

Te Whānau ā Apanui - Iwi Manaakitanga

Trudy Downes

Mai i Taumata-ō-Apanui ki Pōtaka
Ko Whanokao te maunga
Ko Mōtū te awa
Ko Whakaari te puia
Ko Apanui te tangata
Ko Te Whānau ā Apanui te iwi

From Te Taumata-ō-Apanui to Pōtaka
Whanokao is the mountain
Mōtū is the river
Whakaari is the volcano
Apanui is the ancestor
Te Whānau-ā-Apanui is the tribe

Tucked away on the eastern Bay of Plenty are the most beautiful lands of Te Whānau ā Apanui. This is the iwi of my mother's mother and the place we spent many holidays with our large whānau.

There is just one road in and out. It is one hour's drive to the nearest supermarket and petrol station at Opōtiki, or almost two hours to the next at Whakatāne. Internet can and does fail often and cellphone reception is patchy at best. Land lines are limited.

This is the place my parents now live with their giant pōhutakawa tree and sea views to White Island. This is also the place where the iwi have introduced their own Covid-19 alert level system.

"In light of the Covid -19 plaguing the country and the world, we have had to take measures to protect our most vulnerable, our iwi taonga, our elderly and our mokopuna.

We are placing an iwi rāhui. We are closing our borders from Pōtiki Rua to Te Taumata ō Apanui and will have manned border control stations at both ends of the iwi...

We have near on 200 vulnerable pakeke here on the coast and the cost of death for our iwi will be catastrophic."

Te Whānau ā Apanui Covid-19 Iwi Response Team

While we are on alert level 4, the iwi are on alert level 5. Regardless of the proposed government return to level 3, Te Whānau ā Apanui will remain at level 5 for another four weeks. What this means is that access is for essential services only; no campers, tourists, outside fishermen, cyclists, or holiday makers. Those legitimately passing through are be checked in and out at each border control. Locals wanting to leave the area need to gain approval for a permit to travel outside the iwi. Inside the borders, pakeke (elders) over 65 are urged to remain at home, travelling only for essential needs and medical care. Family living outside of the rāhui are not allowed in to visit, under any circumstances.

To achieve and maintain these conditions the iwi organised itself promptly, with a coordinated effort from local businesses and support networks including the medical centre, the police, Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency, hapu within the iwi and WINZ.

Apanui World was created for all grocery



Checkpoint.



View from Mum and Dad's lawn.

shopping requirements. It is run from the underground carpark of the local hotel and takes online and telephone orders. It accepts WINZ payment cards (as do the local stores now) and offers a range of basics and non-basics.

Supplies have been coordinated at the local stores to contain costs (remote local shops are normally expensive) and all local businesses have instigated social distancing measures.

Kaitiaki (minder, guardian) volunteers have been assigned to keep tabs on the pakeke throughout the iwi. Mum and Dad's kaitiaki calls or visits daily, ensuring shopping is sorted, and updating them on iwi plans and events.

Flu shots are available at three iwi centres although Mum and Dad received a home visit for theirs. The local medical team are posting regular updates on the iwi Facebook pages; about the virus, its effects and countermeasures, and information on how to access their services under the new social distancing restrictions.

There is a coordinated mahi kai (food gathering) team, and spoils are shared throughout the iwi. So far Mum and Dad have had venison, fish, seafood, preserves, fruits and vegetables, along with hygiene and sanitation packs.

The borders are manned 24/7. Boat access to the sea is monitored. Seafood is gathered wearing gloves, recycling and firewood are all managed and regular communications keep iwi informed.

visitors - at a social distance - in the last few weeks than they have had in the last few years. He feels almost embarrassed to be accepting all the abundance coming their way as he doesn't see him and Mum in a position of need. He is loving the silence that comes with the lockdown - they live near the state highway and usually logging and supply trucks barrel past at all hours. He does miss the sound of kids and families at the beach and says that a few more locals are coming to 'his' beach for their lockdown walkabouts.

Dad is pākehā and thinks that the manner of this rāhui is the very essence of manaakitanga* in a community. A typically Māori and family way of connection, ensuring that the iwi as a whole survives. He doubts that he and Mum would have been as well looked after if they were still living in Katikati.

I have complete faith in all my whanaunga to look after my parents. It gives me a sense of peace to know I don't have to worry about them. Huikau Rata sums up my feelings in her many Facebook posts:

"Loving hearing all the stories of different hapu, and what they are currently doing for their elders in their areas. True MAGIC!

"My kaumātua (elders), are doing so well. Calling them on a daily, has become a ritual I am enjoying and will do more of after this pandemic has packed itself away."

I will leave it with Huikau to wrap up: "Time is really of the essence. Have to soak up our pakeke while they're here."

He hōnora, he korōria ki Te Matua i Te Rangi, he maungārongo ki runga ki te whenua, he whakaaro pai ki ngā tāngata katoa. Āmine.

**Manaakitanga - one meaning is 'hospitality'. It is central to Māori society and inspires interactions between people to make them feel welcome. To Māori, manaakitanga is a value of vast importance.*

Facebook pages entertain and re-connect the iwi inside and outside the rāhui.

A tangi was held during the first weeks of lockdown. My cousin's daughter Huikau Rata said, "Sitting at the bottom of our driveway today waiting for Nan's convoy to pass us, I hear there were cars and people all out on the highway waving Nan aroha and singing her songs. What a send-off. e Kui!"

Dad reports that they have had more



Pastor Nigel wasn't sure what he missed more under COVID-19 lockdown - his congregation or his hairdresser.