refused to help put it out. I started to think, heck, these Macs are everywhere!

We were taken to Fort Dunadd, one of the most sacred sites of the Scottish people, and we were instructed to fill bottles with water from the River Add. We were asked that once we

entered the sacred space at the top of the mountain, that no English be spoken, lest the ceremony be tainted. Up until this point, our stay in Scotland had been surprisingly warm. As we began our ascent, and our tohunga began to chant, the rain began to fall.

As the bagpipes sung out, their call was met by our women who began to karanga to the land, to the mountains, and to the ancestors, theirs and our own. Our right feet were ceremonially cleansed by a young girl with the water from the river, and then we were instructed to place the cleansed foot in a footprint-shaped hollow in a rock, a place where kings once stood, and we were blessed, one by one, in a ceremony that goes back millennia. Our host made a reference to my Douglas tartan scarf and my MacDonald pin, quoting them as some of the most honourable clans around, and my spirit soared with pride, my eyes stinging with tears. To give thanks for the welcome we had been given, one of our men gave a speech that shook the earth, and then we performed a haka speaking of our shared longing to hear our mother tongues at home once more in our mouths. It’s an experience I’ll never forget.

Now I’m not saying that I’ll be booking a one-way ticket to Scotland any time soon. Indeed, there’s nothing in the Gaelic tongue that I found familiar, aside from the sentiments carried, and looking at my dark skin and wavy hair, you’d never guess at my Scott’s blood, but I am filled with wonder to know that my histories are very much alive in me, and I am awestruck to hear my ancient heritage singing through my blood. I hope that one day, you all get to feel that same sensation by visiting the place our forebears called home.

*Hania Douglas is a translator, subtitle producer and reporter at TVNZ for Te Karere Maori News. She is a descendant of Tupuna #6 Hoani Makitanara (MacDonald) & #94 Teone Mekerika (McGregor)*

Photo Credit: Te Anga Nathan