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|  | Speak Up-KōrerotiaSubfossil forests and subdivisions: The story of the Halswell mataī20 July 2022 |
| Female | This programme was first broadcast on Canterbury’s access media station Plains FM and was made with the assistance of New Zealand on Air. |
| Female | Coming up next conversations on human rights with “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”, here on Plains FM. |
| Sally | E ngā mana, E ngā reo, E ngā hau e whāTēnā koutou katoaNau mai ki tēnei hōtaka: “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”. Tune in as our guests “Speak Up”, sharing their unique and powerful experiences and opinions and may you also be inspired to “Speak Up” when the moment is right. |
| Male | Kia hora te marino, kia whakapapa pounamu te moana, he ruarahi ma tātou i te rangi nei. Aroha atu, aroha mai tātou e tātou katoa. Tīhei mauri ora.  |
| Sally | Nau mai ki te hōtaka tika tangata, Speak Up-Kōrerotia. I’m your host Sally Carlton and today we have a really cool title: “Subfossil forests and subdivisions: The story of the Halswell mataī”. So we’re talking about trees. To give you a bit of background, then: in 2020, during stormwater base and excavation in Halswell, which is a suburb in Christchurch’s south west, workers discovered stumps of mataī (which is New Zealand black pine), that formed part of an underground subfossil forest. And then there were some radio carbon dating that took place and this identified the trees as having lived several hundred years ago, actually as long as 1200 years ago, and that the trees were killed in three separate flood events, probably from the Waimakariri River. The age of the forest being 1200 years old, means that it overlaps with the arrival of humans to Aotearoa. So while we think of Halswell as being known for farming and for quarrying, the discovery of the forests introduces new layers to what, I guess, is a largely colonial history. Within this also, there’s this kind of a strengthened realisation of the environment and the ecological significance of the area of Halswell and also its precolonial past. And I think what’s particularly interesting about this story is it’s actually all taking place at a really interesting time in Halswell’s story which is a very rapid urbanisation, a very rapid increase in population and lots and lots of subdivisions going into that area as well. In fact, Halswell is one of the fastest growing suburbs in the city. So what does this mean? Well the story of the Halswell mataī, I think, provides an interesting lens through which we can consider a number of complex issues. For example, how can our understandings of the past help guide and shape our present and our future and what responsibilities do we have to bear witness to and preserve this past and this heritage? How might acknowledging the past help us to navigate rapid change, and transitions and transformations that change can bring? Today we’ve got three guests and they’re each involved in very different capacities with the Halswell mataī. Kei a koutou te wā. If you could introduce yourself, tell us about how you’re involved in this project. |
| David | Ko David Hawke ahau, so I’m secretary of Halswell Residence Association and our association has got a very broad remit. So it looks at anything to do with improving the community of Halswell. So that can take all sorts of different angles and this is just one of those angles. As you said in your introduction, we’ve got really strong heritage interests but those heritage interests have got a very short lens, very tight lens, that really focuses on the colonial era and there’s a lot that a broader lens might bring to that sort of discussion. So I’ll leave that as an introduction. It was Craig Pauling who brought the issue to our attention in the first place. |
| Craig | First of all, tēnā koe Sally, tēnā korua David and Mike, tēnā koutou katoa. Āe, ko wai au? Ko Ōtūmatua te maungaKo Huritini te awaKo Te Waihora te hāpuaKo Whakaraupō te moanaNo te uri au o Te Ruahikihiki i Taumutu, o Te Rakiwhakaputa i Rāpaki, o Tūrakautahi i KaiapoiKo Kāi Tahu, Kāti Mamoe, Waitaha oku iwiKo Craig Pauling auŌtūmatua (the Hillock above Halswell Quarry) is my mountainHuritini (Halswell) is my riverTe Waihora (Lake Ellesmere) is my lagoon (hāpua)Whakaraupō (Lyttelton Harbour) is my coastal watersI am a descendant of Te Ruahikihiki from Taumutu, Te Rakiwhakaputa from Rāpaki, and Tūrakautahi from Kaiapoi. Kāi Tahu, Kāti Mamoe and Waitaha are my iwiI am Craig PaulingSo kia ora, I’m Craig, I’m a Halswell resident. I’ve lived there with my whānau for about 15 to 20 years. The start of the project really for me, or this whole kaupapa, probably dates back to some work I did on the Southwest Area Plan which was before all the subdivisions started. Christchurch City Council did a process of looking at the future development of the southwest area including Halswell and while I was Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu then and worked alongside Ngāi Tuahuriri, the rūnanga from sort of North Canterbury and Christchurch and then Taumutu from out Selwyn way. And we did a process alongside the City Council, looking at the Ngāi Tahu values, indigenous values of the southwest area, and so I knew that Halswell had a much deeper history than just, you know, our colonial and more recent history. In particular, the landscape was very different in terms of having big wetlands that sort of came around from Te Waihora/ Lake Ellesmere and wrapped right around the city and joined up with the ones that then linked to Ōpāwaho/Heathcote River and to the Ihu tai, the Christchurch estuary. So I knew that and then later on I got involved in some work around the development with Fulton Hogan who were doing their subdivision development in Knights Stream. I was involved in that sort of cultural impact assessment process and worked alongside them and our rūnanga again to make sure values were looked after and brought forward in the subdivision development.And one thing we asked for was that the original channel of Knights Stream was kept in place which we sort of had some success on - I can tell you about that later - but what I will say is that when we went back for a site visit after - it was actually after almost a year of initially meeting with Fulton Hogan - we went back and they explained to us how the school was actually going to be built over the top of where the river was and we said no, that’s not very cool because we wanted the river protected, even though it doesn’t flow with water anymore, the landscape form is still there of the original stream and that’s important to protect.And then while we were talking, I could see this big pile of wooden stumps over to my right, I was just distracted by them while the Fulton Hogan guy was telling me about how they were going to change the plan and I just said to him hey, what are those over there and he said oh we found them when we were digging up the stormwater basin and I said do you know what they are and he said no. I said well, what are you going to do with them? He said well we’ll be burning them soon and I was like can you please not do that, can you give me like a week, I’m going to try and find out a little bit about them. And I went over to them and I could tell they were native trees because the wood was red, it wasn’t like grey or whatever, like macrocarpa trees would just be grey, they were quite red but once you peeled the layer… So anyway, that’s how my association started was finding those original stumps. I got the Fulton Hogan person to show me on the map were the contractors dug them up and then I overlayed that with the old wetland or 1840 maps of Canterbury and you could tell that it was sort of just on the edge of the wetland, anyway. So that’s how I started and then met with David later on. So yeah, that’ll be enough from me for now, so kia ora. |
| Sally | Just a question for you Craig, was there two blocks of stumps?  |
| Craig | There’s lots of sites now, we’ve found multiple sites of stumps. There might be up to five different places where they’ve been found now because even though I’ve found them around near where they’re digging the wetlands around in Hoon Hay Valley and if you look at the old… it’s called the Black Map of Christchurch, it’s quite well known especially after the earthquakes, you can even see on those maps that it’s Taylor & Taylor were the surveyors at the time, 1856, and they even noted where there were stumps left then, kahikatea stumps mainly. Yeah, these stumps that we’ve found are older than that.  |
| Sally | And finally we’ve got Mike Molloy, principal of Knights Stream School which ties in well with Craig’s introduction there.  |
| Mike | Kia ora koutou. Ko Mike Molloy tōku ingoa. Ko au te Timuaki o te Kura Mingimingi Hautoa/Knights Stream School.I’m Mike, I’m the proud principal of Knights Stream Schooll/Mingimingi Hautoa and I guess my connection to Halswell began in the end of 2017 when I was appointed as the foundational principal for a new school, coming into a new community wanting to, what I would call, get things right and be really respectful, of being under the cloak of the local rūnanga for a number of years in about four different schools now. So have a really strong connection to Taumutu. So after the gifting of the name, which was kind of there when I started, was all about how do we connect our kura with the land and what’s around us, build our own pepeha that we could then use as a living narrative to teach our tamariki about the local area, our history and what’s important.And in particular Halswell is very multicultural, diverse, so it’s really important that we were looking at building upon a culture of, I guess, protection of local narrative and stories that we could teach our whānau and also for our… I guess our children from other countries, they can also connect to a lot of those narratives through their own culture. So my big part was around that connection and when the mataī stumps were found, it segwayed beautifully into our cultural narrative for the school. In fact, one of our learning spaces is called Mataī which ended up being a beautiful match and we now have about four of the stumps at school that we are looking to incorporate into an outdoor native area starting next term and we’re looking at getting a piece of that mataī mounted in our tari, in the office, where we kind of have our pepeha on the wall. So to help tell our story of the school because the colours, everything we’ve done is shaped around our cultural narrative. |
| Sally | Okay then, as we move forward in our kōrero, perhaps we could talk about some of the challenges, I suppose. How do you get hold of them? How did you excavate them? Who did you have to deal with? All those sorts of red tape issues. |
| Craig | Can I go back to the first ones that I found then you can pick it up when the second ones were found because you know, right there when I was at that meeting with Fulton Hogan, you know I said give me a week, don’t burn them or do anything with them, can we hold onto them. So then there was a discussion around well what are we going to do with them because they sort of wanted them gone right, because they wanted to get on with the subdivision and which I could understand.And so I rung a few colleagues that I knew of at the City Council and actually we were also working with Waka Kotahi on the southern motorway at the time and so the idea came up and it was a bit like what Mike’s talked about for the use around the school, was to try and get them utilised in some way would be better than obviously burning them or burying them or whatever again. So one use was that they were actually used… there was an area there at Springs Road where the new southern motorway is. So there’s a lizard management area, so part of the southern motorway was to create lizard reserves because they realised there was lots of lizards when they were going to dig up the ground. So there’s a few stumps there and then other stumps we used in City Council reserves, especially around Seven Oaks School and all that sort of area there, Murphy’s Road and all that, so some of them have been moved there.And then a bunch of them were actually moved - or I thought - to the Creamery Reserve but we haven’t found them ones ever again. So hey, hopefully they were used in a good way but then of course we found a whole bunch of new ones and so David can talk about that, yeah. |
| David | And so I guess one of the things and this all sort of had a fortuitous coming together, I guess, through a colleague… In those days I was on fulltime staff at Ara Institute of Canterbury and so Craig was involved in one of the administrative jobs that outsiders sometimes get at Ara.And the contact was passed on Craig to me, me to Craig, by one of my colleagues and we met up and at that time just as I say, quite fortuitously, we had in our….one of our monthly meetings we’d had a little bit of an unfortunate outburst I suppose you would say and I think that this is where your interest in the human rights side of it comes in. Because after that meeting which our board councillor, Councillor Galloway was present. She said we should have rules against this and we say well you can’t have rules against it, it doesn’t work but we just had this conversation with Craig and we thought well why not extend our narratives a bit and rather than taking a really confrontational approach to addressing these issues in our community which are pretty widespread, let’s try and broaden out that narrative, make it a bit deeper, a bit broader, to give people something else to talk about. And that conversation between me and Craig came at a very, very fortunate time and working with Craig, we’ve been able to build a narrative around the material that’s been recovered, all around Halswell. But I guess mainly about a 700m arc on the southern side of Halswell.  |
| Craig | Going back to what David said about Anne Galloway and her request for protection. That’s something that I raised straight away because my involvement, I’ve been involved in sort of the resource management process for a few decades and one thing we utilise is an Accidental Discovery Protocol. It’s normally for archaeological material, so like a human made implement or something, whether it’s Māori or even… well it’s got to be pre-1900. But if it’s found then there’s a whole of Act of Parliament that comes in and you can’t touch it and all that.But the same protection or protocol isn’t there for ecological material which I consider to be almost as significant because humans obviously interact with ecology and especially in this case around Halswell we know that. So I was saying why don’t we have an Ecological Discovery Protocol when something like this is significantly found underneath the surface, especially native material, it would be good to at least document it, understand it and know what it was and then you can disturb the site, a bit like you would with archaeology. But of course that doesn’t exist and still doesn’t, but it’s something that I still would love to see happen in the future.  |
| David | Yeah I would say that not having that protocol has really got in the way and we’re very, very fortunate. There’s an area on the southern side of Halswell, there’s a road called Quaifes Road, Quaifes Road has a lot of subdivisions running on the northern side of it and there was an extremely significant amount of material was revealed by an excavation. We tried to contact the developer and they just ignored us and as it happened, we did get access to that material and some of that is now at Knights Stream, through a City Council project manager. But it was entirely fortuitous, so there was no formal protocol in place, it was more very good management with a large slice of good luck. |
| Craig | Yes I would agree, it’s the same when we were working with Fulton Hogan originally in the Knights Stream area. I think because we had an original agreement with them to preserve the remnant Knights Stream and when that sort of was going a bit not sticking to the plan. I remember the developer, the staff member, he actually rang me the next morning after that meeting because he said he didn’t sleep very well and then he agreed to keep that and then the school site or whatever got realigned and it got moved and it was really about how many houses they could fit in to make it economic for them, which I understood but I was sort of like, let’s protect that.And the stumps came up as part of that. So having that relationship with that staff member at Fulton Hogan meant that I was able to talk about something different that wasn’t on paper or wasn’t written down but that hopefully he could see that it meant something and that we could do something pretty cool with it and so while we might not have landed it completely with those first stumps, the stumps that have come up since have been… yeah, now come back to the school which is fantastic. |
| Sally | It sounds like a lot of it has come back to individuals feeling a sense of obligation or responsibility or wanting to do the right thing. |
| Craig | For sure, rather than a rule or a policy. For sure. |
| Mike | And I think from an education point of view, our job as a kura, as a school is to… it’s like that partnership and protection of what is in our local area because they are great narratives that will help the generations coming through our school to learn about the importance and history of the area and it was just a really golden opportunity for us to get a little slice of that history in our own backyard, which is what Craig was saying. The Knights Stream Reserve is just behind the school as well so we will hopefully over development will give us some access there as well. So we’ll see these things around our school. |
| Craig | And they’re real and tangible too, I think that’s important. Because a lot of even Māori archaeology, a lot of it hasn’t remained. A lot of European archaeology is built structures or forms whereas Māori, most of our houses and stuff were all organic anyway, they were made out of trees and stuff like that so it all dispersed over time. So not a lot of living tangible stuff to see but these trees offer us a real good insight into what the past might have been like for people and for our environment. |
| David | One of the things that we’ve found very strongly is that you take a section of this timber and you say right well this timber was here a thousand years ago and they lay their hands on it and it’s quite different from reading it in the book. You know, here it is or it’s quite different from someone telling a story about it and I remember we had an engineer doing some ground scanning in a section actually quite close to where we live and I said would you like to have a look and he came into our garage and he said wow… and this is because he could see it, he could put his hands on it and I could tell him that that tree died in a fire in 1840/1830 and it lived 410 years old and you know, he could actually see it, see the growth rings and this is tangible, right before his eyes.  |
| Sally | I think it’s interesting isn’t it, you’re talking about the tangible and Craig you’ve touched on the intangible and how something like this can really bring that to life. Yeah having it before your eyes, being able to touch it.  |
| Craig | And no better place than a school to have that, to showcase you know. |
| Sally | We might have our first waiata, we’ll go with your choice Mike. Would you like to explain why you chose it?  |
| Mike | During Matariki we put on a few waiata and these were some of the ones that the kids chose with their kaiako, the teachers.  |
| Sally | ‘Kei aru atu koe’. |
|  | **Waiata: ‘Kei aru atu koe’** |
| Sally | Ko Speak Up Kōrerotia tēnei. We’re talking about the Halswell mataī, trees that were found in the Christchurch suburb of Halswell that are 1200 years old. In this section - it’s a very broad question, but why is this important? We’ve sort of touched on a lot of it already but I’d be really keen to break it down a bit more. The historical side of it, the ecological side of it I think is really important and the cultural side of it as well.  |
| Craig | I grew up here in Christchurch, Canterbury, and I didn’t actually know until I went to university that willow trees and sheep weren’t native to this country because it just never was talked about. I just assumed that what I saw around me had always been here and so when I found out that… It was quite a rude awakening, as you could imagine, and I also didn’t know I was Māori at that stage either. So I had a pretty interesting few years in my 20s discovering a whole bunch of stuff and it’s all related really of course to colonisation and how that happens. But I think one thing that came out of it for me was you know, you’re in Canterbury, we have some of the lowest indigenous biodiversity in New Zealand, less than 1% of our indigenous biodiversity left on the Canterbury Plains. So you can imagine, you live here, that’s not part of your identity or your worldview. The identity of the Canterbury Plains was the patchwork quilt in terms of agriculture, not the swamps and the forests of the Canterbury Plains, that just wasn’t the thing. So I knew there was another story there to be told and of course being Ngāi Tahu as well, that story becomes more evident as well when you learn and understand the history of indigenous people. And so for me, the trees - or the stumps, they’re not trees I suppose, they’re stumps because they’re not alive anymore - but the stumps represent something that we’ve unconcealed, that we’ve uncovered, that we didn’t know about ourselves. Some of us knew, but the wider community didn’t know. If you tell people that there was a thriving mataī forest or podocarp forest in Halswell, they would probably laugh and not believe you. And so for me it comes back to this idea of you can’t love what doesn’t exist and you know, I’m heavily involved in ecological restoration in Canterbury and that’s one of the biggest challenges that we have. Because people don’t understand it, they don’t know it so they find it hard to love it. Whereas if you go to somewhere like Kapiti Island up near Wellington or even Rakiura, Stewart Island, it’s pretty easy to understand the landscape around you and what it means to you. So yeah, that’s what it means to me. It’s like a chance that we’ve got through these stumps to be able to actually say to people this is real, you know, indigenous biodiversity was all over this place. We had kākā and kākāriki all around Christchurch and Canterbury, we don’t anymore but we could maybe one day again and Wellington has proved that around the Zealandia area, there’s kākā in people’s backyards now and there wasn’t 20 years ago.Look, I’m a real believer that that’s the chance we have around our identities, about identity for me as well as our ecological health because if we can keep doing what we’re doing. A big shout out to the City Council, they’ve done a great job actually around restoring native biodiversity in and around subdivisions and the developers themselves have done a good job. So yeah, we’re on a good track but I just think that’s the significance for me. We’ve got a chance to keep that trajectory going and got something real and tangible that you know, we didn’t make up, it’s there. |
| Mike | And I think for me, I grew up in Canterbury also but as a Pākehā and local primary school, we didn’t do a lot of te reo Māori but I think coming in as an educator and then growing up with a couple of Māori friends from when I was about twelve and learning a little bit about how they didn’t really share their culture out in the public eye because it probably wasn’t the thing to do and then learning their discovery of finding their culture and what it meant to them, it really had an impact on me.So I sort of… Now in education, I have a responsibility to make sure all our tamariki learn about our history, our heritage, not just the western heritage but actually going back and honouring the Treaty. I guess having a new kura, it was a real opportunity to look at how you do that from the grassroots, from the start and do it right. So from a naming presentation right through to the landscaping that we’re doing at school, through to next term actually planting projects. So we’re putting our own wee native green space in so we can look at the species that were there prior to urbanisation and having the stumps integrated into that area for the kids to play in, on and under and around, it will be really good and we’ve also got a connection to the Knights Stream Reserve, which is just behind the school.So connecting those linkages of native areas is really important and then from there we hope to join any other local kind of planting projects around the Halswell area that we can get the tamariki involved in, so they feel that pride. When they come through 20 years later, they go wow I actually, I remember planting those at our school and being a part of that and look how big they are and hopefully the bird life does return and some of those beautiful things because that’s all learning for children. |
| Sally | One of the things I was reading when I was doing my research on mataī trees is that they have berries that are really important for birdlife.  |
| Craig | They do. |
| Mike | So all that kind of beautiful nature science kind of learning and history is all wrapped into… just the living organism of what a school is.  |
| David | Yes and I think there’s… with this particular material that we’ve uncovered, there’s a really strong ecological story in there too and for whatever reason, ecological history tends to be a written history which means that it’s a colonial history and what these trees provide, is that they give us an ecological history that goes as you said in your introduction Sally, right back to before the time that people were here and stretching through into that time when people were occupying the land, living in the land. And I guess one of the things, too, is it really illustrates to me how dynamic the landscape was. Because we tend to think that, you know, it’s always been like Craig said before… this patchwork of green and yellow and so on across the plains. Well actually, we had floods coming through our area in Christchurch every few centuries and they weren’t just little ones, they were big floods and they would knock the forest down in a particular area but then over the next few centuries it would grow back again and it would get knocked down again. So you’ve got this real ecological sense of dynamism, a really dynamic landscape rather than a sort of colonial view of that landscape as being something that’s static and unchanging. |
| Sally | It’s interesting isn’t it, the learnings that we can take from the flooding and you’ve already touched on the fact that Māori knew that this was an area of swamp and wetland and yet we’ve built the city here. I remember going to Tuamutu information day and they were like once upon a time Māori used to come to Te Waihora, get in their waka and journey up to Kaiapoi and that was just how the land used to be at that point, or probably still is under all the housing. |
| Craig | Yes the mataī represent you know, a wider sort of indigenous biodiversity like I said and of course all of that was utilised in the past. So we have records about what species - we, sorry, Ngāi Tahu do - in terms of what species were in certain areas. It all relates to the 1848 Kemps Purchase of Canterbury, the Crown off Ngāi Tahu, and we did a survey after that because the land sale deed didn’t sort of turn out the way we thought in terms of areas that were special to us, food gathering places weren’t protected and they were obviously sold and privatised and then we lost access.The places like Waihora in particular but all around Knights Stream and the Hurituni which it is in Te Tauawa a Maka which is the Nottingham Stream, the top part of the Halswell, there’s sites all along there noted and then the different species that existed. That’s why I know that kiwi and kākā and kākāriki were in the city. Those trees just represent one part of that, there was probably other trees that their stumps haven’t survived because the wood’s not as hard but it just sort of is that reference to all that biodiversity that used to be there and then the interaction that humans had with those species at that time. |
| Sally | There’s a whakataukī that I found online, I’m not exactly sure of the meaning but I can have a pretty good guess: “Ka whakatakotoria ngā tāwhiti ki runga I ngā mataī hei hopu I ngā tūī me ngā kererū e kai ana I ngā hua” - “The tūī and the kererū can eat the fruit of the mataī” and I’m sure there’s probably more you could add to that, Craig, but I imagine that’s a nice whakataukī to symbolise the importance of the tree to the wider ecosystem.  |
| Craig | Yes for sure, no that’s right, that’s what you said about the berries of the mataī in particular for kererū for sure. And you know, you will know that tūī have disappeared from Christchurch actually but they’ve been reintroduced onto Banks Peninsula and the kererū were still here of course. But they don’t come much down onto the plains or onto the flat either, they hang around the Port Hills.That sort of comes back to the ecological restoration point of view and Mike might see this in Knights Stream and other places, you might notice that there’s a few tōtara trees planted especially along the reserve. Well that was sort of the work that we did at that time as well, to make sure that those species were put back in place. And along the streets in particular and you also notice some of the names around where the school is, they carry the names of local species, plants and birds. And so that’s all part of that identity, trying to build an identity for people that’s more relevant to this local environment rather than something that’s brought in from another place. |
| Sally | Like street names that are all plays by Shakespeare or something, which is in Rolleston. |
| Craig | Yes. Our rūnanga has been involved in those subdivision projects, we always advocate for that street naming or reserve naming as part of it and it doesn’t have to be exclusive. We’re happy to share because it is a shared history too, like it’s not all Māori, but we say let’s have a pattern here, you know, some main streets can be this and sub streets can be this and we’ve worked on them at Lincoln and Wigram of course, which was a Ngāi Tahu subdivision.But also the physical part of it is getting the streets to grow and I worked on the Wigram subdivision and originally they weren’t going to have tōtara in the streets there, they were going to have oak trees. I managed to argue them around with my cousins to say why can’t we have native trees in the streets. Some people said they didn’t belong there or they’re better in the reserves and we were like, no we want them front and centre in the streets.I don’t know if you’ve been to Wigram Skies but it’s pretty amazing now. This is my guess, there’s more tōtara trees in Wigram Skies and in the stormwater basins out the front, than there is probably anywhere else on the Canterbury Plains, that’s what I would say and not remnant, they’ve been planted but still… they’re still going to fruit the same in time. That was my underlying hope with that subdivision, like it was with Knights Stream, that in the future when I’ve maybe got some mokopuna and I’m a bit older, I can walk down those streets and actually collect tōtara berries with my grandkids. They don’t know that, that’s going to be a bit weird but anyway, I’m going to hold myself to that and do that and if it’s not me, it’ll be my grandkids or their grandkids, they can have the chance to do that, you know, because most people wouldn’t know what a tōtara berry looks like but they do taste quite nice.  |
| David | So tōtara are interesting and it is actually really noticeable around Wigram but also around Halswell that tōtara have been planted in the Longhurst and Knights Stream subdivisions and they’re slow growing but they’re not that slow growing. Because the house that we live in, the people who we bought it off were quite enthusiastic about native plants and so they put a tōtara tree under the powerlines and I can tell you right now that tōtara do grow.  |
| Mike | That was part of our landscape project as well, was putting species in that was native to the area. There were a few flowering things put in for a bit of colour and a bit of learning but really a lot of it was based around the natives that would have been in that area. One of our blocks is called the Kūkūwai, the wetlands, and all the names are connected to our surroundings. Our other block is called Otūmatua, so that’s our local maunga, and the other one is called Opouira which is the Knights Stream. The new block that we’re just about to start soon will be called Owaka which is the wee portages where the… dragged the river and sort of waka from place to place as they were traversing through the thing. So there’s a beautiful narrative as the kids come through our kura, they learn about the local area just naturally. |
| Sally | Really cool. We might have our next waiata then, we’ve got a song by Hirini Melbourne. |
| Craig | It’s called ‘Waiata Tatāi’, it’s off an album called Te Wao Nui ā Tane which is a sort of symbol of the forest, the great forest of Tane, and this album is awesome, I absolutely love it and I used to sing this song to my kids. And ‘Waiata Tatāi’, it’s a counting song but what it does is it references different birds and what they do in the trees and it talks about them eating the berries of a miro tree actually, not mataī but miro. So it’s good to learn, you can learn all different bird species that exist and at the end, then it has someone cutting down the trees, so it’s just an interesting song, yeah hope people like it.  |
| Sally | It works perfectly with our kōrero today. |
|  | **MUSIC BY HIRINI MELBOURNE – WAIATA TATAI** |
| Sally  | This is Speak Up Kōrerotia and we’re talking with David Hawke, Craig Pauling and Mike Molloy about the Halswell mataī. I’d like to think now about what we are doing to preserve them. We’ve talked about the fact that some of them are in Knights Stream School and you’re doing all sorts of great initiatives to really incorporate them into the school environment, the physical environment but also in the learning that’s going on within that environment. But I know there’s a lot of other projects that are happening with them as well. David, the reason we started this conversation between us was around carving and encouraging woodworkers to come and carve some of the mataī. I’d really like to hear about that angle and the Resident’s Association work going on there and the hopes that you have to encourage a range of woodworkers to get involved. |
| David | One of the things that I think that runs across most cultures is that they work with wood in one form or another. One of the things that we’ve got here is that we’ve got some pretty… a pretty amazing amount of material. So we had about 50 tonnes of mataī were pulled out of one of the subdivision developments and the idea is that different groups in our community can gain a greater identity by being involved in working with this wood.So first off the block has been some work that we’re proposing to do with some of the mataī in Te Hapua which is the library and City Council service centre in Halswell. And we’re hoping that that will be a really strong centrepiece for linking the present Halswell which is, you know, very 21st century, back into the people who lived here a long time ago before the area was colonised and linking it further back too into an ecological history.But wider than that, one of the things that we’re really keen on is to get various new migrants to the area and having some of their community work with this material and create something that brings their culture and unites it with this amazing resource that we’ve got in Halswell. And that’s some work that, I guess, is fairly early. We’ve had one of the local carvers, a guy called John Robertson in the Addington community, he took some of the material and he showed that it is able to be worked, it has its challenges but it is definitely still able to be worked. So from there, it’s a matter of building these relationships through into other communities so that they feel more a part of the 21st century Halswell that they have come to live and I think that’s also where we link into what Knights Stream School is trying to do and the other schools as well.  |
| Craig | I think some of the uses, like I said early on, because that time pressure was there just getting them utilised in some especially landscape processes was good. But I really love what David and the Halswell Residents Association have gone to with the actually utilising the timber to make beautiful things. Because it’s definitely a belief of mine - and I know that my relations share this - that you can increase the mana of something by making it beautiful. That’s why we use feathers in our cloaks and things like that, even though the bird has had to die for that, you can actually celebrate that bird by wearing it on your body.So I really love the thought of utilising the timber and we’ve tried to work a few times haven’t we David, with our local Ngāi Tahu carvers as well, we’ve had a few come out and visit the stumps to see what they could utilise and it’s my hope that the Te Hapua project will really come through and we’ll get something stunning through that, working with our people. So yeah, I’m really positive about that. And one thing: my wife had a little medical incident last year and David and the Halswell Residents Association kindly gave us a little bit of polished up mataī, it’s a real treasure for our family. It’s only small but it’s really precious and it’s just a beautiful… When it’s all polished, it just looks amazing. It doesn’t actually look like wood anymore, it looks like something different. Just want to thank you for that David but yeah, just so many things, what a gift… A tree that’s over 1000 years old sitting there in your home, it’s just beautiful. Hoping more to come, getting the carvers and different ethnicities working on them will be great. |
| Sally | I imagine with something in Te Hapua as well, it’s such a hub of the community, people are coming through and being exposed to the story through whatever installation ends up being created there. One other question I had was the sites where these stumps have been found, are they being preserved or acknowledged in anyway or is the subdivision simply being built over the top?  |
| David | No and yes.  |
| Craig | Both I think, yeah.  |
| David | So no, the place where we got the 50 tonnes with, that actually came from a temporary stormwater basin. So after that particular site off Quaifes Road, off the norther side of Quaifes Road was subsequently filled in and it now has houses on it. So as a site, it’s no longer there. Further west, there’s some of the stormwater basins where mataī were excavated, the mataī has been left there to signify what was there before if you like and the lizard habitats that Craig talked about before, some of the mataī material has been used there as well. But it’s very much a mixed bag and you know, it reiterates what we said before is that actually the protection for these sites as in the areas of ground is somewhere between minimal and non-existent. |
| Craig | There’s some… I think the ones in Hoon Hay Valley there, some of them are in situ still. So you know, where they were found they have been left but it was able to be done because of the stormwater design. Whereas when the subdivision were happening, that’s normally when they find them right when they dig the subdivision stormwater basin down to the ground and the houses sit up here.So there could be many more stumps under all the houses out at Knights Stream, Longhurst and all around Halswell but we’ll never know that but the ones that did get left in situ or the ones that we’ve put back into the basins to look like they’re in situ as a symbol, I still think that’s pretty cool because we do have a real story to tell and that in one way just interprets it and tells that story so people can go hey, I wonder what those things are and the story can be told so I think that’s still cool.  |
| Sally | And are there signs next to them explaining what they are? |
| Craig | I don’t know if there’s interpretation yet.  |
| Mike | That would be something really nice to have, some signage around and a bit of that history for people that walking by can see that narrative. |
| Craig | That’s definitely something we could do, it actually is a thing we could do together with the City Council. It’s probably a bit of an afterthought but it would be cool. Maybe the Te Hapua thing can really do it because it is a central place for the community and then when people see them in other places, they can connect to that story maybe. So we’ve still got a chance, I think, to tell that story. |
| David | Yes there’s a project that we’ve got out on the way at the moment with one of the subdivision developers and they are wanting to use some of our mataī to put in a stream as habitat for animals and plants that live in some of the streams that flow through the area. And what we have in mind is some interpretation that goes with that. It’s an interesting question though is how you actually do that interpretation because interpretation in principle is a good idea but how you interpret it is another question and we would have to be working very closely with our local rūnanga to ensure that the story that we tell is one that’s got a broad level of acceptance and understanding. |
| Sally | I will show my ignorance in these matters - but if the stumps are put into flowing water, will they disintegrate over time? |
| Craig | Probably but that’s okay. I think it’s like anything, we’ve just got a chance… At the end of the day, they become a resource at some point as well and they’re a resource for carving. Like I said it’s all about making the most of them, really, in my opinion. We can’t put all of them in a museum, we could put one or two of them in there. You know, I’m a pretty practical person in terms of our relationship with the natural world, we do interact with it, we do need to interact with it and like I said, if you think about mana and to whakamana something, to uphold its mana then it’s okay to utilise it, just done appropriately.And I think you know, for it to slowly… to help habitat, for birds and fish and plants, that’s a great use for it and it might last 100 years or something and that’s pretty cool.  |
| Sally | How were they preserved initially? Thinking of… They were obviously buried somehow.  |
| Craig | Just because they were buried.  |
| Mike | Probably silt and sealed in really, so they were literally… There’s no oxygen down there for them to disintegrate so they’re in pretty good nick for how old they are. |
| David | They’re below the water table, the water table in Halswell goes up and down seasonally but they’re down low enough that there’s no oxygen there. So that means that, as Mike said, the decay doesn’t proceed and you have to say that - we’ll call it the 50 tonne batch, the ones that are now taken a selection to Knights Stream School - they were buried down to about 1.8 metres, so it’s a long, long way down, much deeper than you do your vege garden. |
| Craig | But that’s amazing to think though that only 1400 years, which I don’t think that’s long for another two metres of soil to accumulate on the ground and like we touched on earlier on, the Waimakariri cutting through and coming this side, it used to swing around and come to Waihora, that’s effectively what it used to do and on the old maps that I talked about earlier on, Halswell Junction Road that runs right up next to Knights Stream and Longhurst and out towards Hornby there. On the original maps it says riverbed right where the road is now. It’s my belief that Halswell Junction Road was built on top of that riverbed once we’d controlled the Waimakariri and knew that it wouldn’t come back this way anymore.Because that’s what we’ve been doing you know, over generations now, is controlling the Waimakariri so it stays straight and doesn’t come south and so we know that there was a riverbed there and that probably then used to feed into the top of Knights Stream and flush that out every… you know, we don’t know the frequency of those floods but it definitely happened and they’re the floods that topped off the trees you see. Because the stumps don’t… they’re not full trees, they’re just root balls and then a little stump, maybe one or two metres max and so the floods just gone boom and then the soil and everything that’s come with it has just covered them up and that’s sort of how they stood there.  |
| David | Yeah it’s quite interesting actually because that burial that kills the trees, it’s not the end of life because what happens is you’ve got the standing forest and then in that standing forest you get beetles, huhu will excavate their cavities and those huhu are then food for kākā, they also provide homes for other invertebrates to live in and so you know, there’s life in dead trees and so it’s part of an entire cycle of life and regeneration really.  |
| Mike | I think coming from a learning perspective, kids love investigating creepy crawlies and you know, we’ve been down to Quaifes Road and looking at tuna and the local waterways and the connection. So that learning is in your backyard and it’s fantastic.  |
| David | The disc that we’re intending to gift to Knights Stream School has actually got some of these cavities in it and you can see where the huhu used to live and you can see where they are on the circumference of the tree and so on and so it’s quite a cool story really.  |
| Sally | We’ll have our final waiata which is ‘He korōria te Atua’ and David, did you have a particular reason for selecting that one?  |
| David | I think this one speaks to a spiritual component of how we live and that spiritual component doesn’t have a particular faith or denomination or anything like that, it just acknowledges that we have a dimension to our lives that is more than just a physical existence.  |
|  | **Waiata: ‘He korōria te Atua’** |
| Sally | This is the concluding section of Speak Up-Kōrerotia talking about the mataī stumps and I’d just like to think about now, what would you all like to see happen as we move forward and maybe you have some expectations or some hopes. What do you want to do with the remaining stumps and what do you hope we’re going to learn, or the wider Christchurch Ōtautahi, Canterbury community is going to learn, from the experiences that you have all shared through this project? |
| Mike | I think from an education perspective is that being a new school we had an opportunity to build on a cultural narrative and a name that was gifted, so that’s really quite a special process and I know existing kura around Ōtautahi are going through the process of being gifted names and then are starting to reconnect with where they are place-based learning. So I feel we’ve been very lucky to be new and to actually start from the beginning and to have that support and I think just ongoing connections with, it’s one of our school values, with our local rūnanga, with our local residents association and our other kura around building the narratives for everyone because everyone has a similar but a different story. And I think for Knights Stream, there wasn’t any amazing sort of chieftain happening that happened there but there’s a lovely narrative around what was there before us and the mataī stumps just connect us back to that area.  |
| David | And I think that Knights Stream School, from what I understand too, has got a really strong or very diverse bunch of people that contribute to it and I think that getting the mataī story into the people who are perhaps newer to the area, is something that we really strongly have a commitment to and you know, one of the things that our Association is really strong on is building community and people coming new to an area, especially new to New Zealand, they don’t have those sorts of links. And to us the whole mataī story, whether it’s doing carving or looking at what’s there, researching what’s there, it’s all part of developing that link and can help them feel at home in their new home, while I think really importantly respecting the depth of the people who have gone before and place and the landscape.  |
| Craig | Like I said earlier on, I mean there’s a little bit maybe unfinished business around the policies around sort of protecting significant ecological sites if they’re found by developers. Because it is sort of an accident when you find them and we don’t know before we go into those places. So I’d love to see something developed on that over time. And then really for me, it is like I said earlier on, just about identity and I think it’s been great what Mike and Mingimingi Hautoa are doing at the school and you know, the gifting of the stumps and the utilisation of them in the community is just something that we can celebrate. I’m really looking forward to the Te Hapua project. I mean experience of anything that I’ve done in the community and working on things, especially around restoration or identity is that it takes time and I’m not too impatient on getting these things done. I think they will happen and slowly but surely we’ll get that project to happen.And then once we have that in a central place in the community, it will be able to tell a much better story that sort of tells a deeper history and I think that’s really good for people. People that have been here generations but also people that are new to the area because then you can draw something from that and make meaning out of it and so that’s what I look forward to.  |
| Sally | Just a final question, David, if someone is a carver or knows a carver, how might they get in touch?  |
| David | Yes so the easiest way to get in touch with us is through our Gmail account. So secretary.hra@gmail.com that’s the easiest way to get in touch.  |
| Sally | Perfect thank you, any final thoughts as we conclude? |
| Craig | No just thanks for the opportunity to come and share.  |
| Sally | Tēnā koutou, thank you so much. I think what’s become obvious through our conversation today is if we’re thinking about the rights of people who live in this space, we also need to think about the rights of the environment in which they find themselves. So thank you so much for coming and sharing your thoughts and your experiences.  |
| Craig | I’ll just do karakia whakamutunga.  |