



The Mahurangi West Regional Park is a great place to visit, viewing the bountiful place that was so important to tangata whenua.

The seas churned and boiled with movement, fins dancing, circling and charging through the surface of the water. I remained as still as I could and waited for sharp teeth to find me, surely bringing my life to an end. That was when a large waka suddenly loomed above me, sweeping past my shoulder. The strong hands of a young warrior, whose tattoo's suggested he was part of the Ngāti Whatua tribe, scooped me up and deposited me in the bottom with the rest of their haul. I lay unmoving, showing no fear to my rescuers/captors, unharmed but surrounded by squirming and gasping sharks. The men laughed at their unusual catch, grinning broadly, casting their eyes over me but not engaging in conversation.

Once ashore, the men were greeted by a dozen young boys and girls of the tribe who took a shark each, dragging them by their tails up to the Pā. I joined them in carrying their catch, with many of them excitedly chattering away, trying to learn my name, my tribe and what had happened. I remained mute as I dragged the shark up the steeply stepped sides of the headland, avoiding the kumara pits that had been excavated into the terraces. The Pā was new to me although I knew who the inhabitants had been, Ngāti Rongo, my people, who had held significant positions of power near the Mahurangi shark fishing grounds. But they had been driven from their headland strongholds by their rivals Ngāpuhi in the 1820's.

As I walked through the gap in the palisade at the rear of the Pā, I followed the children, dumping my shark with the rest in front of a group of stern-faced women with sharp tools. Their eyes however were filled with mirth and they chided the children for getting the sharks dirty, threatening that they too would find themselves under the knife if they did that again. They paid me no mind, barely giving me a glance. As the children drifted away with smiles on their faces one of the girls took me by the arm and led me through the Pā that commanded grand views across the Mahurangi River and inner Hauraki Gulf Islands. We stopped in front of the largest whare where an old man in a korowai, filled with intricate patterns and colours, sat smoking. His hair was grey but you could feel the mana he held, demonstrated by his lined and tattooed face. I sat down next to him, a mere slip of a girl, covered in shark blood; I am a big believer that first impressions count so goodness knows what he thought of me!

I broke the silence between us. The emotions boiled up within me as I let him know how I came to be alone, my father abandoning me, my mother taken, my tribe scattered and gone. I struggled to suppress my anger when speaking of Ngāpuhi who had caused the end of my childhood. He listened and smoked, not asking any questions, merely observing me with a calm demeanour. When I was all talked out he finally engaged me, shocking me with his response. He introduced himself as 'Te Ruke' or the Duke. All Māori knew this man; he was a master of hand to hand combat, having unparalleled strategic knowledge of warfare; he was feared by both Māori and pākehā. More shockingly for me was that he had worked closely

with the man I hated, Hongi Hika, leader of the Ngāpuhi tribe. I stood before the man that had had a hand in my misery, blood boiling, hands clenched into fists. I grabbed the only weapon I possessed, a patu parāoa, a single handed club weapon made from whale bone. I pointed my toes toward my target, standing lightly so as to move rapidly, twirling my wrists which had been strengthened through years of defeathering birds and playing with poi.

Thrusting forward, the patu cut through the air where the Duke's head had been moments before. Again and again I sought his body out with my club only to find air. My movements were quick yet this old man danced around my blows untouched. He mocked me by saying, "What training do you possess?" Enraged I thrust again, too far this time and off balance. Sensing my weakness the Duke took hold of my wrist, twisting my arm behind my back. "Excruciating isn't it? This is my arm now, I can do what I please with it." I was helpless, my face contorted with pain. "Is it my skills and power that you seek to possess?" "Yes," I replied, "Please stop!" "This is the beginning - your training will start tomorrow."

In the months that followed the Duke made the arms that belonged to him strong through work. I carried water from the Mahurangi River, I sharpened kanuka logs destined to be defensive palisades from the Pā and I trained regularly with the Duke. He let me join in some games with the children of the tribe, such as waiata with the long poi and te rakau (stick throwing) games, to strengthen the wrists and make them supple. In return for my training I would speak each night with the Duke. For countless hours around the fire, he taught me how to outwit opponents using military and personal strategies. I would translate his teachings into English, teaching him how to master the language of the pākehā.

When he sensed that the arms that he claimed as his were strong, he sat me down, this time with begrudging respect. "I like you," he said, "You are wise beyond your years." My heart skipped a beat - did he know my true self? The Duke went on. He explained that he had relatives within Ngāti Whatua and now he sought to create peace between tribes. "I understand your anger. Perhaps you should turn that wasted emotion into something more useful? Hongi Hika is dead and the man who fought with him, Te Ruke, is now fearful of what our actions have done to the future of all Māori. We are weaker than before, losing many of our young to warfare and many more to the alcohol bottle. I fear that soon we will also be losing much of our land. If you truly want to fight, make it your goal to fight for our continued existence. Be the go-between of your childhood and be the bridge between our cultures. Hope that you will be able to use your words and not your arms to show strength."

And there it was. The Duke had laid out my future path and it was not one of personal vendetta. The skills in one to one combat and strategy that I had learned would most likely be used against the looming threat of the pākehā, not the diminished presence of Ngāpuhi.

I left the pā in what is now Mahurangi West Regional Park, destined to meet my mentor only once more. The Ngāti Rongo pā he stayed at has yielded to time and now walkers can only recognise where it would have been by looking for the terraces leading up the slope to the summit, or the sunken dips in the ground that held the winter stores of kumara for the tribe.

1) The men from the boat belonged to which tribe?

- a) Ngāti Rongo
- b) Ngapuhi
- c) Ngāti Whatua

2) What do you think the word 'chided' means based on the sentence structure?

3) Identify three emotions you think Wikitoria may have had when she lay in the bottom of the boat. Explain why she had them.

4) Using clues from the sentence, explain what a korowai is?

5) Why did Wikitoria fight Te Ruke?
a) He had fought with Hongi Hika.
b) He was feared by many Māori.
c) He was a master of combat.

6) What did Wikitoria give to Te Ruke for his training?
a) Sharpened kanuka logs.
b) New waiata for the tribe.
c) Lessons in English.

7) List three features of the pā that Wikitoria described.

8) List at least three ways that Wikitoria (and many Māori warriors) strengthened their wrists?

9) For what reasons was Wikitoria angry when she spoke with Te Ruke?

10) Briefly state specifically what the fears of Te Ruke are for the future of Māori.

11) Explain what Wikitoria's goal is both before and after her training with Te Ruke?

Word Salad

There are many unusual words and phrases in the story you have just read. Complete the following tasks to ensure your understanding:

1) Find the definitions of the following English words.

- a) churned
- b) excavated
- c) mirth
- d) slip (of a girl)
- e) demeanour
- f) supple
- g) vendetta
- h) yield

2) Use each of the words above in its own sentence - check to see that it makes sense!

Parts of speech

The following sentences have many different parts of speech. Identify a noun, a verb and a preposition in each sentence:

- a) I was lifted easily up from the water.
- b) The sharks hung down from their rear fins.
- c) After we spoke, I walked to the path.



This is an image of Kawiti (The Duke) who remained undefeated against the British in the Northern Wars of the 1840's in Northland, New Zealand. Next to him is a patu parāoa, whale bone club.