

A trip to the Moa Point sewage outfall is not my idea of a pleasant journey. Nor was that the experience of about seventy predominantly Maori people who gathered by the outfall, on Saturday the twelfth of March.

The occasion was to see with our eyes what was happening to the shoreline and surrounding sea area and to hear how our tupuna viewed the area.

One Te Atiawa man said the common expression of solidarity, "tatou, tatou", had been turned into "tutae, tutae", and the time had come to bring this message home to the decision makers in the capital.

It was pointed out that Moa Point, by the flight path to Wellington International Airport and the seaway into Wellington Harbour, was a shocking introduction to a so-called 'civilized' capital.

Later the group were taken to the peak of Rangitatau, overlooking Moa Point.

There the full majestic creation of Te Whanganui a Tara lay in a full circle around the pa site. From there could be seen, te Pito-one, the sandy end (anglicised to Petone) and the Hutt Valley. Closer was the area of Kilbirnie that geologically recently was uplifted. This coupled with the levelling of the area around the airport, contributed to the runway which now extends far into the harbour.

From Rangitatau could equally be seen the Pencarrow sewage outfall on the east side of the harbour and how the coastal currents and winds drive the effluent carrying waters to many parts of the harbour.

At that time looking out over the har-

bour the quoted words of a Hutt Valley city councillor came to mind that a strong South Atlantic current carried the Pencarrow primary treated sewage away.

And then much closer at hand was the fatty slick clearly visible coming out of the Moa Point outfall. I there and then resolved never to swim at Lyall Bay or even Island Bay.

On the descent the bay adjacent to Moa Point was pointed out. Called Tarakena Bay, it was long recognised by the tribes crossing te Moana o Raukawa, (Cook Strait) as the best place to launch or beach a waka in rough southerly weather. This has been recognised by the Civil Aviation in the last twenty or so years because it is designated as the official launching ramp for rescue craft in the event of an aircraft going down in the sea approach to Wellington Airport.

Just around the corner into the harbour entrance is Breaker Bay and Steeple Rock, known as Te Aroaro a Kupe, the entranceway of Kupe. This was the area the inter-island ferry the Wahine sunk in. After seeing what Ray sees at Moa Point, it is easier to understand what Ray is on about.

"Coming against what is being done at Moa Point, it is fairly easy to see what has to be done. I've had to establish my whakapapa within my own understanding first before asking others to support this take.

"It's then I realise the incredible depth we all have to draw on and see I'm sitting on top of a mountain of what has been.

"We owe it to our children to look after that heritage."

**TOP: Ray Ahipene Mercer. TOP RIGHT: Ray and his mother Romona Ahipene atop Rangitatau. BOTTOM: View from Moa Pt looking up to Rangitatau.**



## History

### 1. General

Recent research by McEwen and O'Regan<sup>1</sup> has revealed major errors in the pre-European Maori history written by Best<sup>2</sup> and others.

Although none of his descendants remained, Kupe's voyage of exploration forms a part of the traditions of Maori Tribes based in the Wellington area. The previous dating of 925 AD has been questioned, but although it is thought that Kupe's voyage preceded Maori settlement, some sources have suggested that it might have been mid-scale in terms of Maori pre-European settlement or alternatively, because of the oral way that Maori history is handed down between generations, Kupe may have been no more than a mythical figure. Kupe is

said to have stopped over at Cape Paliser, Seatoun, Sinclair Head, Porirua Harbour and Mana Island. The Seatoun stop over was long enough to replenish stocks by growing food and it is said that while some did his work, Kupe explored the northern South Island. Place names attributed to Kupe, which feature in local Maori traditions described by O'Regan,<sup>1</sup> include:

Matu (Somes Island)  
Makaro (Ward Island)  
Pariwhero (Red Rocks)  
Te Rimurapa (Sinclair Head)  
Te Tangihanga-o-Kupe (Barretts Reef)  
Te Aroaro-a-Kupe (Steeple Rock)  
Matauranga (rocks on the eastern side of the Harbour entrance)

The first Maori inhabitants of the Wellington area were the Ngai Tara people. O'Regan<sup>1</sup> describes how an early Hawkes Bay chief named Wha-tonga took his sons Tara and Tautoki on an exploration to find lands for them. Land south of a line between Kapiti and Castle Point was apportioned to Tara, that north of the line to Tautoki.

The first Ngai Tara built a pa on Matu (Somes Island) and named the Harbour Te Whanganui-a-Tara (the great Harbour of Tara). The first settlement is probably dated around the thirteenth century. Tautoki's people named Rangitane after his son, inhabited north Wairarapa and Manawatu.

Later the Ngai Tara moved to Te Motu-kairangi (now Miramar but then on an