

Access the first step in connecting whānau to the whenua



The Trustees of the Kōpūtara Trust are undertaking a programme of work to re-establish the lake, restore wetlands, and reconnect the people to their whenua.

Town of Carnarvon Sandon 382 & 383 is a block of Crown Land Reserved for Māori just north of Foxton. The block has a combined land area of just over 139 hectares. This area was set aside as a reserve for certain hapū within Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga. A sizeable part of Lake Kōpūtara lay within the reserve.

The whenua has 388 owners who had been landlocked from their whenua for over 120 years.

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In 2018 the Trust identified succession through the Māori Land Court as something they'd like to help the next generation of owners with. They joined a number of other trusts wanting to help maintain the legal connection with the whenua to create new ideas to support the next generation of owners.

Landlocked history

Kōpūtara was set aside as a reserve in the 1870s as a mahinga kai. However, Kōpūtara Trust trustee Pataka Moore said the owners had battled for many years to get access to the block.

Town of Carnarvon Sandon 382 & 383 was landlocked by a ½ chain (approx. 10m) strip of land encircling most of the block. It was designed to alienate owners from their whenua by the adjoining owner. In 1998 the Trust obtained a judgement from the High Court of New Zealand giving them a right-of-way over the ½ chain strip. And in 2001 another right-of-way adjoining the ½ chain strip was created by transfer from a neighbouring landowner. But it wasn't until 2016 that the Trust was able to form the legal right-of-way.

Creating a new legacy on the whenua

Various drainage schemes over the last century have resulted in very little of Lake Kōpūtara remaining, but the Trust is turning this around. Wetlands were created in 2014, and with support from Horizons Regional Council, owner's whānau and friends were invited to a planting in 2016 – a chance for many members of the five hapū who are connected to this whenua to walk on the land for the first time in many generations.

Using physical connection to promote legal connection

For many owners of Māori land the connection to the whenua is always something there – regardless of who is listed on the Māori Land Court register. But for organisations like Te Tumu Paeroa, we're limited in who we can communicate with about the management of a trust to those who have undergone succession through the Māori Land Court.

Kōpūtara Trust recognises that succession through the Māori Land court is an important part of the process for protecting their whenua for future generations. They hope that by organising events on the whenua, including running education events around Tangaroa – Tuna, namely tikanga about harvesting and preparing tuna, and hosting planting days will reunite people with their lands and give them a reason to return.

“This is all about reconnection for our people to their whenua and giving them a reason to return.” Pat Seymour - Trustee of Kōpūtara Trust

Source Te Umu Paeroa.