

Cultural Confrontation: The Urewera Mural and Indigenous Resistance

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Abstract

When Ngai Tūhoe activists removed the artwork *Urewera Mural* by one of New Zealand's most famous artists from the remote Aniwanuiwa Visitor Centre in the Urewera National Park in 1997, it thrust local land claims and Maori identity onto the national stage. Overnight the *Mural* was made visible again, the drama of loss a rich story for the "mediapolis" (Tufte, 2011) where the object was re-claimed by Pakeha as New Zealand's 'most valuable artwork' and a significant cultural object (McIntosh, 2004). The activism as a disruption and cultural confrontation also made visible differences in cultural value for Pakeha and Maori: for the white settler economy cultural values embedded in artefact and the monetisation of object; for Maori culture as an identity linked to land, place and belonging.

For a year Ngai Tūhoe men Te Kaha and Tame Iti refused to disclose the location of the artwork. After its return – in another dramatic narrative plot point – Te Kaha said the intent was never to permanently deprive New Zealand of its 'taonga' or treasure. Instead the *Mural* was taken to show "what it feels like to have your treasures taken off you forcibly" ('The Paint Job', 1999). The nonviolence of the activism contested the structural violence (Galtung, 1969; Galtung & Höivik, 1971) and cultural violence (Galtung, 1990) of the colonial state and its systems that suppress other knowledges (el encubrimiento del otro). It was part of a long narrative of resistance by Ngai Tūhoe for indigenous justice.

Cultural activism is different to political activism in that it brings out culture and difference as something of value (Muecke, 1998). Making this difference legible and giving it authority in the public sphere (Habermas, 1989) is critical to indigenous resistance. Two decades on this paper uses the theories of strategic civil resistance to analyse how the *Urewera Mural* as an 'object of resistance' disrupted Pakeha cultural frames and renegotiated cultural identity and value. Critical was how the method of nonviolence sustained and created opportunities for new knowledge to enter the public discourse and legitimacy to the Crown's return of Tūhoe land.

Cultural confrontation: The *Urewera Mural* and Indigenous Resistance

June 5, 1997

It's mid-winter in New Zealand. And at 4am in the Urewera National Park, in the middle of the North Island, it's cold and it's wet. Water slides slowly down the leaves of the broadleaves that dominate this remote area, slowly and silently soaking the earth. The few inhabitants in the small settlement at Lake Waikaremoana are used to the quiet, and the damp. Tūhoe, the name of tribe that settled in the Urewera over one thousand years ago, means 'children of the mist'.

When a blast of noise disrupts the night, park ranger Glen Mitchell leaps out of bed. As he pulls on his trousers, he looks out the window and sees a car speeding west along the only road out of the park. The windows at the Aniwhaniwha Visitor Centre are broken. Inside is now a large empty wall where the Urewera Mural – a large triptych, each panel 1.8 metres wide and 2.1 metres high – had hung the day before. Resident in the Urewera for fifteen years, Mitchell knew instinctively this wasn't a mercenary theft and suspected immediately that the Maori activists, Te Kaha and Tame Iti, were somehow connected.

A roadblock is quickly set up in Ruatahuna thirty kilometres away. It doesn't deter a speeding yellow sedan that lunges through its gap forty-five minutes after Mitchell raises the alarm. When dawn breaks the car is found abandoned, now a burnt-out wreck. Next police stop a white van but the driver Te Kaha and his passenger, seventeen-year old Laurie Davis are waved on, the van uninspected because its back door is jammed.

Six weeks later Kaha and Davies were arrested against a mediated narrative of fear that the revalued artwork may now be "two million bucks of white ash". From the beginning the why of its removal "to draw attention to land claims" went uncontested. Police thought the mural might be buried in the land of the Urewera but for thirteen months its fate remained a mystery, the artwork in limbo and Ngai Tūhoe land claims escalated to a broad public.

Te Kaha took the *Urewera Mural* in 1997 to draw attention to Ngai Tūhoe land claims and challenge the Pakeha value system. However, it was the ensuing social drama that played out in the mediated public sphere that disrupted hegemonic frames and shifted power over time, negotiating and transforming cultural frames. The plots points and actors in this "mediapolis" (Tufte, 2011) influenced a new narrative discourse for cultural identity and place and created legibility for Maori grievances and claims. The mural facilitated a "communications platform" (Lash and Lury, 2007, p. 40) to mediate Tūhoe claims but more importantly to make the case of why over time.

This paper reads the 'taking' of the *Mural* as nonviolent activism, applying key concepts of strategic civil resistance to its becoming as an 'object of resistance' and how through this it acted as a mediator to renegotiate cultural values and sustain Tūhoe resistance. Beyond the drama of the initial activism, the *Urewera Mural* disrupted the Pakeha dominated narrative about its meaning and facilitated a new indigenous-led discourse on the meaning of land and belonging. The *Urewera Mura* was transformed through its re-entry into public discourse as an object of resistance that gave legitimacy to Indigenous values. It acted as both a mediator of culture and symbol of resistance to build legitimacy for Tūhoe identity. Critical was how the method of nonviolence negotiated the script, providing cover for the initial unlawful action and facilitating an opening up of public discourse beyond images of conflict and contentious politics to a revision of the meaning of cultural value and identity. Instead of a narrative script bogged down in the drama and spectacle of violence as a method of protest, the opportunity for other frames and knowledges became possible.

Mediated drama

The narrative of movement is often told through the "image event" (Delicath and Deluca, 2003; Deluca and Peebles, 2002) and mobilisation of 'the crowd', this involvement and participation defined as a factor of success in shifting power, changing the status quo. Images of protestors using civil disobedience and mass mobilisation to challenge unjust laws are still used to symbolise how leverage was created in the strategic civil resistance of both Gandhi and Martin Luther King's campaigns for change. From Ghandi's salt march and the civil rights sit-ins or the nonviolent clowns at G8 protests, strategic civil resistance literature analyses actions and events through how they disrupt and confront power. The recent democracy protests of the Middle East and Occupy movement became identified through their mass mobilisations and occupation of public space (Pleyers, 2015). For protestors this presence created a feeling of power by the powerless (Sassen, 2011).

However, nonviolent action is not only this spectacular form of direct confrontation with authority but an "active process of bringing pressure to bear (even if it is emotional or moral pressure) in wielding influence in a dispute-ridden and contentious relationship between groups" (McCarthy et al., 2013, p. xix). For movements to be successful disruption must create leverage that erodes structural power. Mass mobilisation on its own is not enough to shift elite power holding in place structural violence of a system that suppresses indigenous culture. Instead change comes through nonviolent action that is disruptive, sustained and escalates over time (Engler and Engler, 2016). The *Urewera Mural* creates an opportunity to look at how an object acts as resistance to erode structural norms: to renegotiate a script; to increase the number and diversity of actors in public discourse making the case; and to add legibility and legitimacy to claims.

To achieve change there must be disruption that compels attention not only through spectacle but a legible, tangible narrative that draws in a broad public and creates credibility for the claims.

Nonviolent campaigns are “nearly twice as likely to achieve full or partial success as their violent counterparts” (Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011, p. 7). One reason is the diversity and number of citizens likely to visibly participate if the mobilisation is peaceful. Another is the impact on public narrative and elite power and the watching public when the method of activism is violent.

A media narrative frames key issues for an audience. e.g. war (Bird and Dardenne, 2009), the mining boom, indigenous rights, gay rights, women’s equality. Media producers have the “power to inscribe privileged representations of the world that place constraints on actual audience practices” (Bird, 2011, p. 508). As a media production, the ‘how’ of activism alters the ways different audience across the political, social and cultural spheres engage. Activists as media producers risk violence becoming the ‘script’ for the media narrative if this is connected to action. Elite actors and a bystander public then judge the actors through the frames rather than the claims. The absence of the mural and – apparent from the broken windows at the Visitor Centre – aggression or otherness created space for Tūhoe claims to become a script and for *Urewera Mural* to become a mediating actor in the public discourse.

Early news media - in the absence of the *Mural* and villains - framed the disappearance of the *Urewera Mural* as the loss of significant cultural heritage. A diversity of actors reclaimed *Urewera Mural* as *The Urewera Mural*, “a national treasure”, one of “New Zealand’s greatest artworks” and “arguably the single most important artwork produced in New Zealand this (twentieth) century”¹. Its artist Colin McCahon was referred to in news articles as “the pre-eminent modern Australasian painter” and “outstanding New Zealand artist of the twentieth century”. Overnight the painting became a cultural icon. Manager for the McCahon estate, Martin Brown, elevated the *Mural*’s status to that of a sacred icon describing the theft as “an act of cultural sacrilege. It’s a shocking thing and any New Zealander with any sensitivity would think likewise” (Barber, ‘Painting theft linked to land claims’, 1997).

Overnight its status shifted from an (almost forgotten) commodified display item (and as later described in the artworld “McCahon’s least known work”) to an object of significance. Through this return to circulation it became what Frow (1995) a “cultural object” whose meaning is dynamic and in constant flux, created by its trajectory into new cultural spheres but also in relation to the codes around it. For more than twenty years the three large canvasses of the *Urewera Mural* - each 1.8m

¹ Sources for June/July 1997 newspaper references fs NZPA, Auckland Herald and New Zealand regionals newspapers, Sydney Morning Herald.

wide and over 2.1m high – were pinned up with thumb tacks around a dusty corner wall in the Aniwhaniwa Visitor Centre. There were no “Do Not Touch” signs. Few visitors gave it a second glance, its khaki earthy brown colours merging with the place outside they’d come to see. The duty officer typing up hut permits for visiting walkers had long stopped noticing it. If its removal had not been so dramatic the empty place on the wall might well have been ignored by centre workers, the assumption made that someone had simply ‘borrowed’ it for the weekend.

As the *Mural* gathered dust, tacked up on the wall in an outpost sixty kilometres from the nearest petrol station it lost value. In 1997 the National Parks Board did not even have it insured. It was a forgotten artefact, gone from cultural consciousness for both Pakeha the *valuers* and Maori the represented subject. When the *Mural* was returned in 1998 its cultural and fiscal value had increased significantly. Back in circulation it increased from a book value of \$NZ1.2 million before its disappearance to a valuation in the cultural economy of \$NZ2 million. However, whilst the value of the *Mural* undeniably increased within this liminal zone as a result of its journey and “sacralisation” through its defacement (Taussig, 1999), its value across cultural borders also shifted and these new frames used as leverage for Tūhoe land claims. The new recognition as a result of the activism hadn’t only increased its economic value but also its cultural and object value for Tūhoe.

Cultural activism

Protest movements have always been infused by a media practice using images and spectacular events to attract media attention, invoke symbolism and mobilise public support. The identity-based social movements of the 1960s and 1970s translated their demands for equality using “novel, dramatic, unorthodox, and non-institutional forms of political expression to try to shape public opinion and put pressure on those in positions of authority” (Taylor and Van Dyke, 2004, p. 263).

A risk of this emphasis on spectacle – dramatic or violent- is that mainstream media outlets ignore the reasons and background substance for protest (Lester, 2010). This reliance on the image event (Delicath and Deluca, 2003; Deluca and Peeples, 2002) or “dissent event” (Scalmer, 2002) to attract media/ mediated attention may gain short-term visibility but comes at the expense of making protest messages legible to a broader population.

Cultural theorist Stephen Muecke uses the Foucauldian sense of *énoncé* to describe how “cultural activism can have the same result as political activism, but it doesn’t look the same... It is a tactical ‘bringing out’ of culture as a valuable and scarce ‘statement’ (Muecke, 1998, pp 299-300). Cultural activism for indigenous land rights have a number of challenges: the actors are from a minority group; the claims are place-based; and outcomes are not for replacement of the dominant system but for recognition of different knowledges and recognition of cultural identity. Thus, change doesn’t come through the ballot-box or even legislation but processes that include different value systems.

For indigenous groups whose claims are linked to place, land the method of nonviolent resistance becomes critical to negotiating this difference. Cultural activism becomes less about governance but creating legibility for these values.

Land as cultural value

Lucy Lippard (2007) in her beautifully evocative book, *The Lure of the Local; senses of place in a multi-centred society*, contrasts the creation of place for cosmopolitan and transnationals with the connection to place for indigenous peoples. Rather than how the knowledges of culture, history, geography and cultural representation create the sense of place and home for mobile populations, for indigenous people she writes “home is often a much broader and shared concept ... an extension of body and soul” (Lippard, 2007, p. 2). It is not where place is written by newcomers, it is a direct connection to meaning as the place of ancestors, as the foundation of cultural identity and sovereignty. Unlike the cosmopolitan disconnection to land - where even in death cremation now confers mobility - land and place conferred identity, *was* identity and sovereignty. It couldn't be transported as memory object. For Maori land “is the earth mother to be inherited and not treated as a commodity” (Walker and Amoamo, 1987, p. 45).

In 1997, there was an urgency to Tūhoe resistance driven by the threat to *ritenga*, the basic threads of Maori society, and the survival of their culture. In a poignant exposition of what cultural loss means Ngai Tūhoe elder John Te Rangianiwaniwa Rangihau describes how *Tūhoetanga* or Tūhoe culture not Maori culture is the essence of his identity.

These feelings... are my *Tūhoetanga* rather than my *Maoritanga*. Because my being Maori is utterly dependent on my history as a Tūhoe person... it seems to me there is no such thing as Maoritanga because Maoritanga is an all-inclusive term which embraces all Maori... I have a faint suspicion that [it] is a term coined by the Pakeha to bring all the tribes together. Because if you cannot divide and rule, then for tribal people all you can do is unite them and rule. Because then they lose everything by losing [the] tribal history and traditions that gave them their identity.

Ngai Tūhoe like most of New Zealand's more than one hundred Maori iwi or tribes know what it is like to have land taken. Colonial settlers lobbied the Crown for legislation that confiscated or divided Maori land for very little compensation. One law, for example, only recognised 'Individual Title' as a valid form of land ownership. The *New Zealand Settlements Act (1863)* authorised the confiscation of land from any Maori 'in rebellion' and more than three million acres in the North Island were taken this way. Over time a series of “cynical” measures by the Crown, including playing tribal leaders off against each other, left Ngai Tūhoe with just 16% of its tribal land and most of this was “unsuitable for farming or subject to restrictions as a result of various conservation measures”

(O'Malley, 2014). The goal of the acquisition was to destroy Tūhoe economic, spiritual and cultural autonomy². This sovereignty or *te tino rangatiratanga o te iwi Maori* – the absolute authority of the Maori people collectively over their lives – is still the driver for contemporary Maori resistance to protect culture through its language, arts, crafts and lands as proscribed by the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi (Kelsey, 1990).

Not a theft

Critical to the narrative of nonviolence was the defining the removal of the *Mural* was not theft. Ngai Tūhoe on its Facebook page now refers to the incident as “the ‘taking’” (Ngai Tuhoe, [Facebook], 2015). After its return Te Kaha stated that he took the artwork to show “what it feels like to have your treasures taken off you forcibly. And to deprive you of your, what you consider to be treasure, taonga” (‘The Paint Job’, 1999). His action was nonviolent resistance against the Pakeha value system that did not recognise Maori sovereignty (‘te tino rangatiratanga’) or the cultural violence of the removal of land.

Te Kaha said it could not be called theft for his intent was never to permanently deprive New Zealand of the *Mural*. Te Kaha described taking the *Mural* as “going out to get compensation” or *utu*, an action against an opponent “which makes you (the opponent) aware of how I've been feeling”.

And I went out there, knowing full well the compensation I was going to seek was according to New Zealand law, illegal. OK? And it could get me locked up. But I thought, "No, we can do this". And to this day I maintain, "Yes, I took that painting...I didn't steal it". You have a look, I challenge anyone to go and have a read in the dictionary, and you have a look at what the definition of the word 'steal' is, or 'theft'. You'll come to the same conclusion that me and my lawyer did, and that is 'with intention to permanently deprive' is the definition of the word 'theft' or 'steal'. (‘The Paint Job’, 1999)

The intent was not violent but disruption of a power imbalance. The *Urewera Mural* held no monetary value for the activists, nor was there use value. It was the act of removal of the *Mural* that was most important, not the belonging itself. The activists took the artwork to force an exchange and acknowledgment of their own loss. White New Zealand in a state of shock saw the theft as petty retribution initially unable to link it to the motivation, a response consistent with a lack of understanding and respect for Maori cultural value and denial of the impact of the obfuscation of Maori rights set out in the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi.

The narrative of the *Mural* also deviates considerably from classic art thefts – which interestingly are rarely called thefts but art ‘heists’. These artworks are usually found safe in places of transit after

² See www.ngaituhoe.iwi.nz/our-history for a timeline and mechanisms of how the Crown took Tūhoe land.

police are directed to a site; lockers, suitcases, railway stations or hotel rooms.³ The *Mural* wasn't hidden in a place of transit but somewhere far more permanent. Te Kaha and Tame Iti buried it in the land itself, in the Tūhoe land of Te Urewera and where it stayed for over a year while the nation fumed and then tried to mourn. When it was recovered, it wasn't by the police but by one of New Zealand's wealthiest women, Jenny Gibbs.

Found

Significant to success in movements, and a goal for strategic civil resistance, is the defection of elites (Moyer et al., 2001, p. 75). In New Zealand's art world Jenny Gibbs was a powerful figure, a wealthy art buyer and collections with connections across the social and political sphere, her former husband one of NZ's wealthiest businessmen. She owns a number of Colin McCahon artworks and is an admirer of his work describing how it taught her to "see" New Zealand landscape for itself, not through European or English comparisons.

McCahon was born in New Zealand to immigrant parents and struggled with the "confusion of identity" pervasive after World War I for New Zealanders torn between loyalties to Europe and the identity as New Zealander. McCahon described the disconnect as "something logical and beautiful belonging to the land but not yet its people. Not yet understood or communicated, not even really yet invented... My work has largely been to communicate this vision, and to invent the way to see it" (Leonard and McKenzie, 1989). His works such as the *Promised Land* paintings (that refer to New Zealand as a Promised Land) attempt to demystify feelings of alienation and forge new frames of belonging through the connection to New Zealand landscape.

In the first phase the activism played the role of a "mediatized social drama" more closely linked to the staging of the event rather than the debate (St John, 2008, pp 110-111). However, through the absence of the *Mural* new narrative possibilities opened up with an extended set of actors and a discourse that shifted to interrogate concepts of value, belonging and identity. The expanding of actors and frames is significant to sustaining narrative and shifting power.

Te Kaha and Tame Iti chose Gibbs specifically to facilitate the return of the *Mural*, knocking on her front door one afternoon. The juxtaposition of this wealthy elite in her mansion on Paratai Drive and two Maori activists with full moko represented a coming together of New Zealand. Instead of fearing this other Gibbs was open, trusting them and listening to their story.

³ e.g. 1) The theft of Munch's *The Scream* from National Gallery in Oslo, Norway, 1994 – reclaimed after police disguised as art buyers met the conduits in a hotel room. 2) The theft of Picasso's *Weeping Woman* from National Art Gallery of Victoria in 1986 – found in a locker at a Melbourne railway station 3) The disappearance of William Dobell's *Souvenir* from Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney found unharmed in a locker at Sydney's Mitchell Library 4) The heist of the *Mona Lisa* from the Louvre, Paris in 1911 – eventually returned unharmed in a suitcase.

They told me a lot about their view of the world, and I must say that Tūhoe have got a lot of grievances, and a lot of it justified I think. They certainly had a very large percentage of their lands confiscated. And I don't agree with everything they believe in at all, but I certainly am very sympathetic also to a lot of what they have to say, and what they feel about their land. ('The Paint Job', 1999)

She agreed to facilitate the *Mural's* return, recovering it with the activists and driving it straight to the Auckland Art Gallery. This "unlikely liaison" ('Unlikely liaison leads to return of painting', NZPA, August 31, 1998) was a story the media couldn't resist. Tame Iti was a colourful media figure, achieving notoriety for a number of protest actions and his full facial Maori tattoo called moko. While the *Urewera Mural* remained at large it gathered value as an object of resistance but the compelling social drama didn't stop with its recovery. There was debate over where its home should be. Old controversies surrounding the text of *Mural* were also re-interrogated. The drama of the Urewera National Park Board's commissioning of the work in 1974 was re-remembered.⁴ There was speculation that wealthy art-collector Jenny Gibbs had a relationship with Te Kaha.

To celebrate its return the *Mural* went on tour, exhibited at public art galleries across New Zealand with tens of thousands turning out to pay official and personal homage. It wasn't until September 2000 it officially made its way back home to the Urewera and was re-presented during the re-opening of a refurbished gallery in the Aniwanuiwa Visitor Centre that had been designed especially for the mural including new security cameras. Tame Iti and an official Tūhoe welcoming party gathered outside the visitor's centre awaiting special guest Conservation Minister, Sandra Lee. Park ranger Glenn Mitchel was also there along with news camera ready to document the arrival of the *Urewera Mural* back to its home alongside official Tūhoe taonga.

Across the road Tame Iti's now estranged collaborator, Te Kaha gathered with a protest group. Holding up a sign 'No Deal to any Government Deals' Te Kaha yelled at the official gathering.

We're not here to rain your parade – Tame Iti already did that. The painting does not celebrate the union of Tūhoe people and the New Zealand people. It doesn't matter who they send here, whether she wears a white face or a brown face. It's the same policy.

His words were drowned out by singing by Tūhoe in the official party but Tame Iti was incensed at the spectacle and as Glen Mitchell describes it "picked up a wooden taiaha and smacked Te Kaha over the head with it. Then he whacked the TV3 camera man" (personal communication). Of course, all of this was reported on national television news that night, this impromptu staging creating more

⁴ When McCahon first presented his commissioned work, the Urewera National Park Board requested changes which McCahon rejected because he felt they over-glorified Tūhoe. Eventually a compromise was reached but not before McCahon threatened to forgo the commission and sell the painting through a dealer. See Park, 2006 for a detailed account of the debate.

legend and awareness around the Urewera Mural. However, on another level, this discord between Te Kaha and Tame Iti indicates the complexity of defining movement. For here, Te Kaha and Tame Iti appear to be on opposing sides yet both have the common goal to represent Maori. The difference of course is the use of violence by Tame Iti and the influence this continued to have on the perception of him by a broader public as well as the narrativization of his character in the media.

Te Kaha wasn't alone challenging the meaning of the mural. Maori academics and artists also spoke out to challenge the Pakeha narrative of McCahon's links to Maori and the artwork's significance to Maori culture. In 1977 Pakeha art critic Neil Rowe had projected a bi-cultural unity on the artwork describing how

in this smoulderingly beautiful painting McCahon depicts the brooding majesty of the Urewera country and also the inseparable bond between the people and the land which is the very essence of Maoritanga and which should be the heritage of all New Zealanders (Rowe, 1977, p. 45)

Maori now challenged the appropriation of Maoritanga and Pakeha using *the Mural* to speak on behalf of Maori. They challenged representations of Maori values and through the *Mural* reframed the cultural violence of the colonial state. Maori studies academic Pou Temara said the mural represented nothing of *his* cultural landscape and nothing of the "primal sense of belonging and affinity with the land... devoid of those elements which are meaningful to me"⁵. Maori artist and curator Ngahiraka Mason challenged the failure of the mural saying

it doesn't speak to me in the same way that a waiata (Maori song) about the land would speak to me. It doesn't pinpoint, for me, where the kiwi's run, you know what I mean? Actually, the landscape is so denuded of forestation that it seems kind of weird, you know, because it doesn't look like people belong to this place. When you have somebody else that speaks for you, it's really hard to assert your own idea of who you are. ('The Paint Job', 1999)

Te Kaha's activism was nonviolent resistance but the mural itself was now an object of resistance that was both confronting Pakeha cultural representations and enabling an empowered Maori voice in the public sphere. Such contradictory interpretations frame the mural's meanings as cultural representation and made visible the gap in knowledges and frames.

Narrative as resistance

In 2015 the *Mural* moved again when it was given pride of place as a permanent installation in the Ngai Tūhoe tribal chambers at Te Kura Whare, 12 Tūhoe St, Tāneatua. The mural no longer sat

⁵ Auckland City Art Gallery brochure, 1998

beside Maori taonga or treasure but was its treasure, imbued in meaning for the people of the mist. It had been reclaimed as cultural identity on Tūhoe terms. Past grievances at Pakeha claiming its value to Maori as taonga were replaced through its new meaning from Maori, for Maori.

The *Mural's* transfer from Pakeha to Tuhoetanga was part of a significant Treaty of Waitangi settlement in 2013 that, in a significant departure from usual practice, returned Crown ownership of the Urewera National Park back to Tūhoe sovereignty. The settlement gave Tūhoe financial, commercial and cultural redress valued at approximately \$170 million, a formal apology from the Crown for historical wrongs and the right to co-governance of Te Urewera lands. The *Te Urewera Act* (2014) gave legal entity with “all the rights, powers, duties, and liabilities of a legal person” to Te Urewera. No longer was it the Urewera National Park but Te Urewera National Park. Previously, only small parcels of land had ever been returned to iwi and, in the cases of National Park land the return had been symbolic with the land immediately gifted back to the Crown.⁶

Professor Rawinia Higgins - a woman of Tūhoe descent - described the settlement as “another stanza” in the cumulative story of Tūhoe history (Higgins, 2014). No one thing led to the outcome but instead the construction of Te Wharehou o Tūhoe or as Higgins called it “the house that ‘we’ built”

involved, directly and indirectly, countless people. It is a cumulative tale that involves the relationships Tūhoe have had and continue to have with our own hapū, with other iwi and with the Crown (Higgins, 2014).

For more than one hundred years resistance had kept a cultural narrative of Tūhoe sovereignty alive, stanza by stanza. There had been backlash from elite power. In 2007 in a show of power, armed police accused Tūhoe activists of running terrorist training-camps in the Urewera and activated a raid, setting up roadblocks and searching all vehicles going in and out of the Urewera (including a school-bus) for weapons. Seventeen people were arrested and Tame Iti and three others were charged with belonging to a criminal group. No terrorism charges were ever laid and, after a media furore and intense public scrutiny, the Police Commissioner later apologises for the raid.

The method of nonviolence involving the *Urewera Mural* – the careful storage, the protection in Tūhoe land, the meticulous return – was significant to the narrative that emerged. The *Urewera Mural* became an object of this resistance and a mediator for the cross-cultural exchange and knowledge when it returned to circulation in 1997. Over the next decade, new voices like Higgins emerged to tell the story of Tūhoe, talking from place and culture and changing the narrative that

⁶ e.g. 1998 when Ngai Tahu gifted Aoraki, the renamed Mt Cook, back to the Crown after a Treaty settlement.

had been dominated by Pakeha. These shifts in the “who” as narrator in the public discourse contributing to new frame and also increased legitimacy for the narrative for indigenous justice, shifting from form one of land claims through the Pakeha prism of monetary wealth to that of cultural value and identity through place and belonging.

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Tūhoe timeline

A recent Ngai Tūhoe timeline⁷

1987: Tūhoe make its first claim to the Waitangi Tribunal under the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975

1997: The *Urewera Mural* is taken by Tūhoe activists from the Aniwanuiwa Visitor Centre in the Urewera National Park

1998: *Urewera Mural* 'found'.

2000: *Urewera Mural* returns to the Aniwanuiwa Visitor Centre and a new refurbished gallery.

2003-2005: Fifteen Te Urewera Inquiry hearings take place before the Waitangi Tribunal presenting a significant body of evidence of historical grievances against the Crown.

2005: The negotiating body Te Kotahi a Tūhoe is formed as the mandated Tuhoe authority to negotiate and settle Tūhoe raupatu claims with the Crown

2006: Thirty Tūhoe Treaty of Waitangi claims are now under negotiation with the Crown

2006: Te Kotahi a Tūhoe establishes the Tūhoe Establishment Trust as a Post Settlement Governance Entity (PSGE) to consult widely and create a new governance model for Tuhoe.

⁷ For a historical timeline since the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi see <http://www.ngaituhoe.iwi.nz/our-history>

2007: Armed police set up roadblocks and search all vehicles going in and out of the Urewera (including a school-bus) using the claim that Tūhoe activists are running terrorist training-camps. No terrorism charges are laid and, after a media furore and intense public scrutiny, the Police Commissioner later apologises for the raid.

2010: The NZ National Government negotiates with Te Kotahi a Tūhoe for a Tuhoe treaty settlement that would return 212,672ha of the Urewera National Park to Tuhoe ownership.

2010, December: On the eve of Tuhoe signing an Agreement in Principle with the Crown then Prime Minister John Key removes Te Urewera from the negotiation table.

2011: Tūhoe signs a political agreement of understanding ‘Nā Kōrero Ranatira ā Tūhoe me Te Karauna’ with the Crown in Ruatāhuna.

2013: A settlement between the NZ government and Tuhoe is signed that delivers Tūhoe financial, commercial and cultural redress valued at approximately \$170 million, an historical account and Crown apology and the right to co-governance of Te Urewera lands. A commitment is made to build Te Kura Whare in Tāneatua as a headquarters for Tuhoe kōrero (histories) and people.

2014, July 27: The *Te Urewera Act* (2014) declares that the Urewera National Park as a new legal entity Te Urewera with “all the rights, powers, duties, and liabilities of a legal person” (section 11(1)) (see O’Malley (2014) for a more extensive background to the Tūhoe settlement). It is no longer crown land. Management of Te Urewera is transferred to the new Te Urewera Board.

2014, August 22: Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations Christopher Finlayson gives a formal apology for breaches of the Crown’s obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi to Tuhoe during a ‘Settlement Day’ ceremony attended by more than 3000 people in Taneatua

2015: The Urewera mural is transferred from the Āniwaniwa Visitor’s Centre and is given pride of place as a permanent installation in the Ngai Tuhoe tribal chambers at Te Kura Whare, 12 Tūhoe St, Tāneatua.

2016: The Āniwaniwa Visitor’s Centre, with its symbolic links to the Pakeha-created Urewera National Park, is demolished. The new visitor centre in the Te Urewera National Park will mark “a new beginning” for Tuhoe, says Te Urewera Board chairman Tamati Kruger. “Tuhoe was not at all in play in the design of the original visitor centre built in 1974. We were not even invited to the opening. Tuhoe’s part was to supply the food. The centre was built for the Urewera National Park Board, owned and operated by the government of New Zealand. That's what it represents. The new building is on the lakeshore, it is a collaboration between DoC (Department of Conservation) and Tūhoe. It is the beginning of a new relationship.”

2016: Tūhoe Te Uru Taumatua Board declines Wellington City Gallery’s request for the loan of *Urewera Mural* for its 2017 McCahon retrospective saying it had only just returned to “its rightful home” and there was “no will to let it go again albeit for a short time”.