



Activists for the Waiwhetū Stream

Kaumatua Te Rira Puketapu (Teri) (7.08.1948 – 6.05.2023)

Of Te Ati Awa descent. He was very concerned about the state of the stream in the late 1980 and 1990s. He grew up alongside the stream and could remember fishing and catching eels in a beautiful clear stream. Before the Friends of Waiwhetū Stream was established he worked hard to get groups to help him clean up the stream. He also pressured (lobbied) the council to clean up the stream.

Teri was a humble man and the newspaper described him as a community and iwi leader, carpenter (he helped built Waiwhetū marae) and conservationist. He was also Lower Hutt's first Māori deputy mayor.

This whakatauki applies to him: “Kā ore te kumera kōrero mo tō na ake reka” (the kumera does not speak of its own sweetness). He was a man who lived to serve others and grow his community.





Dr Merilyn Merrett

She has a doctorate in ecology and really knows a thing or two about plants. She was teaching at the Open Polytechnic in the early 2000s and was dismayed at the surface of the stream being covered in Cape pondweed. It was a real nuisance as it hindered water flows and could make flooding worse. It was a plant originally from South Africa.

Merilyn carried out some research on the plant in the stream. She proposed to dig it all out by hand. This had never been done before in New Zealand. She asked for volunteers and soon people joined her.

Between 2011 and 2014 the stream was cleared of this weed. In the meantime, Merilyn had also gone on to start the Friends of Waiwhetū Stream, a restoration group supported by Hutt City Council. She was awarded the Hutt City Council Civic Community Service award in 2015.

Vivian Pohl

She was another person who was very keen in conservation. Here is a picture of her instructing some school children on how to plant native trees.



Henry Steele

(21.12.1944 – 24.10.2023)

He was an English immigrant to New Zealand, arriving here to teach at the Open Polytechnic in 2001. He lived by the stream and soon joined Merilyn in raising concern about the state of the stream. He was particularly concerned about an area at the end of Rishworth Street. It was a wasteland and covered in weeds and industrial rubble. He persuaded the Friends of Waiwhetū Stream that they should restore the area.

He set about getting volunteer groups and the Council to clear the land and then he began a successful regeneration project. Today you can visit Rishworth Reserve and see for yourself the transformation over a period of 10 years to become the beautiful nature reserve it is today.

