

# DEVELOPING ANCESTRAL LANDSCAPES: THE INTERFACE BETWEEN DEVELOPERS AND TANGATA WHENUA

Te Marino Lenihan\*

Oral histories<sup>1</sup> tell us that when the earliest forays of Ngai Tahu moved south into Te Wai Pounamu (the South Island), an encounter along the Kaikoura coastline left one of Tuahuriri's sons (Tu-rakau-tahi) gravely wounded. His men took him south to a Waitaha/Ngati Mamoe settlement which was known as Te Kohanga o Kaikai-a-Waro and which is where the Pegasus Town development is taking shape today. It was here that Tu-rakau-tahi was nursed back to health, and it was here where he and his relations ultimately chose to establish Ngai Tahu's foothold on the south island. Named Kaiapoi but known also as Te Paa o Tu-rakau-tahi, this came to be the centre for all corners of Ngai Tahu whanui to meet and trade, and in time it protected the largest pounamu (greenstone) industrial site in the country.

No doubt access and security were key considerations that led to Tu-rakau-tahi's decision to establish a paa within the expansive Canterbury wetlands. Not only did the deep water channels around Kaiapoi provide a 'moat' like protection, those waterways also provided access to key mahinga kai resources (e.g. Lakes Waihora/Ellesmere and Wairewa/Forsyth) and opened up inland pathways to the forest resources of the foothills (Te Hororoa) and over the Southern Alp passes to the rich deposits of pounamu on the west coast.

In short, Kaiapoi Paa is a principal landmark on this country's heritage landscape. In its prime, it became famed throughout the land for its pounamu industry, attracting the attentions of those who wished to trade as well as those who coveted its riches. Kaiapoi Paa eventually fell in the early 1830s at the hands of Te Rauparaha and his allies, and the resulting bloodshed from that slaughter rendered the landscape tapu. Local Maaori have been particularly sensitive about the site ever since, therefore, which in turn led to significant ill feeling and opposition when

it was proposed to develop it into Pegasus Town, a home for 5000-7000 new residents.

While that feeling still exists amongst many who were brought up with those values, the difficulties that previous Pegasus Town developers encountered have largely been recognised by the present developers (Infinity Investment Group Ltd and Brookfield Multiplex Ltd) working closely with local hapuu and iwi representatives (Te Runanga o Ngai Tuahuriri and Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu). The challenge has been how best to recognise and provide for the ancestral relationship that this landscape holds for local Maori, and the key factor in determining the solutions has been to 'cut a new path' in terms of establishing and maintaining a good working relationship between the parties. This has led to a number of processes and design elements that ultimately add value to the development and enrich the wider North Canterbury community. Together, representatives of Hapuu, Iwi and Developers have all taken the view that Maori heritage is a unique treasure of this country, and the more we recognize and celebrate it, the stronger we will be as a nation.

In navigating the myriad of issues presented by the development of a tribally significant ancestral landscape, it has helped to keep the 'big picture' in mind: that is to say, try always to see the wood from the trees. To that end it was important to have two things; a 'map' that set out a clear kaupapa (foundation, underlining philosophy or objective) which related to, and benefited, all parties involved in the relationship, and someone to steer the parties towards that goal. In the case of Pegasus Town, that kaupapa was the balanced protection and celebration of this landscape's natural and cultural heritage, and negotiations between the Developer and Iwi/Hapuu representatives led to the employment of a full time, dedicated cultural advisor/runanga liaison officer.

In terms of providing for that kaupapa, a number of initiatives were agreed to in ongoing discussions between the Developer and Runanga representatives. These include: the establishment of a paa harakeke (flax reservation) within a wider

---

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that there will always be various versions of historical events as there is always more than one side of a story to tell. The account given in this article is but one version of the establishment of Kaiapoi Paa as recalled by Teone Taare Tikao (*Tikao Talks: Traditions and tales told by Teone Taare Tikao to Herries Beattie, Reed 1939*) and recounted by Athol Anderson (*The Welcome of Strangers, University of Otago Press 1998*).

restored wetland environment; the development of a whare taonga (house of treasures) to celebrate the archaeological and cultural materials uncovered during the development; the restoration of historic waterways that will in time hopefully provide a better habitat for mahinga kai to re-establish themselves; the preservation and celebration of key archaeological features (e.g. an ancient pa site); and on-site interpretation that incorporate contemporary as well as traditional forms (e.g. pou whenua/carved posts which tell particular stories and act as land markers).

To help provide for and maintain these initiatives, and in order to protect any known or unknown waahi tapu and/or waahi taonga uncovered during the development, it was important to put in place robust processes and protocols at the outset so that all parties were informed and comfortable with how best to respond or act in any given situation. For example, an Accidental Discovery Protocol was developed in order to proceed appropriately when koiwi/human remains were uncovered. Of most significance perhaps, has been the financing of a full time archaeological operation since July 2005 that has essentially cleared the way for the development to unfold. Whilst the thought of people digging up ancestral remains and artefacts does not generally find favour with our people, it has nevertheless helped uncover and conserve aspects of this land's heritage that may otherwise have been destroyed and lost forever pursuant to the development. Indeed, in recognition of the complexity and sensitivity of such a process, the Developers agreed to employ a number of Cultural Monitors to assist the Archaeologists in the field. Numbering as many as 12 at one stage, their role was not only to monitor earthworks and excavate archaeological sites, but they were also able to advise the Archaeologist immediately if any relevant tikanga/protocol needed to be followed or had been transgressed.

Buffer zones and conservation management areas were promoted and employed to protect areas of known significance, and mechanisms such as reserves and waahi tapu registrations through the Historic Places Trust are currently being considered. Restored wetlands and the highest standards of storm water treatment and disposal have been used to help enhance to local natural environment, as well as the enhancement of historic waterway systems and the development of new water features. Ongoing monitoring of such initiatives,

management plans and appropriate management structures are also important tools to provide for the ongoing protection of these waahi tapu and wahi taonga into the future.

Key factors to the success of these relationships so far has been a combination of the following:

- Acting reasonably and fairly at all times
- Being clear where you stand and establishing a clear understanding with other parties
- Open and inclusive communication (be honest and consistent)
- Building relationships at all levels: Chief to Chief – Co-worker to Co-worker
- Robust Protocols & Support Structures
- Not picking winners or choosing sides, looking instead for shared benefit and 'win-win' outcomes
- Taking the time (where time is allowed) to work things out
- Seeing the wood from the trees

In conclusion, when looking to develop ancestral landscapes it is important to consider who initiates it and why? What are the costs and benefits? And, perhaps most importantly, what is the process that allows those affected by such decisions to participate in discussing these questions and owning the answers? Every situation will no doubt be different and will require its own solutions and answers. The experiences of Developers and local Maori associated with the Pegasus Town development can hopefully provide some light on the challenges and issues that arise from such projects, and perhaps even offer some pathways in terms of how to respond. One thing is for sure, however, and that is that development will always occur, for that is the nature of our human kind.

In terms of the development of New Zealand's future built heritage (cities, bridges, ports, public amenities, etc.), Maori values and interests now have more influence arguably than at any time since the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, particularly in relation to ancestral landscapes which have tended to be built over and forgotten (c.f. Kaikanui Paa site in the modern day township of Kaiapoi). While this influence is not necessarily welcomed by

developers for fear of the potential associated costs, it is hoped that examples like Pegasus Town can illustrate that mutual benefits can be achieved through such endeavours, and that practical and appropriate recognition and provision of our nation's pre-European heritage can actually add value to such projects both economically and socially. The development of our future can not be driven by money alone. Rather, the long term viability of our

nation will be built upon development in harmony with the land and its people.

Whatu ngarongaro te tangata, toi tuu te  
whenua.

*People come and go, what remains is the  
world we leave for those that follow.*

\*Te Marino Lenihan is Cultural Advisor for Pegasus Township Ltd and Lincoln University Lecturer for MAST 603, Mana Kaitiaki (Maori Resource Management)