

Chairman's Report 2007 – Tahuri Whenua Inc. Soc.

Tena koutou katoa

Ka nui te mihi ki a koutou mo te hui-a-tau o Tahuri Whenua.

It is my pleasure to present this chairman's report for our fourth AGM for Tahuri Whenua.

We have completed another very positive year in terms of our development and consolidation within New Zealand society and one where we continue to gain wide acceptance of our kaupapa. A lot of passion and effort has been applied by members to getting the kaupapa out there and we have been very well accepted with almost 200 members now, including individuals, kaumatua, growers, supporters, schools, marae and trusts. Our membership continues to grow and there are many new members and faces this year. It seems that we get much stronger interest in the collective and membership processes when we spend time interacting through a kanohi kitea approach. This means that we have to give up considerable time to interact with our community of interest but ultimately those that become members have a similar passion and interest in Maori horticulture. I believe that all Maori, not just growers of specific crops, have something to contribute to our future generations and therefore can contribute to this collective. Essentially we are guaranteeing the succession of future generations.

Last year I noted the remarkable amount of work that continues behind the scenes for this initiative that goes largely un-noticed, especially as each one of us has our usual commitments to jobs, whanau, marae, etc. We must also thank our kaumatua for their input and support throughout the year. They add a value to our activities which makes us unique in horticulture, educational and other related areas. The ultimate strength in the collective will be in the size and quality of the membership as this will ensure we are well positioned within the New Zealand horticulture sector and that we can continue to contribute positively to Maori development.

We have had a large number of very successful hui and events related to our kaupapa in the last 12 months. The Tahuri Whenua hui at Mangahanea marae near Ruatoria was enjoyed by all those that attended. Two further hui on the East Coast since then (Tikapa in May 2007 and Uawa in August) have been very successful and Tahuri Whenua was well represented, in each case through presentations and attendance of members. Other key events during the year have included a Matariki lecture held at Te Papa Museum in Wellington where I spoke on traditional horticultural practices. I was also the guest speaker at an Eco-Film Festival hosted over two months at New Lynn in Auckland. Some of you may also have seen the episode of Ki uta ki tai on Maori television which focussed on Tahuri Whenua and also my mahi with crops and students at Massey. Aside from my activities our committee and some members have also been out and about talking to functions and schools about the kaupapa. Kia ora koutou.

The proposed 'spud in a bucket' project which we suggested last year has taken on a life of its own. Moana has taken on the task of overseeing this concept while Simon Walsh is working overseas for a few months. Last year a number of schools including Newbury, Ngati Haua, and a Raglan Homeschool took part as a trial and the kids thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Already this year we have had enquiries from 27 schools about the project and now need to look at the best way to fund it in the interim and grow the project into a curriculum option. Any thoughts on the direction and/or assistance for this project would be well received. Moana can speak to that initiative shortly.

We were not successful in attracting continuing funding from the Sustainable Farming Fund in their round earlier this year. While that has been disappointing it has allowed us to focus on consolidating our activities. We have had sufficient carry-over funds to allow us to continue our activities as we had before so we have been lucky in that respect so far. The variety of plans we had prepared in 2005 and 2006 have now been reviewed and summarised into a document

available to members. I believe we are on target to achieve a lot of the objectives we set ourselves in those early days. Last year it became apparent that we have been given some poor advice from the IRD regarding our charitable status and thus our taxable status. Since then an application has been made to the newly formed Charities Commission to resolve this and we were recently granted charity status. The IRD have been advised and we are expecting confirmation from them that this can be backdated to our original establishment and therefore any tax requirements will be waived. It remains a waiting game but the advice should not be too far away. A further positive point from being granted charity status is that people can now claim back donations etc made to Tahuri Whenua on their tax returns.

I would like to give a brief update on some of the projects we have been associated with. In 2005 we committed as a partner to a project between Crop & Food Ltd (CFR) and Te Pu Hao Rangi Trust (Del Wihongi) targeting the commercialisation of kumara. The project is still progressing, albeit slowly and we are now waiting for Crop & Food to let us know when Tahuri Whenua can be involved as the interface between these kumara varieties and their maintenance. There is an opportunity here to take the kumara concept further and look to establish a kaitiaki process whereby some of these old varieties can be grown as parent stock year by year. Some thought needs to go to that concept, especially as it would need to be located in a suitable climatic area and involve someone managing the stock both during production and storage. As a further note, I quite like the idea of a group of trustees existing as kaitiaki of some of these crop materials and would enjoy hearing people's thoughts on the appropriateness of that process and the roles trustees like this might take. The primary issues is the cost of any formal structure and the reality that there is a cost to looking after these materials and finding people to grow them as a seed bank year by year.

The other project we are associated with is the product development one with the Riddett Research Centre looking at processed products for the taewa. They are into their final year of the project and Marie Russell is their primary contact at the moment. They have looked at types of potato flour, chippies etc but now need to work with food manufacturing industry to determine the costs of production, especially if it involves some factory type situation requiring new equipment or skills.

Currently I am also looking at how I can work towards establishing a trial ground for our Maori crops within the Massey University site. My objective here is that we create something that is long-term and strategic. I am looking at an area of around 1ha (tentatively approved) which can be accessed directly from the road and designed to have a rotational layout and be functional as an interactive mara which we can take manuhiri to and which will have a public profile under the collective watchful eye. The idea is still in a conceptual stage but I hope that it can be ready to start this time next year. Any suggestions etc would be welcomed.

In closing, my personal thanks go again to all the committee members for their input to our roopu. Lastly, an important acknowledgement to Massey University as my employer for allowing me the time and resources in working for the collective at no cost to our group. They have funded considerable time, travel, hui, and other resources for myself and Marie Russell (our treasurer) without hesitation and I would not have been able to undertake my role as chairman the way I have without their support in this way

No reira, ka nui te mihi ki a koutou,
tena koutou, tena koutou, tena ano tatou katoa.
Nick Roskruge, Chairman, Tahuri Whenua Inc. Soc.