



GIFTING OF PŪKAHA RESERVE TO THE NATION SONYA RIMENE | CHAIR RANGITĀNE TŪ MAI RĀ TRUST

1 May 2021

Mihimihi

Kei ngā tangata Rau o te whenua, nei rā ngā tai o mihi te pari atu nei ki a koutou katoa. Ko Rangitāne ki runga, Rangitāne ki roto, Rangitāne ki waho, Rangitāne ki raro titiro mai, titiro atu matatau ana e, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā rā tātou katoa.

Acknowledgements

- Prime Minister, The Right Honourable Jacinda Ardern and ministerial and parliamentary colleagues.
- The Honourable Chris Finlayson, the former Minister of Treaty negotiations.
- The mayors across Wairarapa and Tamaki nui ā Rua Local and Regional Council representatives.
- Dignitaries from the Wairarapa District Health Board, New Zealand Police, and Department of Conservation.
- Pūkaha Board members and management.
- Most but not least, our beloved kaumātua, our kuia, our koroua, our marae representatives, hapū, whānau, our Kahungunu relations, our two kura from the Wairarapa and Tamaki nui ā Rua.

Rangitāne Tangata Rau, Rangitāne Nui a Rangi. Tini whetū ki te rangi ko Rangitāne ki te whenua, tau ana!

This year we will commemorate four years since the Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā (Wairarapa Tamaki nui-ā-Rua) Claims Settlement Bill was passed in Parliament in 2017.

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At that time, we were an Iwi of approximately 3,000 registered members. Today we are 5,000 strong. Our interest spans from north of Dannevirke to Mākaramu (near Pōrangahau), down to Cape Palliser, and encompasses the wider Wairarapa and Tamaki nui ā Rua regions.

Our lineage descends from the great navigators, Kupe and Whātonga – the eponymous grandfather of our tūpuna Rangitāne.

For several decades Rangitāne called this beautiful place Te Tapere nui o Whātonga.

More than 30 generations of Rangitāne have walked through this reserve and have seen much of the flora and fauna you see here today the harakeke, rewarewa, mānuka, and the kōwhai. Although some species no longer inhabit this space, the remnants of their existence remain.

Our history is steeped in a rich tapestry of kōrero that weaves both the good and the not so good.

For many of our Rangitāne iwi members here today, our story is not new, but for the sake of our manuhiri it is important we share the context behind our taonga.

Pū ai ngā were tuhi ki te rangi.

Rangitāne were among those who welcomed Pākehā settlers to the region from the mid-1840s. Rangitāne enjoyed considerable benefits from the annual rents and trade with the new arrivals, who leased large areas of land.

However, the Crown applied pressure on Wairarapa Māori to end the leases and instead sell their land to the Crown. In 1853-54 the Crown acquired about 1.5 million acres of land representing about three-fifths of the traditional rohe of Rangitāne.

When purchasing land, the Crown led Rangitāne to expect substantial educational, health and economic benefits. In the course of time, Rangitāne did not experience many of these benefits nor the prosperity we reasonably expected from Crown-facilitated settlement in our region.

In the 1860s, the Crown introduced legislation that created the Native Land Court and a new tenure system inconsistent with the tribal tenure of Rangitāne communities.

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In 1871 the Crown acquired considerable areas of Rangitāne land in Seventy Mile Bush, between Norsewood and of course, Pūkaha, after most land titles had been awarded by the Court to ten or fewer Rangitāne owners.

Becoming virtually landless by the early twentieth century, Rangitāne communities struggled to maintain our traditional homes, customary knowledge, and language.

During this period, Rangitāne experienced considerable social deprivation and, after 1940, Rangitāne identity suffered further due to urbanisation and assimilation pressures, including Crown schooling that discouraged the use of te reo Māori.

Tō ake nei au i taku waka, te waka nā Tūrangi. Kō Hawaii taku waka, kō Kurahaupō taku waka.

It was a particularly trying and resilient period for our people, and much has been gained since this time and thanks to a number of key tribal leaders such as Nireaha Tamaki, Huru Te Hiaro in 1892, and more recently Uncle Jim Rimene, and Matua Manahi Paewai, Mavis Mullins, we have moved from a place of talking about what happened to us to a place where we can now influence and shape how we move forward as Rangitāne.

In October 2017, the Crown settled the historical Treaty of Waitangi claims of Rangitāne o Wairarapa and Rangitāne o Tamaki nui ā Rua.

As part of the Treaty of Waitangi settlement, the Crown provided commercial and financial redress in the amount of \$32.5 million to the Trustees of the Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā Trust, the post-settlement governance entity through the Deed of Trust.

Tū Mai Rā Investments LP was established by the Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā Trust in October 2017 as the kaitiaki of Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā commercial and financial redress assets.

The settlement, in many ways, is aimed at restoration and reconciliation for us as a people. It has provided a new beginning for us as a people – as a unified people moving together towards a future that has been informed by our past.

It is after all the reason why we gather here today for this momentous occasion. We are a small, gracious and humble Iwi. What we lack in number we more than make up for in generosity.

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Not only does today mark ten years since the birth of our beloved rare white kiwi, Manukura, to the world. When Manukura was hatched, her arrival was hailed as a blessing by Rangitāne, who saw her as a unifying symbol, and a signal to help guide our future relationship with Pūkaha.

Today her legacy will be marked in our nation's history as the day that Rangitāne gifts the 942ha Pūkaha Reserve to the people of Aotearoa.

It is a significant milestone for us as Rangitāne. It speaks to our tenacity, it speaks to our ability to overcome adversity, and it speaks to the mana of us as an Iwi.

Pūkaha is a treasured taonga of Rangitāne. The return of this whenua was an important component of the joint Rangitāne Treaty settlement.

Trees like the kauri and tōtara soared high; our tūpuna witnessed a number of living creatures that are no longer around. They gazed at the gigantic moa, watched as the hokioi took to the sky, and listened to the sounds of the huia once-abundant to the region.

Rangitāne tūpuna knew the undulating nature of the forest so well that they could tell where the maunga were in relation to the direction they were travelling.

Pūkaha was a living pantry of birds, fish, berries, roots and plants. It provided sustenance and shelter for many of our hapū and iwi members.

It was our pharmacy when our people were sick, it was where we would wānanga, where our people would come to connect and learn about the natural world, but more importantly – it was and is our home, our hau kāinga.

We have been actively involved in conservation work at Pūkaha for the past 40 years and hold a position on the Pūkaha Mount Bruce board along with Te Papa Atawhai, The Department of Conservation, as partners in this important conservation project.

The gifting of Pūkaha to the nation is reflective of the ongoing participation of Rangitāne and the Crown to work jointly together in partnership, to give true meaning of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in order to protect our taonga.

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Kia Rangatira te tū, kia Rangitāne te tū.

Rangitāne have and will continue to commit to working with Pūkaha management and, in doing so, ensuring that our role as kaitiaki of this beautiful taonga is fulfilled.

The result has further enhanced our presence on this site, with increased important cultural practices in all operations and increasing iwi involvement in future planning for the reserve.

Current developments at Pūkaha include the build of a \$4.5 million environmental education and overnight stay facility, a whare whakairo with three full-time Rangitāne carvers working on-site, a wharenuī, a nocturnal boardwalk and significant new education programmes such as the UCOL Certificate in Conservation, which started in February of this year which is taught onsite here at Pūkaha.

Our stories, our carvings, and our customs are all part of Pūkaha and will be seen, heard and felt by the thousands who will come to visit and enjoy the wairua of this great place.

And we have more yet to plan for. The future for Pūkaha is exciting.

So to our Prime Minister, the Ministerial party and Parliamentary representatives, I said it before, and I'll say it again, Rangitāne might be a small, gracious and humble iwi, what we lack in numbers we more than make up for in generosity.

To that extent, I would like to hope that this Government and any future successive Governments recognises this taonga and the massive cultural, social, economic, environmental and spiritual contribution that Rangitāne makes with the gifting of this taonga to this wonderful country of ours.

I turn now to our tamariki and our mokopuna, who are present here today, kei a koutou he rangatira mo apōpō, after all, you are the reason why our tūpuna worked so hard to achieve what they have, it is these achievements that has brought us here together as one people.

As we continue to uphold the traditions of our tūpuna, we will ensure that the legacy we give to you will be one that enables you to not just survive but creates the conditions for you to thrive.

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The legacy we leave behind will require more of you, it will require you to be the best that you can be. To draw on your strengths to realise your potential. Whatever it is that you choose to do, pursue to the best of your ability. Your people require the best of you.

Always remember that Pūkaha is part of your legacy, it is part of your DNA, this is the realm that your tūpuna once walked, so like they did, when life gets tough, when things don't go your way. Come back here to your hau kāinga to find your way, to listen to what Te Tapere nui o Whātonga has to offer you.

Be proud of your Rangitāne whakapapa, be proud of the legacy that you will inherit in the future. Kia kaha, kia māia. Kia Rangatira te tū, kia Rangitāne te tū!

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