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Pouwhenua: Marking and storying the ancestral landscape

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Colonisation stifled our storytelling traditions, disrupting the Indigenous communications landscape by silencing Māori voices and removing the tangible markers of our authority, histories, relationships and connections. Yet, Māori have a long legacy of resisting erasure of our memories and authority derived from the tribal territory. This paper explores a series of contemporary strategies to restore and share our stories and knowledge of Te Tapuwae Tahi a Rangitāne-nui-a-Rangi (the single footprint of great Rangitāne of the heavens); the tribal territory once occupied and controlled by the descendants of the ancestor Rangitāne. As part of He Tātai Whenua, a project to develop a Māori landscape classification system, we explore contemporary practices of mapping and marking the tribal territory and systems for assembling our knowledge of the environment. We describe here contemporary physical expressions and associated rituals in the tribal area of the Rangitāne people (i.e., Wairau area and along the Manawatū River) of the tradition of pouwhenua (posts used to mark tribal authority over an area or resource). We argue that this practice is a form of Indigenous and ethical mapping that seeks to disrupt mapping traditions that colonise and silence Indigeneity. Māori therefore are building on old traditions for naming and visualising the cultural landscape to continue our storytelling traditions, decolonise the landscape and connect with the communication landscapes of our ancestors.

Key words: storytelling, Indigeneity, sovereignty, Indigenous mapping

Introduction

Storytelling is an integral part of te ao Māori (the Māori world) expressed in a variety of ways – through our histories, narratives, carvings, artworks and performance such as song, dance and theatre. Stories carry our cultural world, ideals and dreams and connect us to the gods, ancestors and tribal territory, providing a foundation for Indigenous identity and sense of belonging (Davis et. al. 1990a, 1990b; Harmsworth 1997; Harmsworth et. al. 2005; Hauiti 2011; Walker 1990).

Colonisation stifled our storytelling traditions, disrupting the Indigenous communications landscape by silencing Māori voices and removing the tangible markers of our authority, histories, relationships and connections (see, for example, Smith 1999; Walker 1990). Our pā or fortified villages are replaced by towns and cities. Our food gathering sites are felled or drained and replaced by farms. Our rivers are altered and straightened, turned into drains or areas for flood protection. This substantive transformation of the landscape (see, for example, Pawson and Brooking 2011; Young 2004) alters tribal connections with the environment and culminates in what Pawson and Brooking (2011) refer to as the ‘Empires of Grass’ with an emphasis on productivism.¹ Yet, Māori have a long legacy of resisting erasure of our memories and authority derived from the tribal territory. Although the visibility of Māori knowledge in public spaces is low, its ability to shape identity and sense of belonging of present and future generations remains. Building on this legacy this paper explores how continuity and connection is maintained with the communication landscapes of our ancestors. We

argue that Indigenising public spaces is one initiative and a powerful ethical device to connect with culture, continue our storytelling traditions and decolonise the landscape.

This research was completed as part of He Tātai Whenua — a project to develop a Māori landscape classification system. A team of Indigenous environmental specialists and scientists explored contemporary practices of mapping and marking the tribal territory to synthesise a landscape classification system that can reveal, convey and express Māori environmental knowledge. By rendering visible this information bicultural spatial governance becomes a reality and Māori authority and Māori knowledge have a greater influence on environmental management.

Whakapapa is the underlying methodology of this research. Whakapapa is a Māori intellectual tradition that is often translated as genealogy or to place, in layers. As a methodology a whakapapa approach generates contemporary explanations for origin, relationships and expressions of phenomena (Royal 1998; Sadler 2007). It draws on Māori knowledge and ways of knowing to construct a critique that is cognisant of Māori understandings and key Māori political agendas such as rights and tribal sovereignty resulting in an evolving commentary of Māori identity and belonging (Royal 1998; Sadler 2007). Whakapapa methodology is used to explore a range of topics from tribal origins (see for example Te Rito 2007), social issues (see, for example, Graham 2009; Sadler 2007) through to histories (see, for example, Forster 2019; Mahuika 2019). In this paper, a whakapapa methodology is used to critique physical markers (i.e., carvings, signs, recreational areas) of Māori culture in public spaces. Key questions posed include: why and how certain Māori practices such as taunahanaha (a process of naming of places) and pouwhenua are expressed today, and how do these expressions decolonise public spaces and reaffirm tribal authority?

This paper explores how Rangitāne in the Wairau and Manawatū regions tap into the ancestral communications landscape to assert their tribal authority and share that territory, their history and knowledge with others. As part of a national commemoration project Rangitāne ki Wairau unveiled a tau iho (canoe prow) that talks to ancestors and tribal relations and authority in the area. Peter Meihana narrates this story. Along the Manawatū River the local iwi collaborates in a community river framework that through storytelling recognises significant tribal sites and facilitates connectivity between people and the river. Several pouwhenua, posts used to mark tribal authority, are found along the Manawatū River. Margaret Forster narrates this story. Together we argue that these practices are a form of Indigenous and ethical mapping that seeks to disrupt mapping traditions that colonise and silence Indigeneity.

Ethical mapping: Disrupting the insidious effects of mapping

There are some aspects of the past that are best left behind such as mapping traditions that colonise and silence Indigeneity. While maps are complicit in the colonising project there is huge potential to repurpose to support a decolonising agenda; to create more ethical and equitable spaces for Indigeneity by reconsidering naming conventions and capturing Indigenous environmental knowledge (see Chambers 2006; Pearce and Louis 2008;

Syme 2020). For example, increasingly Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and new spatial technologies are used to visualise the tribal landscape by recording Indigenous knowledge and oral histories in culturally appropriate ways. These new methodologies and tools are then used to support tribal land – and water-scape development – and perform environmental modelling and planning to contribute to meaningful self-management (Proctor and Harmsworth 2021). Access to this type of information also facilitates participation in land claims, contemporary resource management and local government planning processes supporting a shift towards bicultural spatial governance.

Another dimension that is quickly lost in a mapping environment is the lived experiences and links between people, communities (i.e. the human components) and place. Davis et al. refer to this as signposts that remind us that ‘place has a human dimension’ (1990b: 5). So, maps excel at capturing geophysical aspects but not at representing thoughts, aspirations, histories, or broader socio-political interests. In the remainder of this paper, we explore contemporary expressions of Māori place naming and mapping traditions that mark territory and convey human presence and ancestral connections to the tribal territory.

Te Tapuwae Tahi a Rangitāne-nui-a-Rangi: Mapping the tribal territory

Naming the land is an important practice common to all peoples and cultures. Since the arrival of the first Polynesian explorers Māori named the places they discovered and later settled. The process of naming – taunahanaha – embedded tribal authority, sacredness, spirit and tribal knowledge in the landscape; moreover, it was a means of mapping and claiming authority over newly discovered lands (Davis et. al. 1990a, 1990b).

Te Tapuwae Tahi o Rangitāne-nui-a-Rangi – the single footprint of great Rangitāne of the heavens – is a whakataukī (saying) that references the extent of the territory once occupied and controlled by the descendants of Rangitāne. This area was originally demarcated by Whātonga, the grandfather of Rangitāne (McEwen 1990). Traditions refer to the arrival of the Kurahaupō waka (ocean-going vessel) at Nukutaurua, on the Mahia peninsula. From here Whātonga and his family moved south where they built a meeting house, giving it the name *Heretaunga*. Following a domestic dispute with his wife, Hotuwaipara, Whātonga took leave, sailing south along the Wairarapa coast. He entered Raukawakawa Moana (Cook Strait) and crossed to the northern South Island where he stopped briefly before sailing north up the Kāpiti coast until he reached the Manawatū River. From here he sailed upstream arriving at Te Taperenui o Whātonga (Forty Mile Bush). The descendants of Whātonga over generations populated the area encircled by their ancestor (Meihana and Morris 2020). Successive generations walked the land, named it, occupied it and utilised its resources until European explorers arrived and imposed their own names on the landscape as a precursor to colonisation, settlement and the eventual taking of the land. By 1870, Rangitāne in both North and South Islands were divested of nearly all their traditional lands, save some small reserves (NZ Government 2010, 2015). The impact of land loss was devastating, not only in lost economic opportunities, but also in terms of lost mātauranga (knowledge) (NZ Government 2010, 2015).

Today the descendants of Whātonga make up four distinct but connected contingents in the Manawatū, Tamaki-nui-a-rua, Wairarapa and Wairau. Each contingent has engaged in activities including processes that investigate unethical alienation of tribal territory and cultural revitalisation projects to reaffirm authority over the tribal territory. This paper explores how descendants of Whātonga in the Manawatū and Wairau areas are disrupting colonial narratives by centring and retelling their stories to make explicit the continuity and connections with communication landscapes of the ancestors.

Ethical storytelling in the Wairau region

On 24 January 2020, Rangitāne ki Wairau unveiled Te Tauihu o te Waka a Māui, a large canoe prow made of bronze and steel on land owned by Rangitāne (Figure 1). Te Tauihu o te Waka a Māui is the result of a tremendous amount of work by numerous people, throughout an extended period of time. This project acknowledges the authority of mana whenua (local tribal groups) and raises the visibility of Māori histories and tribal relations in the Wairau area. In this regard it is a decolonising project creating an ethical and equitable space for Indigenous voices. It is also a physical symbol of bicultural relations across the Wairau community. In years to come the significance of the Tauihu will become even more apparent.

Figure 1: Te Tauihu o te Waka a Māui, a carved canoe prow located in Blenheim that symbolises Rangitāne ki Wairau authority and local history in the area. Credit: Peter Meihana



Te Tauihu o te Waka a Māui

Before commenting on the *Tauihu* itself some background to its construction is warranted. This background speaks to the ways in which Māori contest existing narratives in an attempt at creating space for tribal-centred narratives. In 2019, as part of the *Tuia 250* commemorations, Rangitāne, Ngāti Kuia and Ngāti Apa welcomed a flotilla of vessels into Meretoto – Ships Cove. *Tuia 250* was a national commemoration of initial contact in 1769-70 between Māori and Pākehā (non-Māori) (Manatū Taonga, 2019). It celebrates the dual heritage of this country, in particular our shared histories and voyaging and navigation traditions.

The *Tuia 250* flotilla included two *waka hourua* (double hulled canoes) and a replica of the *Endeavour* (Manatū Taonga 2019). All three tribes trace their descent from the Kurahaupō *waka* and ancestors that began migrating south from the North Island beginning in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Ngāi Tara crossed over first, then Ngāti Māmoe and Ngāti Tumatakokiri, who were later joined by Rangitāne and Ngāti Apa. Ngāti Kuri and other Ngāti Tahu hapū (subtribes) followed in quick succession (Phillipson 1995).

The Marlborough Sounds was a staging post for southern migrations. Often the movement of early migrants was recorded in the landscape. Ngāti Tumatakokiri, for instance, are remembered in the names of certain islands and mountains in the Marlborough Sounds and a lake on Rangitoto Island. Ngāti Māmoe is also remembered, particularly in the names of hills to the north of the Wairau Valley and the bays and inlets of Te Koko o Kupe (Cloudy Bay). Among the many ancestors who are immortalised in the landscape, Kupe is the most conspicuous. According to local oral tradition, Kupe did not settle in Aotearoa; rather he and Ngahue led an exploratory expedition, gathering information for later Polynesian settlers. Kupe's granddaughter, Waipuna, married Tautoki and they begat Rangitāne. Their descendants were among the Kurahaupō *waka* people who migrated to the northern South Island. It is noted that Kurahaupō peoples did not enter an empty land; archaeological research now suggests that Te Pokohiwi o Kupe (Wairau Bar) was first occupied in the 13th century (Walter et al. 2017).

When James Cook arrived in Tōtaranui (Queen Charlotte Sound) in 1770 he learnt from the Kurahaupō community, no doubt with the assistance of the Tahitian, Tupaia, that there were two islands that made up the country – Ea Hei no Mauwe and Toai Poonamoo. These names are as recorded on Cook's map. From that time the oral map constructed by Māori was gradually erased. Tōtaranui was supplanted by Queen Charlotte Sound, Meretoto became Ship's Cove and Punaruawhiti is now more commonly known as Endeavour Inlet. Some names did survive, albeit in a corrupted form. Arapāoa (island), a reference to the downward blow of Kupe's *toki* (Adze) that killed Te Wheke a Muturangi, was for a long time rendered as 'Arapawa'. That name, and others, were recently corrected as part of the *Te Tauihu o Te Waka a Māui Treaty of Waitangi settlement* (Rangitāne Settlement).

Tuia 250 drew controversy and condemnation from some Māori communities around Aotearoa as the initial brief was focused on a discovery narrative that privileged British colonial history and downplayed the oppression and trauma experienced by Māori communities (Forster and Belgrave 2022). In the Wairau area the killing of Te Maro, a chief of Ngāti Oneone, is not forgotten by his descendants (Dewes 2018). In the northern

South Island the commemorations were also looked on with suspicion. However, what was a celebration of Cook (the first English navigator to land in Aotearoa New Zealand) ended up a celebration of Māori history and knowledge and the connections made with Tupaia, the Tahitian navigator who accompanied Cook on his first expedition. As part of Tuia 250 Ngāti Kuia and Ngāti Apa ki te Ratō built carved waka, providing a catalyst for the revival of waka culture within the tribes. Rangitāne approached this aspect of Tuia 250 in a slightly different way to their Kurahaupō relatives, deciding instead to build a large canoe prow on land owned by the tribe in Blenheim (Manatū Taonga 2019).

Te Rūnanga a Rangitāne, the entity tasked with managing tribal assets, always championed the preservation and retelling of tribal narratives. Te Tauihu o te Waka a Māui is not the first work to be commissioned by Rangitāne. Today, pouwhenua representing the ancestors Te Huataki, Kupe, Te Hau, Ihaia Kaikōura and most recently, a pouwhenua dedicated to ancestors credited with the construction of the 22km of hand-dug canals that feed into Waikaripi (Wairau Lagoons), are erected. Although led by Rangitāne, Te Tauihu was a community initiative that brought together a number of groups with an interest in art, culture and heritage.

Te Tauihu is a physical representation of whakapapa (genealogy). It connects ancestors to descendants and people with the physical environment. At one end of the Tauihu stands Māui, the hero figure whose exploits are well known throughout Polynesia. He acquired fire for humanity, slowed down the sun and fished up islands (Orbell 1995). In the present context Maui also embodies navigational achievement and his exploits are clear to see in the nomenclature of the North and South Islands – Te Ika a Māui and Te Waka a Māui. Moreover, Māui ultimately reminds us that we live on a Pacific island and as such share with others in the Pacific a common future.

Standing opposite Māui is Tukauae, a significant figure in the consolidation of Kurahaupō whakapapa in the northern South Island. His name is remembered in a low pass connecting the Wairau Valley and the Para wetlands – Te Whiringa-a-Tukauae. The name is a reference to the lashing together of flax and raupo that was once harvested from the wetland. It also acknowledges Tukauae's marriages to Hinepango, Hinerewha and Ruamate, all of whom are represented on Te Tauihu. Another significant ancestress is Te Heiwi; her marriage to Ngāti Apa migrant, Tarakaipa, produced numerous descendants, many of whom married Tukauae's children and grandchildren. Today these lines of descent flow into the Rangitāne, Ngāti Kuia and Ngāti Apa.

Lastly, Te Tauihu also acknowledges the physical environment. Running through the centre of the middle section, linking Māui and Tukauae, is Nga-Wairau-o-Ruatere (Wairau River) and Paepaetangata (the ranges dividing Wairau and Whakatū-Nelson). Both were fundamental to human occupation. Nga-Wairau-o-Ruatere comprises not only the main river, but the valley's springs and wetlands also. Paepaetangata was a source of pakohe (metasomatised mudstone or argillite) which was exploited by the first Polynesian settlers. Large adzes made of pakohe were often interred with the dead indicating its importance. Some individuals were also buried with perforated moa eggs (Meihana and Bradley 2018).

The aforementioned ancestors were recorded in tribal whakapapa manuscripts during the nineteenth century. On 2 September 1863, Meihana Kereopa, an early Kurahaupō scribe, met with Rangitāne elders at Wairau. Among those present was Ihaia Kaikōura (*Meihana Manuscript, n.d.*). Ihaia was the only Kurahaupō rangatira to sign Te Tiriti o Waitangi and was a signatory to the 1856 Rangitāne receipt of payment (Te Tau Ihu o Te Waka a Māui 2008). The whakapapa provided by Ihaia was to accompany monies collected from Rangitāne and Ngāti Kuia elders to support ‘Te Kereme’, the Ngāti Māmoe and Ngāi Tahu claim (*Meihana Manuscript, n.d.*). It was this particular whakapapa that underpins the construction of Te Tauihu, providing another layer of interpretation that might well have been confined to the archives.

Prior to the physical construction of Te Tauihu certain protocols were observed. Whatu mauri – stones imbued or invested with a life force – were buried beneath where Te Tauihu would eventually stand. On this occasion whatu were collected from the summit of maunga Tapuae-o-Uenuku and Te Pokohiwi-o-Kupe were chosen. Also buried with the whatu was the pito (umbilical cord nearest to the baby’s body) of a child thus establishing a connection with the land. Once Te Tauihu was erected, a dawn ceremony was conducted. At this time Te Tauihu itself was imbued with mauri, binding it to the mauri implanted in the stones that lay beneath it. Dawn is the appropriate time for such ceremonies because karakia (incantations) are at their most potent and the breaking of dawn allowed the welcoming of Te Tauihu immediately into the world of light.

Te Tauihu is a modern pouwhenua, a marker of tribal authority and a communicative device that carries whakapapa, relations and history and most importantly, connects the present and the future to the past. A characteristic of Indigenous resistance is the ability to invert colonising practices and create spaces where Indigenous ways of story telling are privileged. Tuia 250 was a highly contested moment; nevertheless, it was the context in which Te Tauihu was realised. The whakapapa that underpins Te Tauihu was in the first instance recorded for the purpose of land claims. Just as whakapapa is a statement of mana whenua (authority of local tribe over land), so too is Te Tauihu.

Ethical storytelling along the Manawatū River

Along the Manawatū River the continuance of the pouwhenua tradition has been evident for some time, ranging from carvings representing ancestors, tau ihu and more recently whare kōrero also known as educational kiosks. This section of the paper explores how the tribal landscape is storied and mapped in public spaces. As part of the Tātai Whenua project, public signs along the Manawatū River were critiqued to reveal a shift in narration of the river as a public and recreational area to the river as a tribal ancestor and shared space. This shift is facilitated by mana whenua-local government projects to implement the Manawatū River Framework (Palmerston North City Council 2016). These projects and this transition are showcased here.

Signs as indicators of social change

Ethical mapping is evident through a shift in how spaces are publicly narrated. For example, an analysis of signage along the Manawatū River provides a snapshot of Indigenous narrations and the changing meaning and value of the landscape. In part the intent of signage is set by legislation, in particular the Reserves Act 1977 that regulates the ‘preservation and management of areas for the public’ (s3(1)a) with an emphasis on recreation (s3,(1)i) wildlife (s3,(1)ii), Indigenous flora and fauna (s3,(1)iii), environmental and landscape interests (s3,(1)iv) and the ‘natural, scenic, historic, cultural, archaeological, biological, geological, scientific, educational, community, or other special features or value’ (s3,(1)v).

These drivers establish three distinct ‘styles’ of signage. Earlier signs (Figure 1) often feature a map of the area and some basic information about recreational use of the space and safety. These signs are informative, basic and functional, indicating the location of walkways, estimated walking times and areas where caution is required. Use of the Māori language as part of the signage is low and if present, macrons are often missing (for example, Maori not Māori), reflecting a bygone era when very little prominence was given to the Māori language or Māori knowledge of the land.

Many of the maps feature a ‘You are here’ icon placing an emphasis on the presence and needs of people. This reinforces Western notions of the environment as passive spaces to explore, conquer and consume (see for example, Simmonds 2009). The implication is that the presence of people at a location provides context, meaning and value as opposed to the environment itself taking centre stage, a feature of Māori understandings. The environment is an atua (deity), it is a living entity with its own energies and must therefore be respected as such (see, for example, Forster 2019; Royal 2003; Simmonds 2009). These values and understandings are not reflected within sign structure or text. Indeed, the human dimension, particularly local history – Māori and settler – is often absent, inferring human activity is somehow disconnected from the space. The space is a reserve – set apart from settled spaces where human activity is confined.

Signs created more recently tend to focus on scientific literacy (Figure 2) – providing geographical data and information about local flora and fauna. Māori names of place and native species are often present with correct use of macrons reflecting increased recognition in the public arena of the importance of Māori language and knowledge and the bicultural history of this nation. These spaces are still predominantly considered recreational with the presence of some historical, cultural and social narration. If present, historical information tends to promote the settler experience rather than local Māori history reflecting a privileging of specific types of knowledge and a reminder of the deep- rooted, far-reaching and continued impact of colonisation.

In recent years several projects along the Manawatū River addressing the health and wellbeing of waterscapes were prioritised. These projects are collaborations where Rangitāne (the local iwi) have partnered and codesigned projects with local government. Rangitāne involvement in local planning matters is mandatory. Statutory provisions (see Resource Management Act 1991 and Local Government Act 2002) create space for the pursuit of Māori interests and these are reflected in local plans, policies and strategies. While relations are contentious at times it is common practice now to involve Rangitāne in significant community development

projects ensuring that cultural expressions are a feature of projects. The signage accompanying these newer projects (Figure 4) departs significantly from the earlier two styles discussed here (Figures 2 and 3). Four examples are provided here – OURS – the Manawatū River Leaders Accord initiative, Te Apiti (the Manawatū Gorge) Reserve, Tū te Manawa project and He Ara Kotahi network, the Manawatū River walkways and bridges. Each of these examples signifies a shift in the way the tribal landscape is storied and mapped in public spaces.

Figure 2: An example of a map found in a local reserve that is informative and functional and devoid of Indigenous narrative. Credit: Margaret Forster



Figure 3: Examples of signs found in a local reserve that emphasise a scientific narration with some references to Indigeneity. Credit: Margaret Forster

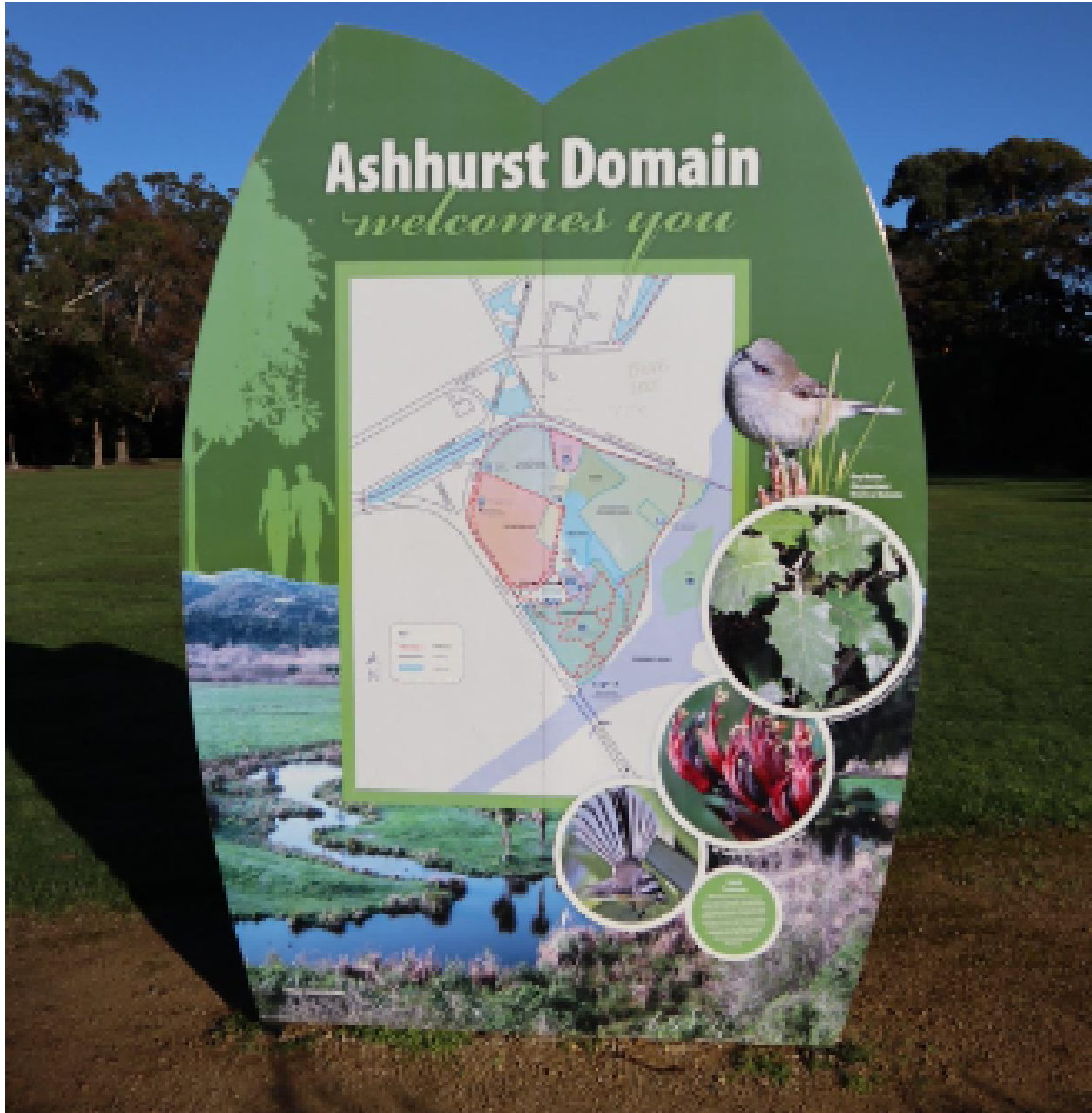




Figure 4: An example of a sign found in a local reserve that emphasises a protective narrative from both Māori and non-Māori perspectives. Credit: Margaret Forster



OURS. The Manawātū River leaders' accord

The Manawātū River Leader's Accord brings together a broad range of freshwater stakeholders from the region around a shared goal – to improve the health of the Manawātū River (Manawātū River Leader's Forum 2011). This goal is encapsulated by the following statement:

The Manawātū River flows through all of us. It shapes our region and reflects our people. It is precious because it is ours. Now is the time to stand up and take ownership. We need to improve and protect the

mauri (lifeforce) and ecological health of the Manawatū River catchment for generations to come (OURS. The Manawatū River Leaders' Accord 2011: 47).

This entity is part of a national programme to reform freshwater management in this country that has culminated in the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS) (Ministry of Environment 2020). The NPS recognises the fundamental importance of water and the critical need to restore and preserve these resources for the community today and in the future. This policy statement represents a significant shift in freshwater management including substantive roles of tangata whenua (Indigenous people of Aotearoa) in regard to mana whakahaere (involvement in high level decision making), kaitiakitanga (Māori environmental interests and practices) and manaakitanga (the process of demonstrating respect, generosity and care for freshwater and others) (Ministry for Environment 2020).

The Manawatū River Leaders' Accord has devised an action plan to meet the requirements as set out by the NPS (2011). It identifies four goals:

1. The Manawatū River becomes a source of regional pride and mana [authority].
2. Waterways in the Manawatū Catchment are safe, accessible, swimmable, and provide good recreation and food resources.
3. The Manawatū Catchment and waterways are returned to a healthy condition.
4. Sustainable use of the land and water resources of the Manawatū Catchment continues to underpin the economic prosperity of the Region (Manawatū River Leaders' Accord, 2011).

These ideals and the collaborative nature of the Leaders' Forum are reflected in various initiatives and signage along the river. A typical sign communicates the intent of the Accord in its messaging '*Now is the time to stand up and take ownership. We need to improve and protect the mauri (lifeforce) and ecological health*' and through the use of whakatauki: *kei te kōrero wai, kei te kōrero whenua, kei te kōrero tangata (if the water is healthy, the land and the people are nourished)*. Rangitāne interests are also highly visible through the use of Māori place names, brief references to tribal history as narrativised by the tribe (i.e. names and location of pā) and through the kaitiakitanga and stewardship messaging. These types of communications reframe the environment as inclusive spaces where tribal authority and connections are acknowledged and distinctiveness (i.e., Māori and settler histories) is celebrated. The intent of the Manawatū River Leaders' Accord and initiatives that are completed are showcased on a website ([https:// www.manawaturiver.co.nz/](https://www.manawaturiver.co.nz/)) and through a number of engaging and informative videos (see for example *10 years of the Manawatū River Leaders' Accord* available at this link <https://vimeo.com/637244138>).

Te Apiti (The Manawatū Gorge)

Signage at the Manawatū Gorge predates the OURS initiative but nonetheless aligns well with the OURS' agenda to reaffirm Indigeneity and make more explicit the stories of the land and its people. A carved

tomokanga (gateway) is present at Te Apiti (Manawatū Gorge Scenic Reserve). Tomokanga are often found at the entryway to marae, a cultural complex or meeting area of the local tribe.

The tomokanga was designed and carved by local Rangitāne, Ngāti Apa and Muaūpoko artist Craig Kawana. It evokes a protective karakia (incantation) over all who travel through the gorge. The carvings represent: significant atua associated with the forest; prominent geographical features and cultural markers such as the Ruahine and Tararua ranges; local flora and fauna; connections to local hapū (subtribe), marae (cultural centres) and genealogical connections; common activities associated with the gorge such as travelling between the coasts; and prominent ancestors including Whātonga who named places and waterways in the region, Popoto and Ruatea. This information is provided on a set of signs beside the carving itself.

Inside the carved frame of the tomokanga are a series of signs that provide educational material on geological (formation of the gorge and information about rocks that can be found in the surrounding area), ecological (information about native flora and fauna), historic and cultural information associated with the gorge. Tribal information is given prominence including: the local iwi pepeha (tribal greeting) and the well known (at least locally) whakatauki *Tini whetu ki te Rangi, ko Rangitāne nui ki te whenua* (like the myriad of stars in the sky, so are the people of great Rangitāne on the earth); information about prominent ancestors and local pā; and kōrero tuku iho (tribal narratives) about the creation of the gorge and events from which place names in the region are derived such as Manawatū, Te Ahu a Turanga and Potaehinetewhaiwa. Other information showcased on these signs are: scientific information about the local flora and fauna including the now extinct huia bird; information about a local biodiversity project led by the Department of Conservation and Horizons Regional Council in association with local communities, tangata whenua, local, regional and central government organisations to ‘improve the natural, historic and recreational values’ (statement found on the sign itself) associated with the gorge; and other cultural information such as settler history and history associated with building the roadways through the gorge.

Tū te Manawa

Tū te Manawa is a project to erect eight whare mātauranga, also known as educational kiosks, along the Manawatū River to ‘tell stories of the cultural and historical importance of each of the sites’ (OURS. The Manawatū River Leaders’ Accord n.d.). The intent is to bring people back to the river and promote an increased appreciation of the area and its resources. Such activities have the potential to establish stronger connections to waterscapes ideally leading to increased emphasis on action around sustainability.

The project is funded by the Ministry for the Environment and is linked to realising the NPS and the objectives of the Manawatū River Leaders’ Accord. Each site has a similar design – shaped like a house with two walls where information panels are displayed. There are four types of panels – one containing information about the Tū te Manawa project in the form of a map and other panels containing information about science, culture and

community (click on this link <https://www.manawaturiver.co.nz/activities/tu-te-manawa/> to find more detailed information and view images of each of the Whare Mātauranga).

The cultural information is selected and narrated by the local hapū. The first whare mātauranga is located at Ngāmoko (Norsewood). It is a carved whare with a koruru (head) at the apex of the roof and carved maihi (outstretched arms). The carvings reference local tribal genealogy and connections. The cultural information provided on the panels expands on the identity and belonging of the local hapū providing narrations about local marae, pepeha, significant local place names, ancestors and pā. The community panel tends to focus on local history particularly associated with settler experiences. The science panels provide information on local protection and enhancement projects and sentinel species. A sentinel species is a native species that provides an indication of the health and wellbeing of the waterways. At the Ngāmoko site there is some additional signage providing information about a native fish habitat restoration project. The restoration project is an OURS initiative. When viewed together this information clearly signals an intent to enhance the river ecosystem and connect communities to whenua as a critical step for achieving shared sustainability goals. This format and objectives are repeated at six more sites along the river with a final whare planned for Te Awahou (Foxton). There are slight variations reflecting the priorities and values of each hapū.

He Ara Kotahi (the Manawatū River network)

In 2018 the Palmerston North City Council released the Manawatū River Plan. A key objective of this plan is to realise the full potential of the river as a significant recreational asset in this region. This plan necessitates close engagement with the local Rangitāne people enabling tribal aspirations and interests to direct the type of activities planned and completed as part of this project.

He Ara Kotahi (A Pathway that Brings People Together) is a centrepiece of the Manawatū River plan. It is a bridge that connects Massey University, the science centres and Linton Army Camp to the city. It also provides access to the various walkways along the river. It is a physical and highly visible marker of Rangitāne authority and identity. From above, the bridge looks like a karaka tree, fallen across the river. The kowhaiwhai designs on the bridge reference the shape made by a native moth, the puriri, when it burrows into the bark of the karaka tree. At night the lights and rail make the bridge look like a waka floating on the river. These design elements acknowledge the importance of the karaka tree that was once a prominent feature and important source of food in this area. The waka metaphor is a reminder that the river was once a major highway connecting Māori communities throughout the region.

Along the bank are a series of educational signs that provide information about the local iwi, historical settlements that were once present alongside the river and the kōrero tuku iho of the creation of the Manawatū River and Te Apiti, the Manawatū Gorge. As is common with recreational reserves there is also information about local flora and fauna. All these narrations have been designed and developed in collaboration with Rangitāne and licensed te reo translators.

The Manawatū River network has several other sites of cultural significance. Key sites include the Ahimate Reserve, the Tini Whetu i te Rangi pathway and the Urban Eels platform. Ahimate was an old pā. In 2020 five pou (carved posts) were erected representing each of the five Rangitane hapū. This area is now the site of an annual Matariki fire festival bringing families back to the river. At the entrance to the site is a carved mareikura (female guardian) and whatukura (male guardian) providing a protective presence over the space.

In 2021 the Tini Whetu i te Rangi pathway was opened. This was designed by local Rangitane artist Warren Warbrick and is a physical expression of the whakatauki *Tini whetu i te Rangi, ko Rangitane i te whenua*. The urban eels platform was opened in 2020 and is the fruit of a partnership between Rangitane and local government to restore the habitat and increase the numbers of eels in local waterways. It is a platform that is accessed from He Ara Kotahi where eels can be viewed. The most recent addition is Te Arapiki a Tāne where He Kupu Rangatira, The Proverb Pathway, is located. The pathway represents community unity and the various cultures that now call the Manawatū home. There are 12 signs that appear in the language of origin of the proverb, a Māori language equivalent and an English translation (to access pictures of the pathway and information about the proverbs visit this website: <https://www.pncc.govt.nz/Parks-recreation/Walks-and-walkways/Te-Arapiki-a-Tāne>).

Each of these sites are visual expressions of rangatiratanga (tribal sovereignty connections) and markers of tribal identity designed specifically to bring people back to the river, to reconnect and to support efforts to enhance the health and wellbeing of the Manawatū River.

Pouwhenua: Marking and storying the ancestral landscape

The examples showcased in this paper are contemporary expressions of tribal authority in the form of physical markers that hold and communicate the lived memories and multi-layered interactions of people and place. This is consistent with the custom of pouwhenua. Pouwhenua are a Māori form of mapping. Mapping the ancestral landscape is an act of rangatiratanga or tribal sovereignty. By naming the landscape and retelling and sharing tribal histories the landscape is living – alive and dynamic. In the past pouwhenua were markers of tribal boundaries or signalled the location of resources under collective protection. Pouwhenua are intricately carved posts as seen marking garden plantations through to natural forms such as a grove of tī kōuka trees or a stack of stones that mark important food gathering sites or settlements. Carved forms were often a focal point for atua evoking their presence and energies to protect an area or resource (Makereti 1938: 193). Carved pouwhenua are also creative representations of tribal connection – telling a story of tribal association with an area or resource.

There is reference to pouwhenua at one of the sites researched for this paper. At the Apiti (Manawatū Gorge Reserve), groves of karaka trees are an indication of settlement sites:

Located near Te Apiti were a number of significant Rangitāne pā and kāinga (villages). These include Parahaki, Kauhanga, Motuere, Te Wharau, Kopuanui, Otangaki and Raukawa Pā. The present day locations of these sites are often identified by a grove of karaka trees (text supplied by Rangitāne for sign at Te Āpiti outlining local tribal history).

This point is also reiterated at He Ara Kotahi bridge where there is an entire placard centred on a significant site close to the river called Te Uru Karaka (Karaka Grove). This is one of the few remaining remnants of karaka groves along the river and stands as a monument to the importance of the karaka tree for the survival of Māori communities who resided along the river.

The contemporary examples of pouwhenua discussed in this paper are derived from this tradition. Mana whenua are continuing the practice of marking the landscape and mapping the tribal territory to make visible their interests, to connect to the past, to communicate their stories and celebrate their identity and belonging as shaped by the tribal territory. This includes performing various rituals like dawn ceremonies to activate the space where these markers reside and reawaken connections to the past and to ancestors. This is a decolonising project reasserting Indigenous authority and autonomy. It also develops new relations with others who frequent and reside around these spaces.

Cultural markers or expressions embedded into bridges, walkways, signage and artistic expressions (such as carvings, artworks and written compositions) are all gaining greater prominence and becoming a normalised feature of bicultural spatial governance. These types of expressions are sometimes referred to as *tohu whenua* ‘landmarks associated with *whakapapa kōrero* [genealogical narratives, ancestral histories] that validated a *rohe* (region) of a *whānau*, *hapū* or *iwi*, as well as *tūrangawaewae* [Indigenous homeland]’ (Te Atawhai o te Ao 2019: 12). Pouwhenua, therefore, physically transform and decolonise a place. Consequently, Māori knowledge and political agenda (for example Māori language revitalisation and biculturalism) become a normalised feature of the landscape influencing the values and hearts of all who move through that space.

The *Tauihu o te Waka a Maui* in Wairau and the *whare mātauranga*, bridge, walkways, *pou* and other design elements found alongside the Manawatū River are modern versions of pouwhenua. Pouwhenua are part of a new Indigenous communicative landscape that connects the past, present and future. Pouwhenua are clear physical markers of tribal authority and interests. They are designed to connect (or reconnect) people with place and to educate people about place, establishing new connections to *Te Tapuwae tahi o Rangitāne-nui-a-Rangi*, the territory still occupied and to a certain extent, controlled by the descendants of Rangitāne.

Glossary

atua	deity
hapū	subtribe

kaitiakitanga	Māori environmental interests and practices
karakia	incantation
kōrero tuku iho	tribal narratives
kōruru	carved head on a carved house
maihi	outstretched 'arms' on a carved house
mana	authority
manaakitanga	generosity, ethic of care
mana whakahaere	involvement in decision-making
mana whenua	tribe with authority over local area
marae	cultural centre
mareikura	carved post representing female guardian
Matariki	Māori new year
mātauranga	knowledge
mauri	lifeforce
pā	fortified villages
Pākehā	non-Māori
pakohe	metasomatised mudstone or argillite
pepeha	tribal greeting of key tribal features
pito	umbilical cord
pou	carved posts
pouwhenua	custom of marking the tribal landscape
rangatiratanga	tribal sovereignty
tangata whenua	indigenous people of Aotearoa

tau iho	canoe prow
taunahanaha	custom, process of naming the tribal territory
Te ao Māori	the Māori world
toki	adze
tomokanga	gateway
tūrangawaewae	place to stand, ancestral authority
waka/waka hourua	canoe, double hulled canoes
whakapapa	genealogy
whakapapa kōrero	genealogical narratives, tribal histories
whakatauki	sayings
whānau, hapū, iwi	Māori collectives associated with the extended family, the subtribe and tribe
whare kōrero	school of learning
whare mātauranga	education kiosks
whatukura	carved post representing male guardians
whatu mauri	stones imbued with a life force

Note

¹ Maximising the largely economic productivity of the environment. This imperative is premised on an assumption that the environment is a commodity and its value is linked to its economic viability

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