



Wairoa In Focus

Your Community, Your Future

Maori Liaison Officer moves on from vital role

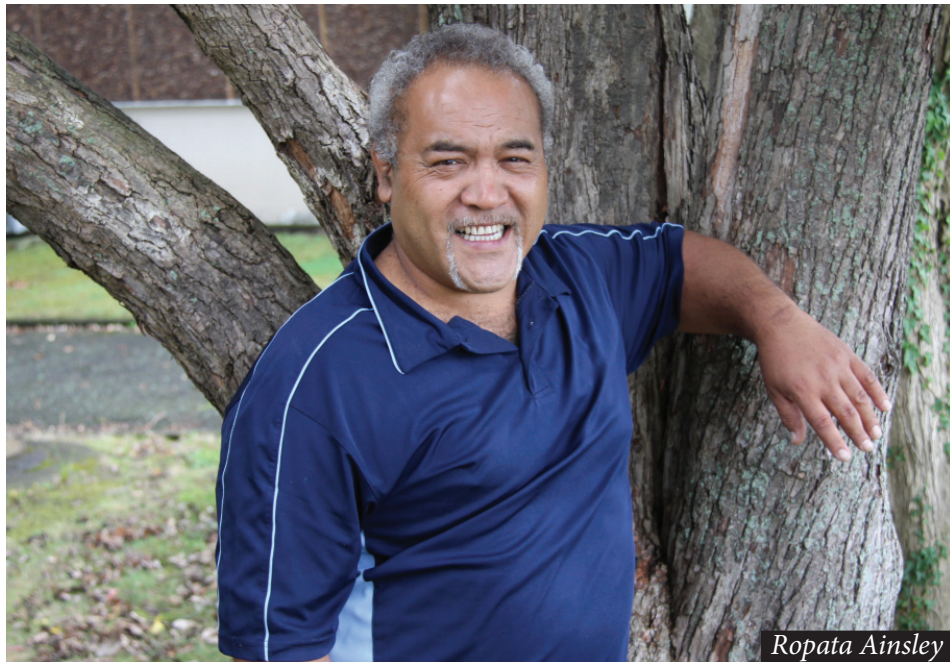
Working with marae, managing relationships and guiding staff and councillors through cultural matters are just a few of the tasks Maori Liaison Officer Ropata Ainsley will leave behind when he is farewelled next week.

The key staff member is moving on, having made a significant impact on the district during his three years in the role.

During his time on staff, Ropata has been instrumental in minimising the cultural divide and taking a lead through several key milestones. The reformation of the Maori Standing Committee is a particular highlight.

"This was a long, complex process involving many people. Now the foundations are in place for this committee to really make its mark in local politics," he said.

Playing an active role in the Gateway to Mahia programme was also a memorable experience for



Ropata Ainsley

Ropata. "Our aim was to bring tangata whenua on as partners in this project to create a new road. It has been satisfying to see how it is

possible for different marae to come together and work with council to achieve a common purpose."

Behind the scenes, Ropata is leaving his mark on staff, particularly those

who have taken advantage of the culture and language programmes he has implemented.

Several staff are now becoming confident speakers of te reo, and a wider understanding of maori culture has permeated many aspects of council.

The demographic of the area means the role of Maori Liaison officer is very important to council operations. Whoever assumes the role must have the ability to interact between different cultural groups and ensure a Maori perspective is provided when decisions are being made. WDC is one of only a few councils in New Zealand to employ a dedicated Maori Liaison Officer.

WDC thanks Ropata for his outstanding service and wishes him and his family well for the future.

Ko te pae tawhiti whaia kia tata, ko te pae tata whakamaua kia tina, seek out the distant horizons, cherish those you attain.

Hydrant tests

Don't be alarmed if you see water spouting at different points around town this week – it's hydrant testing time.

Around 100 of the town's many fire hydrants are being professionally tested to ensure they are in good working order. Assets Manager Terrence Maru said the hydrants must comply with the Code of Practice for Fire-fighting Water Supplies 2008, which meant they had to operate at a certain pressure.

"It is vital that we know these hydrants are working now so they are available in emergencies," he said.

Nationwide Fire Protection Ltd are expected to complete the testing today, providing a cross-section view of the current condition of the hydrants. This will be used to determine if any maintenance work needs to be carried out.

Building law tightens up next week

Wairoa District Council building control staff are preparing for the implementation of a significant change to New Zealand's building legislation with the introduction of 'Restricted Building Work'.

From March 1, any residential design and construction work that is critical to a building must only be carried out or supervised by a Licensed Building Practitioner (LBP).

These are people who have been assessed and found to have met the standard of skill and competence in particular areas of building practice, including designers, carpenters, roofers, brick and block layers, external plasterers and foundation

layers. Registered architects and chartered professional engineers are automatically treated as Design LBPs.

Building Control team leader Corinne Hamlin said the changes will take some getting used to, but the overall result will mean quality assurance and accountability for the client and recognition of skills and competence for those in the building industry.

"Our aim is to support both those in the trade and those who are building by providing as much help as possible through the change. We recognise that building can be a complicated process, so we encourage anyone to contact us to seek guidance at the start of any

project," she said.

Ms Hamlin ran a well-attended information evening this week for members of the local building industry, in order to make sure they are fully informed of the new legislation and what will be required of them.

"It was heartening to see such interest," she said.

Visit www.dbh.govt.nz to find out more about 'Restricted Building Work'.



RESTRICTED FIRE SEASON
A restricted fire season still applies to the entire Wairoa District. Permits are available from WDC offices on Queen Street.

Numbers stack up for new accountant

It all added up for Andrew Morton when he saw the advertisement for the council accountant's role late last year.

The UK expat decided to swap his management accountant position at an Invercargill educational institution in favour of moving north for a change of lifestyle and a new challenge.

"We had heard the North Island was quite different from the south, so we opted to make a move and experience it ourselves," he said.

Mr Morton is no stranger to local government, having worked in similar roles in Leeds and Halifax before moving to New Zealand

nearly four years ago.

"We are permanent residents now and have really made the country our home."

He is joined in Wairoa by his wife, while his teenage daughter undertakes tertiary studies in Christchurch and his adult son is currently in the UK working. Performing the accounting functions at council is a vital element to the smooth running of the organisation, involving the preparation of operational reports, financial planning and monitoring compliance. Mr Morton works closely with Finance Manager David Steed, along with the rest of the finance team.



Andrew Morton

For the diary:

Council Meetings:

- March 13
- April 10
- May 8
- June 12
- July 10
- August 14
- September 11
- October 9
- November 13
- December 11

Council Forum:

- February 28
- March 27
- April 24
- May 22
- June 26
- July 24
- August 28
- September 25
- October 23
- November 27

Meetings and forums are held in the Council Chambers in the Queen Street offices and are open to the public, unless otherwise specified.