

Wangapeka Stories

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Introduction

Louise Petzold has written two articles on Wangapeka's history. Shelley Taylor has written an article discussing the name of the Whare Wānanga. They are included in this pamphlet.

In May of 2020 Louise Petzold wrote "The Whakapapa of the Wangapeka Whenua (The history of the land)"

<https://wangapeka.org/the-whakapapa-of-the-wangapeka-whenua-by-louise-petzold/>

In October 2020 Louise Petzold wrote "The whakapapa of the Wangapeka Whenua - a process of discovery!"

<https://wangapeka.org/the-whakapapa-of-the-wangapeka-whenua-a-process-of-discovery-by-louise-petzold/>

In November 2021 Shelley Taylor wrote "Naming of the Whare Wānanga, a Wangapeka Heritage Story"

<https://wangapeka.org/naming-of-the-whare-wananga/>

The Whakapapa of the Wangapeka whenua.

The history of the land.

It sounds like a very compelling title doesn't it? It alludes to a kind of certainty of knowing what's happened over the years on and to the land the Wangapeka Study and Retreat Centre currently sits on, and has sat on for 47 years.

Over the last year I've done a bit of prodding, poking and researching about this question acknowledging that we are all part of what ever came before, as we are part of whatever comes after. I've spoken to Iwi, historians, community members. Read various books, title deeds, old news prints. Held off writing anything for Newsphere until, "I have a bit more information"- as if there will one day be a nicely framed chronological low-down I can offer to the community.

Well day that day didn't happen.

Nor does it look like it will any time soon.

However, it seems time to reveal what is known so far, from this bias view, knowing that this journey of discovery is by no means complete, and in the hope that others who may hold more knowledge, may add to the kete.

So, here goes!

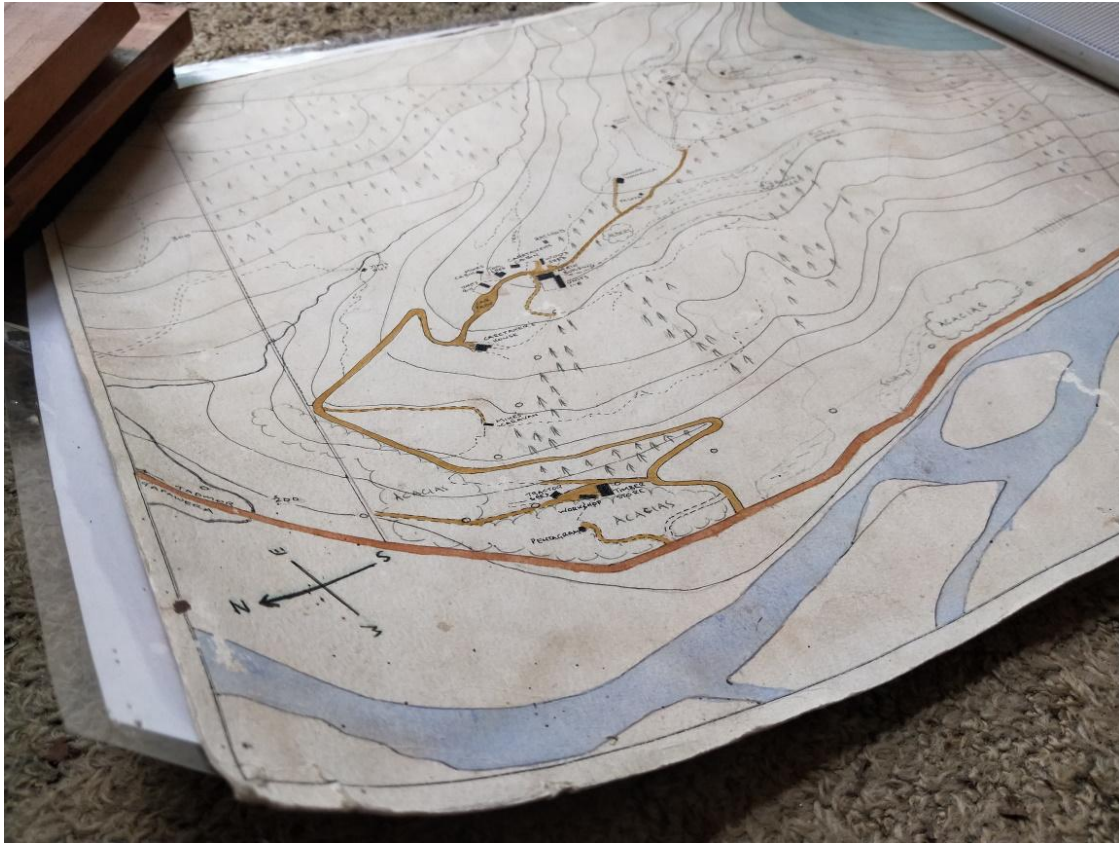
Entries on Title Deeds 1903-now.

The history of the land as it passed from Pākehā hands to Pākehā hands is fairly straight forward to track. Entries on the title deeds (although seemingly written by a spider!), date back to May 1902 after the Land Transfer Act was passed, with transfer of the block of land passing from one farmer to another in May 1903, March 1954, October 1960 and finally being purchased by the Sphere Group on the 20th January 1976. Many of you will know the story of Norm Howarth hearing about the land being for sale and encouraging Chime Shore to visit, who looked out across the valley declaring, "This is the spot!"

The Sphere Group archived minutes from that time indicates that the group considered they had purchased the land in 1975 as it was then they paid a deposit. The finalisation of the Deal was dependent on raising the finance which was raised over the following year through a variety of innovative events including ballet at the Theatre Royal, puppet shows, magic shows and market gardens.

On the 7th January 1988, the title deed was altered to ownership to the new name of The Wangapeka Educational Trust as the Trust is known today. (There's a whole other story

that is well worth documenting at some point about how locals thought for many years that the land was owned and lived on by a bunch of pig hunters called The Spear Group!)



Pre 1903.

What happened prior to 1903 is not so straightforward to ascertain. There are many accounts from 1839 onwards that give general indications of what was happening in the Wangapeka area, as Pākehā settlement increased, and land was taken, divided and allocated for that purpose.

Between 1839 and 1856, all land in Te Tau Ihu o te Waka a Maui (The Top of the South Island), had been “acquired” by either the NZ Company or the Crown. The Wangapeka area would have fallen into that. In 1844, Samuel Stephens a chief surveyor indicated the Wangapeka valleys which were covered in toi toi, harakeke, grass and thistle were ideal grazing for thousands of animals, and land in the valleys began to be laid out in rural sections for acquisition. Would the steep ridges of the Wangapeka Retreat Centre land have been part of this?

In 1846, there are historical entries about a large sheep run- the Wangapeka Run, established by a man EQ Stafford who ran 1700 sheep in the valleys of the Wangapeka and Motueka. His shepherd, John Frazer seems to be the only person living on the run. Frazer's settlement was identified as the last point of settlement on the way to the West Coast, via the Wangapeka valley, by Brunner in 1846 as he travelled that way and back 18 months later.

The Wangapeka Gold Rush.

If you have ever walked to the end of the valley along the Wangapeka tramping track, you will see the remains of the gold mining equipment that was sledged up the Wangapeka River to Blue Creek and Rolling River. This was part of a massive surge to mine for gold after it was found there in 1862 and 1869.

After a bit of dilly-dallying, the area was finally declared part of the SW Nelson Goldfield in 1869 and mining began in earnest with gold miners and their families moving into the area. Eventually the valley was abandoned given the small amount of gold found but some settlers had begun purchasing land in that area.

In 1906 the Wangapeka Run was sold to the New Zealand Government who began to divide and allocate sections for settlement as, "Rich farming and settlement land." 6167 acres of land in the Wangapeka went up for selection and purchase of individual plots although there are no details of exactly where this was. The Colonist Review Newspaper article of 7th June 1907 stated there was expected to be much interest in the ballot to purchase sections given the quality of land.

And so the whenua known at this time known as Section 11 Block XIV Wangapeka Survey District sat in amongst all of that change and acquisition, silently breathing and supporting the cycles of birth and death.

Māori Whakapapa.

So what of the time before this? The time when tangata whenua, the Māori people of this land used or occupied the land? Was the land where the Centre sits now, ever the kāinga or community for Māori? Was the Wangapeka area generally used in this way?

How did the land pass from Iwi hands to Pākehā hands? Which Iwi claimed or claim mana whenua of these lands?

Between 1828-1832 Te Rauparaha's Tainui/Taranaki alliance of Ngāti Koata, Ngāti Tama, Ngāti Rārua, Ngāti Toa and Te Āti Awa, arrived from the north, taking land in the area from Ngāti Apa and Ngāti Kuia who 40 years before had displaced Ngāti Tūmatakōkiri, the iwi that chased away Abel Tasman in 1642, and whose rohe it been for two centuries.

Local Māori historians say they found no records which particularly identify Māori occupation of the Wangapeka District. There are references to the ousting by the Tainui and Taranaki invaders of the previous inhabitants of nearby districts to the hinterlands, from which they were eventually driven out or captured. Was the Wangapeka valley and the Centre land one of those temporary hinterlands?

The Wangapeka track to the West Coast may have been a corridor for trade and access but at this stage of the enquiry there is little information about the identity of traditional users. Though there was evidence in the upper Motueka valley to the west coast that North Island Māori had made corridors there by burning bush for ease of escape from enemy tribes. Tools were also found there.

Today, Te Tau Ihu o te Waka a Maui have eight Iwi. Of these Te Āti Awa, Ngāti Koata, Ngāti Rārua and Ngāti Tama may have close connection to the Wangapeka valley. However, it seems no Iwi, according to my enquiries so far, made claim to the Wangapeka valley in their Treaty claims.

Did the pūrakau or stories of mana whenua and this area, pass away somehow in 1840 or earlier, as colonisation deepened? Or is it not the time and space for them to be revealed right now?

And so that is where I leave this story, for now. With some discoveries and more questions than that. Maybe other stories will flow and be woven into this voyage of discovery, who knows.

And as I write this, my memory returns to an email I received some time ago of a story of a Pā site at blue rock, up from the centre, and a waka found there...another thread of exploration perhaps.

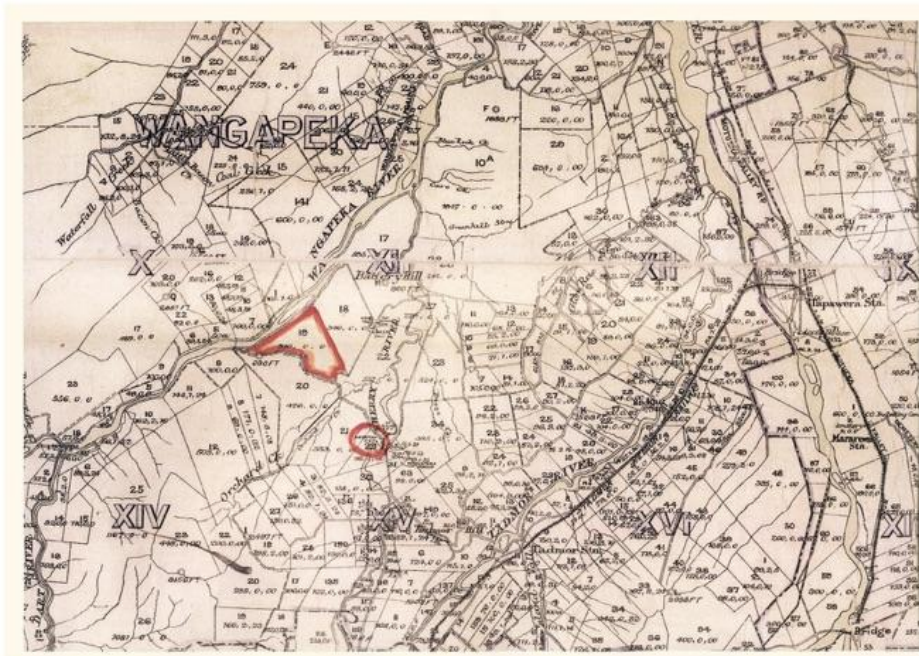
Perhaps we will never truly know the whakapapa of the Wangapeka whenua as it is held by human voice and mind. Perhaps the true and only way to know the history of the land is to connect with, and listen to what is there now, and she will tell us all there is know.

The whakapapa of the Wangapeka Whenua - a process of discovery!

Have you ever pulled in through the gate at the Centre and deeply exhaled? An incredible feast meets the sense doors, the whenua, the land, alive with sounds, movement and smells. It always makes me smile as the whole organism seems to breathe a sigh of relief.

An intrinsic part of being at the Wangapeka Retreat Centre, is feeling deeply into the support and connection with the land. So many of our community have expressed how that connection has been felt from first stepping foot through the gates. We are supported and we support. We are connected whether we know it or not.

So many weavings have created the land to be as it is, and continue to provide us with the support and nourishment we so obviously feel by being at the Centre. But what of the human weavings? How has the land been passed from one human collective to another? What has the whenua been used for? How did the whenua pass from Mana Whenua to Pākehà? What is the whakapapa of the Wangapeka Retreat Centre whenua?



In these times of great global challenge and change, gaining deeper understanding and greater clarity from these questions seems important as each piece of information has the ability to feed our present day actions.

With these musings, earlier this year, I began the initial stages of discovery, firstly getting historic title deeds, archive records, old newspaper articles and history books. Enquiries have been made with Mana Whenua- Ngāti Rārua, Te Āti Awa, Ngāti Tama and the local Tapawera community.

Tracking the historic titles deeds is the easy part with clear historical Pākehā ownership to 1903. Other historical records detail information about the area as a whole, the gold rush days of the 1860's, the New Zealand Land Company Purchase of land in the area for allocation to settlers, and the large Wangapeka Run sheep station of the 1840's. There are hints of Iwi use of the area pre 1840 as a corridor to the west coast and to trading routes.

Our February Hui, with the involvement of Pā Ropata Rob McGowan provided another investigation of the richness of the land that the Centre has been built on, through the eyes of Rongoā Māori wisdom. Our July Hui traced back movement of people across the region from tangata whenua, and provided time for the community to deepen our understanding of our present connections to the richness of the land we stand on.

There are more stories to be collected from kuia, kaumatua and elders in our community, who hold the stories of the history of the area and of the land the Centre is built on. It's a process with its own momentum!

Once we have a clearer picture, more information will be shared. For now, if you would like to contribute in any way to this journey of discovery, please email me louise.petzold01@gmail.com.

Naming Of The Whare Wānanga

Earlier this year the sign 'Whare Wānanga' was taken down during a retreat, and questions were asked about the original naming of the Whare, and of cultural appropriation as this is currently recognised within Aotearoa.

The Board kept the sign down while seeking the story of the Whare's name, cultural advice from Māori colleagues and friends, plus guidance from Elders.

Ray Caird who was on the Board of Trustees and one of the whare's builders in the mid 1980's was able to give us the story. The new meditation hall took several years to fund and build. During this time it was frequently referred to by Norm Howarth, Mike Elliott, Lily Hill and others as "the Chapel". Several Board members felt that a more appropriate Aotearoa related name was required.

Ray contacted the Te Āwhina Marae in Motueka (Ngāti Rārua, Te Āti Awa) whose rohe extends up the Motueka River valley and its subsidiaries. He was referred to Tom Bailey, a senior kaumātua and invited to his home. After outlining the Wangapeka Educational Trust's broadly Buddhist non sectarian universalist aims and the idea of seeking an appropriate name for the new teaching and meditation hall, Tom suggested the name Whare Wānanga ... a house of higher learning. It was a gift that was gratefully accepted on behalf of the Trust, and it was welcomed by the Board and the broader sangha.



The Board has reflected on how actions and contexts in history change over time, and has asked what learnings, actions and relationships need to develop to honour the name Whare Wānanga today and in the future.

The Whare Wānanga sign has now returned, with spelling corrected to include the macron. The story of its naming shows us the importance of keeping the Centre's history and knowledge alive. Ray is currently making enquiries to find a safe storage site for our archives and we are investigating further digitising archival documents.

Supporting the Centre's Te Tiriti o Waitangi focus group is vital. This group is in its formative stages and will explore how we can engage more deeply with Te Tiriti, making recommendations to the Trust and being a visible presence in shaping our community with bicultural awareness.

The Board welcomes input from anyone with interest in this area. Please contact Louise Petzold who can further outline the intentions of the group. louise.petzold01@gmail.com

While the removal of the Whare Wānanga sign has been challenging, this incident has provided an opening for many explorations, including attachment, non permanence, and living skilfully. May this be a catalyst for positive new initiatives, and an opportunity for the Wangapeka community to continue to grow together in wisdom and compassion.