



Responsible Development Is Paying Dividends For Ngati Tuwharetoa

Business is booming in the central North Island for the Tuwharetoa tribe and the catch cry is 'Green Gold'. From the lookout at Waituhi one can see Maori land stretching all around almost to the horizon and much of this land is either grassland or else covered in timber.

In many ways the Tuwharetoa people have been very lucky in having smart business people like the late Pat Hura who've made sure the Maori owners made the most of land deals. Those deals have seen the tribe retain much of its land so that it has economic clout in the commercial world.

Business figures

Undoubtedly one of these business figures is Sir Hepi Te Heu Heu who administers the Puketapu 3A Incorporation along with his son Timu.

Sir Hepi says it was a point of pride amongst owners not to seek outside financial assistance. He says the people were lucky in having administrative and commercial expertise on tap from the extensive logging that took place on the land some years ago. From that background of Maori contractors and transport firms he says came a sound business sense that saw the incorporation plough back its money into grassland farming.

His son Timu is being trained to take over the reins of the incorporation and says the future looks bright for grass-

land farming with sheep and cattle. The incorporation is also diversifying into deer farming on the Moerangi Station.

As well the incorporation owns two commercial premises in Taumaranui, one in which it is housed, and the other, Te Maunga House. Both have been leased out to government departments for local sub offices.

Going ahead

However it's in the field of afforestation that the Tuwharetoa people are really going ahead. The Tuwharetoa Trust Board administers the annual income paid to the Board by Government in perpetuity for the use of Lake Taupo waters and that of its tributary streams.

The Board is also the Tribal Council for the Tuwharetoa people who own and occupy large areas of land within the central plateau of the North Island. The income from the Lake is used for annual grants to tribal youth and covers the whole field of education, trade apprentices, nursing and teacher trainees, handicapped persons, school libraries, post primary students and

university students as well as care of tribal elders.

Major role

Since its constitution in 1926 the Board has played a major role in the development of tribal land for farming. When it was found that afforestation rather than farming was more desirable on land on the eastern side of Lake Taupo and around Lake Rotoaira, the Tuwharetoa people were quick to move.

The land was leased to the Crown to be planted in pine trees and looked after by the New Zealand Forest Service. The Lake Taupo forest on the east side of the Lake covers 75-thousand acres and the Rotoaira Forest has 50-thousand acres. The planting programme allows for commercial thinning after ten years and members of the Lake Taupo Forest Trust have already benefited from the first thinnings through a deal with New Zealand Forest Products. Their return is 18½ cents in every dollar from the sale of the wood product. That's a guaranteed eight dollars per tree.

Green gold

This payment will continue annually until 1990 and when the clear-felling of saw logs commences in 1990, it's been estimated the income to the Lake Taupo Forest Trust will rise to a million dollars per year, hence the term 'Green Gold'.