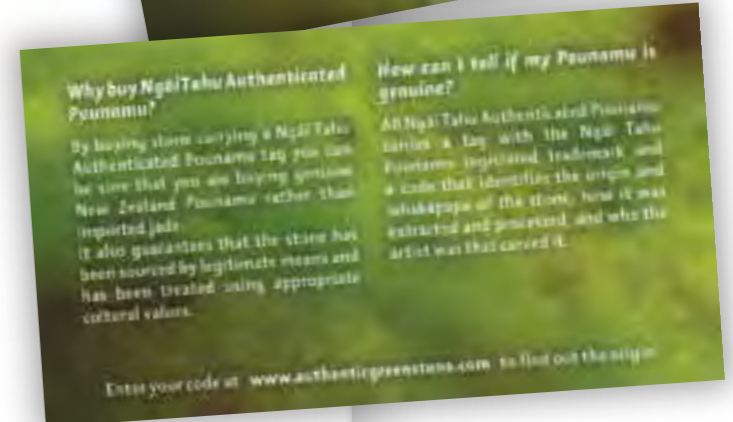
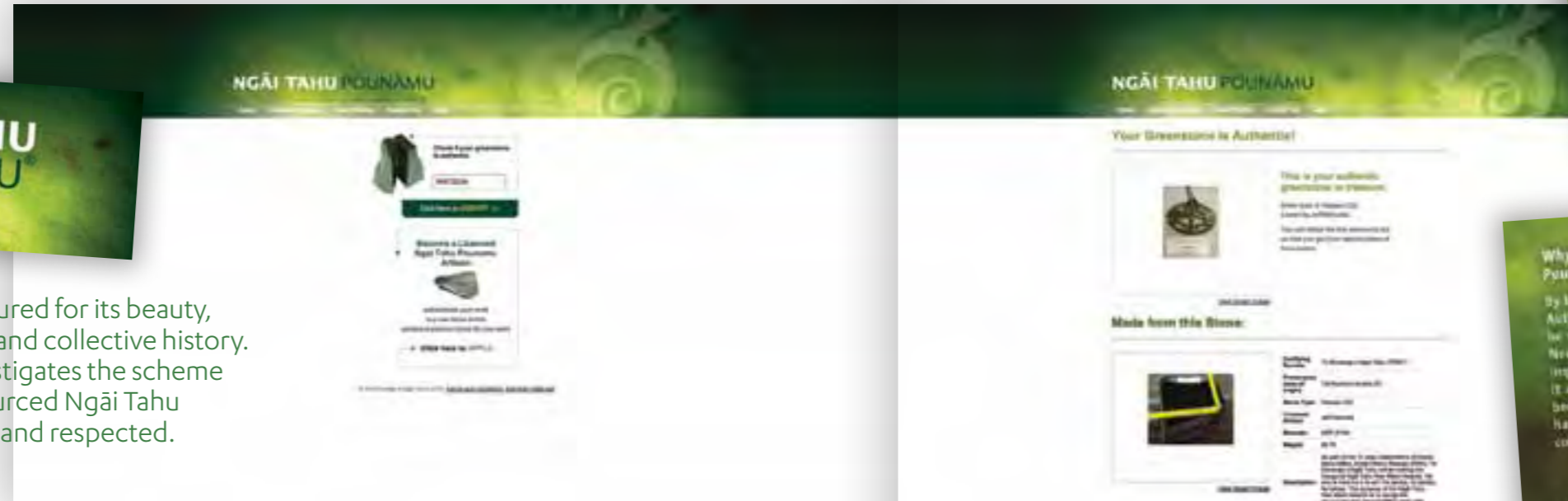


# TRACING POUNAMU



Pounamu has long been treasured for its beauty, its durability, and its personal and collective history. Kaitiaki Sally Blundell investigates the scheme to ensure that legitimately sourced Ngāi Tahu pounamu is easily recognised and respected.



FORMED MILLIONS OF YEARS AGO IN MAGNESIUM-RICH ROCKS deep below the earth's surface, pounamu (greenstone) is a taonga for generations of Ngāi Tahu whānui – in particular the peoples of Te Tai o Poutini, the West Coast of the South Island. It is also a must-have memento for tourists, a meaningful gift for New Zealanders and yet the origin of souvenir pounamu is often murky.

Without labels, tags, or written information, customers have no way of knowing if the pendant on the shop counter has been made from cheap Canadian jade, illegally sourced pounamu from New Zealand, New Zealand pounamu carved in China or legally extracted, locally hand-crafted South Island pounamu.

This uncertainty has a negative impact on the tourism industry and is especially bad for pounamu carvers, forced to compete with cheap imported stone. It is bad for buyers, who have no idea what they are buying. A 2002 University of Otago study found many tourists are reluctant to buy pounamu because they could not determine quality or provenance.

However for the last eight years, Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu has been working alongside the nine Papatipu Rūnanga recognised as ngā kaitiaki (guardians) for the pounamu that occurs within their regions. In the past year Te Rūnanga has developed a certification scheme that identifies legitimately sourced New Zealand pounamu.

Still in its infancy, the Ngāi Tahu Pounamu certification scheme is similar to those programmes used to identify honey, organic produce, even clothing of a certain standard.

To check the origin of a Ngāi Tahu-authenticated pounamu item, buyers log on to the Ngāi Tahu Pounamu website ([www.authenticgreenstone.com](http://www.authenticgreenstone.com)) and enter a unique traceability code supplied with their purchase. They will see a photograph of their carved artefact and information describing the origin of the stone, who carved it and how it was extracted and processed.

Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu regional development manager John Reid says the system will authenticate the pounamu, “so you can take a stone and know its provenance, its history, its story”.

“It’s about developing respect for the industry, defending the pounamu and regaining its mana. This creates a differentiation between what is authorised (pounamu) and what is not.”

The unauthorised taking of pounamu has been the subject of recent high-profile court cases. In 2006 Makarora helicopter pilot Harvey Hutton was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment and ordered to pay \$300,000 reparation after being found guilty of stealing 20 tonnes of the prized hukarere (snowflake) pounamu, found only on the Cascade Plateau in South Westland.

In 2008 father and son David and Morgan Saxton were sentenced to two years nine months and two years six months respectively, after being found guilty of stealing snowflake pounamu between 1997 and 2003.

Earlier this year police seized one and a half tonnes of raw stone and carved articles, worth an estimated \$750,000, from two West Coast shops, The Jade Factory and Mountain Jade, after a lengthy investigation into trade in illegal greenstone. The Greymouth District Court ruling confirmed that the pounamu seized from the two outlets belonged to the iwi, and ordered that the greenstone be returned to Ngāi Tahu. No charges were laid. Jade Factory owner John Sheehan later told the Greymouth Star that his company had talked to Ngāi Tahu and was not going to contest the ownership of the stone.

While in these instances the illegality of the stone was readily identifiable — permission to mine hukarere pounamu has never been granted — it is difficult to estimate how much pounamu in total has been taken illegally.

“I would suggest that what we have recovered through the court process would be infinitesimal in terms of what has been removed,” says former Te Rūnanga o Makaawhio deputy chairman Terry Scott



(Ngāi Tahu – Ngāti Māhaki), who has been working on the project with Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu.

“There are big scars in the countryside where boulders have been and once it has gone, there’s no trace of it.”

Before 1997, pounamu mining was conducted under licence by the Government. Supplies of the stone legitimately gathered under these regulations are still making their way on to the market. That year the Ngāi Tahu (Pounamu Vesting) Act placed the ownership of all naturally occurring pounamu within the Ngāi Tahu rohe in the hands of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu. Pounamu in the Arahura river catchment was later vested in the Māwhera Incorporation.

Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and Papatipu Rūnanga began working immediately on a plan to ensure the long-term protection, collection, extraction and supply of pounamu, and to define the role of individual kaitiaki rūnanga in managing and protecting the commercial and cultural future of pounamu in their regions.

Under the resulting 2002 Pounamu Resource Management Plan, kaitiaki rūnanga are responsible for managing pounamu sources from their local areas, as well as extraction and supply. Public fossicking is restricted to coastal areas and limited to what an individual can physically lift by themselves within a 24-hour period. Rāhui may be placed on certain areas to limit collection. Mining on private land where pounamu is known to occur requires an access arrangement with the kaitiaki rūnanga, and any activity on conservation land that may affect pounamu must adhere to specific rules of access. A review of this plan is currently underway.

Ngāi Tahu and kaitiaki rūnanga have also been working closely with the Institute of Geological and Nuclear Sciences to determine sustainable levels of pounamu extraction; not only in the interest of commercial demand but also to ensure a pounamu supply for future generations.

Now, as police, customs and retailers are becoming more active in preventing the black market pounamu trade, and as increasing numbers of those within the industry voluntarily return stone suspected of being illegally sourced, there is the ongoing challenge of “grey market” stone. This includes cheap jade from Canada, China or Siberia being passed off as New Zealand pounamu.

The Ngāi Tahu Pounamu assurance scheme will guarantee customers they are purchasing authentic pounamu items, and also ensure higher prices and due respect for the work of the artisan, and the status of the stone as a taonga.



*“It is going to be a long hikoi [educating the public about the importance of knowing what they are buying and where that pounamu came from], but it’s going to be a worthwhile one.”*

TERRY SCOTT (Ngāi Tahu – Ngāti Māhaki), former Te Rūnanga o Mātauranga deputy chairman

## PERSONAL CONNECTION

The significance of pounamu as a meaningful gift extends far beyond these shores. Last year former Te Rūnanga o Mātauranga deputy chairman Terry Scott sent his son, Rob a piece of pounamu carved by licensed artisan Jeff Mahuika (Ngāi Tahu – Ngāti Māhaki/Ngāti Waewae) to mark Rob’s 40th birthday.

The adze design alludes not only to the close connection between Mātauranga and pounamu, but also to Scott’s pride in the work of his tipuna, who were skilled at making waka with adzes.

For Rob, the gift is a treasured reminder of the country of his birth. “I received my pounamu here in London, about four or five months after I left New Zealand. I had been through my first London winter, and was feeling very homesick at the time. To have this little piece of home was something quite special to me.”

Rob was able to log on to [www.authenticgreenstone.com](http://www.authenticgreenstone.com) and enter the code that came with pounamu. There he could see the pounamu was sourced from the West Coast.

“It’s a place that I spent a lot of time in as a child, because my grandparents lived there. I also took a trip over to Hokitika with my parents a few weeks before I left New Zealand — my first time back on the Coast for some years. To me, the West Coast is New Zealand — it typifies everything that is so beautiful, untouched, fresh, unique about the country. It holds a very special place in my heart.

“I mainly wear my piece of pounamu against my skin, underneath my shirt. It is not something that I usually want to show publicly because it is very personal to me, indicating the strong and in some ways, newfound relationship that I have with my country. It is the connection back to the land of my birth, to the mountains, rivers, places and people that helped form me. I can put my hand on it, feel it on my chest, and breathe it in, reconnect with that little piece of New Zealand/Aotearoa that represents my links back home, back to my tūrangawaewae.”

goes. I know a lot would be keen as more stone becomes available.”

The Director of Christchurch’s Form Gallery Koji Miyazaki is fully supportive of the scheme. For him, the two main obstacles to selling high-quality hand-carved pounamu artworks are the prevalence of imported Māori-based designs carved in China, and tourists buying British Columbian jade on the assumption they are buying New Zealand pounamu.

A robust certification scheme, he says, would provide the necessary information, especially for international visitors, who appreciate New Zealand pounamu.

“On the business side there are souvenir shops and even gallery shops buying work on the basis of making money. It becomes a price war and customers looking for something created in New Zealand are getting the wrong message.

“Here (at Form) we are not choosing work based on how cheap we can buy it but on the basis of high quality work made by hand, by New Zealand artists. It’s a struggle every day but we are trying to educate people. I have nothing against people creating something out of British Columbian jade but only so long as people are aware.”

There is still much work to be done in getting more retailers and carvers onside. The uptake from retailers throughout New Zealand is on the rise and kaitiaki rūnanga and Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu are confident they can convince more retailers to join. There is also the ongoing task of educating the public about the importance of knowing what they are buying and where that pounamu came from.

“It is going to be a long hikoi,” says Mātauranga’s Terry Scott, “but it’s going to be a worthwhile one.”

While souvenir shops may well continue to sell their \$10 greenstone pendants, such items will eventually be identified for what they are, says Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu Development Adviser Jymal Morgan (Ngāi Tahu - Ngāti Irahehu).

“It’s the same as going to a market in the middle of an alleyway and buying a Gucci bag for \$20 — you know it’s fake. So it will come to a point where low-end Canadian and Siberian jade will become worth little. At the moment people see greenstone or pounamu in New Zealand and they automatically think its pounamu sourced from the river by indigenous people and infused with all that history. But increasingly buyers are seeking authenticity in whatever it is they are purchasing.”

Currently the three major pounamu manufacturers and retailers (including Te Papa) in New Zealand want to sign up to the system, and a number of small-scale artisans are waiting to be licensed.

Mount Maunganui carver Paul Graham was one of the first to become licensed. “As soon as this opportunity came up I jumped. I know how special it is and I feel privileged to be part of it.”

With an existing supply of legitimately mined pounamu dating back before 1997, Graham takes time to tell his customers the difference between the certified and non-certified stone.

“And they are really interested. Often that’s the first question people ask — where does the stone come from? As soon as they know it’s got the label and it can be traced back, their ears prick up.”

Graham is now encouraging other carvers to recognise the importance of the scheme.

“People are aware of it but a lot of carvers who have been working with pounamu for a long time are just sitting back and seeing how it

HE WHAKAARO  
OPINION nā TOM BENNION

## Smoke-free NZ?

If you look through the weekly summaries of the work of select committees for this year, you will see that the Māori Affairs Select Committee has been beavering away on its inquiry into the tobacco industry in Aotearoa. The report, in Māori and English, was released in early November.

The committee set itself very wide terms of reference. It determined to inquire into:

- The historical actions of the tobacco industry to promote tobacco use amongst Māori
- The impact of tobacco use on the health, economic, social and cultural wellbeing of Māori
- The impact of tobacco use on Māori development aspirations and opportunities
- What benefits may have accrued to Māori from tobacco use
- The policy and legislative measures necessary to address the findings of the inquiry.

On the question of benefits, the report has a short entry:

“The overwhelming majority of evidence we heard asserted that Māori have not benefited in any way from tobacco. While the industry may have generated some jobs, any positive economic results are greatly outweighed by the negative and harmful effects of tobacco use.”

The assessment of impacts is grim. Six hundred Māori die annually from smoking-related illnesses, “a loss that is virtually equivalent with the loss of 649 members of the 28th Māori Battalion in World War II”. In cultural terms, smoking affects “tinana (physical wellbeing) by causing nicotine dependence, hinengaro (psychological wellbeing) through the very experience of being a smoker, wairua (spiritual wellbeing) by a breach of tapū, and whānau ora (family wellbeing) by its normalisation and perpetuation”. Tobacco dependence was “counter to all notions of freedom and cultural identity”. It also “delivers a major insult to whānau ora”.

“The cultural cost of tobacco to Māori is evident—the premature loss of kuia and kaumātua takes away the opportunity for cultural traditions, knowledge, and histories

*The Māori Party appears to have no fears that it might suffer electorally by instructing a large number of its voters that they need to give up a favoured pastime.*



to be passed on to younger generations, and robs iwi and hapū of important and informed role models. We, like all the submitters we heard, consider this loss a tragedy, and are determined to remove tobacco from our country’s future in order to preserve Māori culture for younger generations. “The need to reduce smoking rates is of “urgent national importance”.

The aim of the inquiry was also cross cultural, to develop an “ambitious, effective approach to reducing smoking rates amongst Māori, with the wider brief of reducing smoking rates for all other New Zealanders”.

Politically, this has been an astute move. Despite the 5000-odd annual deaths from smoking-related illnesses, and strong measures to control the sale of tobacco, the major parties have been somewhat reluctant to embark on a wholesale inquiry with the explicit aim of ending its use. The reasons might be, in part, the extraordinary annual tax revenues of around \$1.3 billion from tobacco, or a reluctance to be seen as heavily regulating a private preference of thousands of NZ voters. As the report itself notes, the majority of New Zealanders would not support a general prohibition on smoking. The Māori Party appears to have no fears that it might suffer electorally by instructing a large number of its voters that they need to give up a favoured pastime. In part this is because the report recommends as many carrots as sticks to achieve its aims. It is proposed that tobacco companies provide millions towards quit smoking schemes. In addition, there would be more schemes to

stop children taking up smoking in the first place, which is also an easier sell electorally.

Thus the government is given an opportunity through this report to reframe quit smoking measures as an assistance programme to the population, which will have particular benefits for Māori in particular.

As for the loss of tax revenue from smoking, this would simply be balanced by the saving of \$1.9 billion in direct health care costs.

By 2015 the party hopes that use will have dropped so far that the smoking population will consist mainly of “heavily addicted smokers concentrated in certain sociocultural or economic groups”. Those groups would be intensely targeted after that date.

Not surprisingly the tobacco industry, which has long since seen the writing on the wall, responded by advocating for some modest changes to current restrictions. British American Tobacco (New Zealand) Limited (BATNZ) was anxious to point out that it did not target Māori specifically; it simply “manufactures a legal product

*(continues on page 45)*

*Tom Bennion is a Wellington lawyer specialising in resource management and Māori land claim and Treaty issues. Formerly a solicitor at the Waitangi Tribunal, he is the editor of the Māori Law Review, a monthly review of law affecting Māori, established in 1993. He recently wrote a book titled Making Sense of the Foreshore and Seabed.*