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TWENTYTWENTY

COVER IMAGE

Leafa Wilson/Olga Krause *Ich Heisse Olga Krause, Deutsche Kuenstlerin* 2005
Poster print (detail). Image reproduced in full below.



The life-long work of performance artist Leafa Wilson/Olga Krause began in 2005. These propagandist poster-styled works are loosely based around the Russian Constructivist design aesthetic adopted by the German band 'Kraftwerk'. With both Samoan and German ancestry, the artist reconciles their past and present by creating utopic race relations in the site of their body: I am Olga Krause, German artist (Ich Heisse Olga Krause, Deutsche Kuenstlerin)

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KOPURERERUA AUETU THE VALE OF TEARS.

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The hapū of Ngai Tamarawaho was a driving force behind a 2001 vision to reestablish their relationship with Tauranga's Kopurererua Valley. Their vision set the framework for the design and development of a business-partnered project. The hapū vision for what became the 'Kopurererua Valley Project' included the revival of Ngai Tamarawaho's connection with the Valley, changing it from a so-called wasteland marked by failed attempts at European cultivation and drainage subsidies, to a thriving waterway park, honouring Ngai Tamarawaho's ancestors and providing contemporary spaces for people to reconnect. In essence, the sixteen-year project culminated in the reintegration of hapū vision into the Kopurererua Valley, offering a model for other regions, city councils, and hapū. Significant achievements range from physical changes to the Valley to relationship strengthening. These include community relationship building and strengthening of the hapū's relationship with their whenua, their local authority Tauranga City Council, infrastructural agencies, utility companies, and the community.

I was the inaugural project manager for the Kopurererua Valley Project (1996–2005), Tauranga's 364 hectare inner-city park development, which is now an exceptional natural environment set between urban areas with strong cultural, community, historical and recreation values. The Kopurererua Valley is believed to be the largest urban wetland restoration project in the Southern Hemisphere and one of the most dramatic inner-city turnarounds achieved in New Zealand.

THE MANA AND INNOVATION — THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AN INVITATION

The Valley is an exemplar of tangata whenua–community–Council partnership, where iwi led the visioning process and business leaders partnered on implementation. Ngai Tamarawaho secured \$50,000 from Te Puni Kokiri to invest in collaborative planning processes that had extensive consultative reach. The hapū-led and -funded concept development was followed by a hapū-led visioning hui at Tamateapokaiwhenua Whareniui. Here Council was invited to hear the hapū vision, view the concept and participate, as opposed to iwi making submissions to a Reserve Management Plan.

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The presence of Ngai Tamarawaho was reestablished via a new carving school created within the Valley floor by the Kohu whanau. The story of Taurikura (the ancestress who was known to have carved out the valley as she swam through it) was reaffirmed and artwork commissioned to give context to the landform. This demonstrated the ‘whole of landscape’ scale of the story’s role in the rohe. Another artist was commissioned to lead a programme whereby kuia shared stories in Te Reo which became the content of paintings, later used as interpretation. This work is still used as the mana image for the main Waikareao estuary walkway interpretation sign.

The implementation aspect, as a landscape scale project, was massive and captured the imagination of the community by virtue of the platform that was created through the visioning process led by the hapū.

The implementation was part-funded with one million dollars raised over ten years through a Service Club Trust and the Kopurererua Valley Rotary Valley Centennial Trust, which is still raising income and undertaking projects. An innovative corporate investment programme funded a bold river realignment project, the trail visitor shelter, interpretative centre, education programmes, engineering and physical works.

BOLD CHANGES TO RESTORE THE KOPURERERUA VALLEY

The Kopurererua Valley is a nationally significant site as the staging and withdrawal route for the battle of Gate Pa, yet for many years the site had been subject to utility company activities, failed farming attempts and various pipelines being laid across the valley floor. The Kopurererua River had been ‘straight lined’ by drainage boards and subsidised attempts had been made to drain the Valley for farmland. These attempts failed.

A fundamental part of the implementation of the Kopurererua Valley Project was to realign the river system back to its original course to reflect the legend of the ancestor, Taurikura, and the formation of the river by the flick of her

tail.¹ Thought to be audacious goals as little as sixteen years ago, the following points outline the tangible achievements of Ngai Tamarawaho's vision:

- Realigning the Kopurererua River back to its original course
- Establishing a specific funding trust to coordinate Tauranga Service Clubs' community contribution, with the Kopurererua Valley as a priority. Massive external fund-raising each year continues twelve years after inception
- Rehabilitating a 364 hectare toxic, overgrown, weedy valley with failed grazing attempts and conspicuous utility infrastructure. The Valley now has a range of terrestrial and aquatic habitats, with recreation access and improved neighbourhoods
- Protecting and restoring multiple pa and archeological sites, including work to restore the battle and retreat route of those wounded and interred from the Battle of Gate Pa
- Introducing a cultural interpretation programme including pou, panels, carvings and guided 'Cultural Journey' classes by Ngai Tamarawaho
- Providing a cycleway and off-road opportunity between the major ridges in Tauranga, linking the main western suburbs with the two main secondary schools and the main intermediate school. This includes a new cycleway bridge linking two peninsulas with each other over the toll roa
- Transforming intensive farming and poor land management into sustainable land management, resulting in the cessation of flood plain reliance through major engineering projects to support new wetlands and restored swamps, both saline and freshwater
- Extending community connection to the Valley via their workplace or community planting day

¹ See 'Traditional Story: Taurikura' *Tauranga Memories: Tauranga Moana, Tauranga Whenua*. <http://tauranga.kete.net.nz/tauranga_moana_tauranga_whenua/topics/show/518-traditional-story-taurikura>.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Over two thousand neighbours were directly consulted, mostly through street and 'living room' meetings. This led to a non-notified consent process whereby Tauranga City Council managed implementation and undertook a two-year approvals process to set the scene for implementation as a result of community support for the vision. A corporate gifting programme was also created, with 12 large- to medium-sized companies hosting staff/company directors' consultation meetings at a local, regional and national level to seek connections for staff and sponsorship in the project. Over a million plants were planted during consecutive seasons of community planting days, school and educational programmes, and staff team build days. All of which saw a massive change to the Valley's role and ecological function.

ACHIEVEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY — THE COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

With the twenty-year vision on track for completion, it is important to recap the highlights of the first sixteen years, as a model of collective impact. These highlights include

- River realignment undertaken to reestablish the essence of Taurikura into the Valley
- Increased recreation evidence in the Valley, with monitoring from track counters and observations
- Cycling, running, dog walking, swimming, white water slalom kayaking, food gathering and skateboarding now feature as daily and seasonal pastimes
- Linking trails and increased public access achieved, introduction of cycle trails and new bridges adding to connectivity. Trails plan achieved, with one major bridge now completed ahead of programme in 2018 over the toll road
- Programme of continued cultural presence and acknowledgement to Tangata Whenua throughout the Valley works programme, including pa site protection undertaken
- Massive community connection and investment in the Kopurererua Valley; the public now revere this park and it is also highly used

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- Unsightly utilities undergrounded
- Specific environmental practices adopted, poor practices transitioned out early, creation of major wetlands and low impact boardwalking over specific areas
- Believed to be the largest urban wetland restoration project in the Southern Hemisphere
- Cycle trails exiting car journeys off roads, with cycle trails connected with the City and District network to become part of the inner-city recreation-rides system. A new significant bridge for student cycling to the main schools and polytechnic
- Birds, Bees and Trees Programme run for schools in the Kopurererua Valley by Comvita
- Trees for Survival programme aligning with the Kopurererua Valley, outreach programmes and community days. The reserve is the location for Honda's contribution to Trees for Survival
- Successive Rotary Clubs have continued to contribute and meet funds based on targets for contribution, despite people changes and the passage of time. This was due to a strong structured programme and relationship, clear Trust objectives and commercial partners' relationship management
- The development of the Kopurererua Valley has endured despite the trienniums of Council changing elected members due to the absence of sole-dependence on the Council funding
- The involvement of leaders in key roles, the Kopurererua Valley Rotary Centennial Trust mandate, key Council staff and community advocacy to achieve the original vision
- Corporate Gifting Programme with structured relationship management
- Cessation of farming practices and grazed areas reduced to a minimum, with a continued exit plan for all grazing
- Introduction of over one million plants in accordance with ecological assessment and plans signed off by tangata whenua

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- Approximately one hundred hectares of weed growth removed and six main wetlands created and maintained
- Approximately two hundred tonnes of car bodies, steel, appliances, illegal dumping and inorganic debris removed and recycled where possible
- Recycling of road millings as new trail foundations
- A dedicated park ranger for establishment phases
- Sustainable planning with a significant investment throughout the initial planning phase: A comprehensive planning project over an 8-year time frame, in partnership with others, completed in 2005

METHODOLOGY AND RECOGNITION OF SUCCESS

Reviewed by Te Puni Kokiri, this was ‘co-design’ long before the phrase had become commonplace. This was ‘Co-governance and co-management’ long before that term was coined too. Tangata whenua led the initiation of outlining a process it could bring together, where success had historically eluded antecedent agencies (Transit New Zealand, Drainage Boards, etc.). With Ngai Tamarawaho leading the visioning process for the Kopurererua and with review support and investment assistance by Te Puni Kokiri, a visioning process, so intrinsically natural to tangata whenua, showed the way for other agencies to align the extent of their mandated strategic and planning requirements.

In early phases, a dedicated co-project team of tangata whenua and other leaders was run by the hapū. This followed into a structured co-governance level and co-management level project plan. The resulting alignment of council planning with a project implementation plan that spoke for the project was a strength. This was reviewed by iwi, statutory authorities and New Zealand Historic Places Trust staff.

Six months of neighbourhood and key stakeholder meetings took place pre-project, within a two- year consultation plan. This was the strongest peer review audience and led to a massive ‘social license to operate’ from the

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community, which positively influenced an at times hesitant elected member group and gave them confidence to retain investment contributions.

Every Tauranga service group and environmental programme was involved in the vision for the valley, leading to support, investment and a platform to begin to work with corporate partners. Private sector funders provide regular review via structured relationship meetings regarding their investments. With implementation overtly with the community and led by community leaders as much as possible, an ongoing positive profile was made possible.

Quantitative trail counter data proved very important, as statistics were used not just for measurement of success and uptake but to substantiate investment applications and to continue with corporate funding and resource support.

RECOGNITION OF SUCCESS

The Kopurererua Valley Project has served as a ‘model for export’ and was profiled at the 2013 International Co-Governance/Co-Management Hui at Te Papa, where Ngai Tamarawaho presented. Further to this the Kopurererua Valley has served as a case study presented to

- Senior National Arboretum staff, Washington DC, 2005, at the invitation of the United States Department of Agriculture
- Indigenous Peoples/First Nations Leadership Stream, World Parks Congress, Sydney 2014
- NZRA national conferences, 2004, 2006 and to multiple parks agencies around New Zealand
- Auckland parks projects at the commencement of Auckland Council, 2010 (South Auckland projects)
- Wellington region service clubs for the creation of a similar funding trust, 2017
- Cultural landscape design lectures, Unitec 2017

The Valley project was also promoted as a case study by Te Puni Kokiri and in 2018, the Kopurererua Valley won Aotearoa’s highest award for parks, the

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New Zealand Recreation Association's Outstanding Park Award. The Valley is now entering further and final phases of river realignment, with wetland enhancement and restoration of plant species and care to the Puketoromiro Pa site.

In January 2020 I had occasion to meet with the now kaumatua for Ngai Tamarawaho, Peri Kohu. Peri and I remembered fondly the project's beginnings back in 1996 and the leadership then of the Tauranga Moana Rangitira, the late Morehu Ngatoko, also of Ngai Tamarawaho. We reflected that it was Ngai Tamarawaho's leadership around process and relationships in 1996 that changed the course for a wide range of portfolio outcomes and future approaches. We reflected on the legacy of those past efforts and how they endure today. It was an opportunity to humbly share with Peri that the opportunity presented by the hapū of the Kopurererua Valley relationships and the whole project is my clear career highlight and indeed a life-changing event. The project has been presented internationally as best practice and has set a benchmark in Aotearoa for future approaches. The legend of Taurikura lives on.²

Geoff, ARPro, is a former Tauranga City Council Parks and Leisure Manager, now Principal Parks and Recreation Specialist at Geoff Canham Consulting.

² Concept drawings, images and stories relating to this project would be available from Ngai Tamarawahoraeme.