

Regan Potangaroa



My name is Regan Potangaroa, Professor of Architectural Science, Victoria University, Humanitarian Aid worker, former Member of the Committee of Management and Shareholder in the Aohanga Incorporation.

My parents, Mary and Goldie Potangaroa were avidly involved in the Incorporation in its early stages. Goldie was the first Chairman of the Aohanga Incorporation Board and I ended up going along (dragged) to various farm meetings.

The Incorporation idea came from the push from my Grandfather Rewi Tamihana, as a way to take it back from Maori Affairs and put it into whanau control. Weed control and its costs was the big topic.

At that time, we had a Blue Water Title which it seems, we have subsequently lost (without much of a fight). We should have fought much harder.

Pāpāuma

I was the only one on the Committee of Management that sought to retain Pāpāuma,

while the others (older ones) wanted it to fall down, given that pushing it over wasn't an option.

The existing School house was on a separate title (Educational land) while Pāpāuma was on farm-land and not the Marae reserve. The idea was to relocate the School house to the Marae but the problem was, Pāpāuma was in the field next door.

The School house couldn't be called Pāpāuma 2 and there was the additional issue of the Memorial outside Pāpāuma. The decision by the CoM was to ignore it and let it fall over. That was the impetus for fixing-it-up ourselves using own forces and what was at hand.

The problem that the CoM has created is exactly the one they wanted to avoid, two adjacent Marae, potentially at odds with each other. That needs to be balanced between the functionality of the school Marae and the historically connected Pāpāuma Marae.

As a Structural engineer my recommendations would be to check the foundations, the nailing

of the outside cladding (especially for the two cross walls) plus the roof ridge beam would be a good check-up. Any signs of distress such as alignment in the walls and roof should be noted and followed up. Pāpāuma is not a big structure

I started doing overseas humanitarian deployments in 1996-ish and couldn't do both and hence stood down from the CoM.

Committee of Management

In my time, I was the only non-local (living in Wellington and not Dannevirke) and also non farmer being a structural engineer. However, some things don't change and the role and place of Aohanga (or Owahanga) is still unclear. A history of the Incorporation would be a legacy. And the advice the CoM receives and its transparency of decision making still needs to be scrutinised. The results driven society we live in finds the latter even more problematic.

Women represent half of who we are and just on the simple maths means we must find a way that women can participate. My sister Diane (first female CoM Member) was a nice radical and she was petite, which made her a cute sister but usually resulted in her being underestimated by those that did not know her nature. She had a positive influence on the CoM, and her legacy is more in the acknowledgement and understanding that 'women can', and that 'women do'.

Technology

Technology is playing a bigger part but not as big as it should. The Aohanga web page(???) and I have been trying to force the current management levels of the CoM to accept/review the idea of drone mapping and scanning the farm so that we can better and more specifically manage areas such as fertiliser dressing. Land stability would be another but that is a discussion up the track.

I have been engaged to perform drone studies over the Farm. The drone studies are a summer activity and yes I certainly want to push ahead with them. The problem has been the coordination with staff on the ground. The proposed work (at no cost to Aohanga) was to drone a selected land area using a multispectral camera. That camera uses wavebands in addition to visible light that tells us the health of the ground. And hence why it is important. It means that we can identify unhealthy parts, ground truth them by inspecting the sites and then prioritising and ultimately addressing them. The priority part is the key management outcome.

Aspirations for Aohanga

My aspirations for Aohanga would be Historical as a good start, a book on how it came about and the pain of having to clear the informal housing on the farm would be a great narrative. But also, how the farm has weathered the social context of NZ and into this covid episode we are entering.

One thing for sure is that the land/farm will be here long after we are passed on and watching from the grandstand with our relatives.

Technology would be the other, but not technology for technologies sake but rather one that assists the job on the farm. Hence, that scrutiny I mentioned earlier. A digital map of the farm would be useful. This would be to 'futureproof' the farm and its operations. An exploration of the land use beyond the first ridgeline from the sea would be interesting/useful.

Whanau engagement, given the technological age we live in but also the ability to access certain areas of the farm.

A more significant involvement in Iwi affairs and a more defined one with organisations such as FOMA.

Investment outside solely farming that does not make the farm financially 'precarious'.

A move away from the portfolio approach for the CoM, to one where the CoM were the decision- making core with a management shell, that then expedited the work.

Finally, I want to share a photo of forestry plantation that we established in the hills outside Masterton nearly 25 years ago. The group lead by Bill Gordon, made the same offer to Aohanga and was declined. We are setting

up to harvest the trees, while Aohanga is not. And I reflect back to the decision-making issues of the CoM, wondering what could have been? But also, what should have been, so that opportunities like this are picked up. The conclusion is leadership over dosed with integrity.

And that would be my aspiration for Aohanga.



My daughter Mary, and Albert Horsefield's son (farm manager at the time) running out to Pāpāuma some 40 years ago, well before it was renovated.

So many and various memories.