

### 3. CULTURAL HISTORY

**Tai – a – haha, tai – a - ahaha!**

**Na te ware, na te ware,  
Noho noa koe tuatua noa I a Tane.**

**Ko ia i wheki, ko ia i wheka,  
Rere mai te kongā,**

**Ko ia i piri, ko ia i mau,  
Rere mai te marama,**

**Ko ia i piri, ko ia i mau,  
E ti Tane,  
Kia toro tika to tu**

#### **TIHEI MAURI ORA!**

The Whirinaki Basin has been an important centre of continuous human occupation for at least 300 years, and evidence exists of earlier centuries of habitation. To many people, history is very much a living phenomenon, events of bygone centuries are described in detail as if they only happened yesterday. Sacred waiata (songs) are sung on marae naming the surrounding hills and speaking of events associated with them. Every locality is named and many places evoke of the telling of story and legend.

As forest dwellers, the Whirinaki people were dependent on the rich food resources of the forest, where birds were a plentiful and highly esteemed item. Kākā, kererū, tūi, weka, kiwi and kākāpō were the principal species sought. The taking of the birds was strictly controlled and a rāhui (prohibition) would occasionally be put on a section of forest.

The forest provided many other necessities: wood for shelters, waka, weapons and fortifications; bark for household vessels and roofing; creepers for lashing and hīnaki (eel pots); and feathers and skins for clothing. Fern root was a staple food product and was cultivated in clearings created in the forest and maintained by shifting cultivation. Many other forest plants had specific uses as well.

Five major iwi (Tūhoe, Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Te Arawa, Ngāti Awa) claimed the area at different times. Whirinaki was a conflict zone between these tribes.

The original inhabitants, the Marangaranga occupied the area at the time the Mataatua waka landed at Whakatane. The peaceful Marangaranga people were later defeated by the more aggressive coastal people who occupied the Whirinaki area as the Ngāti Whare and Ngāti Manawa. These small iwi fought numerous battles with

their powerful neighbours and intermarriage arising from both peaceful and wartime dealings has resulted in some very complex genealogies. The Ngati Manawa and Ngati Whare are now under the Tūhoe tribal umbrella.

The Ngati Whare were staunch supporters of Te Kooti, the charismatic prophet and talented leader of the 1860's and 1870's. Te Kooti's people used the Whirinaki area as a base for their campaigns across the central North Island, and, as a result, Government troops with Maori mercenaries pursued him into the area on many occasions. During the conflict the whole Urewera region was subjected to a "pacification" programme ending in the surrender of Tūhoe and confiscation of most of their land. To this day, the Tūhoe are regarded as the bastion of resistance to the European culture.

Approximate dates of events (not necessarily correct)

1150 AD	Arrival of Toi people
1350	Arrival of "Great Fleet"
1620	Defeat of Marangaranga
1650	Te Arawa attack
1700	Ngati Kahungunu attack
1750	'Ngarahutemate' affair
1780	Tūhoe invasion – Ngati Mahanga driven out
1812	Ngati Pukeko invasion
1818	Ngati Manawa and Ngati Whare driven out
1821	Tūhoe settle in Whirinaki
1822	Whirinaki is deserted
1823	First return of Ngati Whare and Ngati Manawa people
1825	Second fall of Okarea Pa
1826	Return of the rest of the Ngati Manawa
1847	Rev. Preece establishes mission station at Te Whaiti
1864	Ngati Whare fight at Orakau
1865	Te Tapiri battle
1868	Te Turuki arrives in the area
1869	Attacks on Mohaka and Whakatane
1869	Three-pronged Government attack
1870	"Guerilla" forces start search for Te Turuki
1871	Tūhoe surrender to Government
1872	Te Turuki escapes to Waikato
1875	Road started to Te Whaiti