

PEGASUS CARVINGS TO BE UNVEILED IN DAWN CEREMONY

6 June 2008

Six carved wooden posts (pou whenua), forming a feature entranceway to the new North Canterbury town of Pegasus, will be blessed and unveiled in a formal dawn ceremony held in recognition of the site's unique cultural heritage.

The blessing ceremony will take place at 6.30am on 7 June at the Pegasus Town site, 25 kilometres north of Christchurch.

Local iwi Māori, neighbours, members of the project team and local community groups will all be invited to take part in the ceremony.

The entrance feature to Pegasus will be made up of six individual pou, carved by Fayne Robinson, Riki Manuel and Caine Tauwhare – who together have more than 75 years carving experience.

Pegasus Town managing director, Bob Robertson, says it is important to honour the cultural history ingrained in Pegasus with a formal ceremony.

“The blessing ceremony will be a tribute to the past, as well a time to look forward and celebrate the growth of this remarkable new community we are creating.”

The pou represent many of the values on which the town is being built, including ideals relating to the environment and community growth, Bob Robertson says.

“**He Tētē Kura** incorporates New Zealand fern designs and represents our past, present and future. It speaks of the cycle of life and reflects the traditional Māori world view that all elements of nature relate to, and are ultimately inter-dependent on each other.”

“**Ko te Tumu Herenga Waka**, in which a waka (canoe) and tekoteko (figure) are carved, represents adventure, exploration, arrival, settlement, accomplishment, and the uniting of people – like in a community such as Pegasus,” Bob Robertson says.

The tekoteko inside the hull of the waka also symbolises the relationship between humans and their environment, and draws upon elements of the ancestral landscape upon which Pegasus will stand.

Te Toki a Raureka commemorates the sacred gift from Raureka, an ancestor of the Wairangi people of Te Tai Poutini (West Coast).

“Raureka’s achievements were pivotal to the history of Kaiapoi Pā, which was to become the largest pounamu industry site in the country and, in its prime, the centre of politics and trade for Ngāi Tahu,” Bob Robertson says. “This pou therefore represents development, knowledge, productivity, determination and chieftainship. Most importantly perhaps, it acknowledges and links the people of Ngāi Tahu to those that were here before them.”

“**Tuna Heke** incorporates two tuna (eel) forms symbolising the migration of people to and from this area in search of resources and food. It is also a reminder of the importance of our natural resources to the quality of human life and that we need to nurture our environment to ensure these treasures are still around for future generations.”

“**Tiki** celebrates the history of greenstone trading in the area. Representing the foetus, it reflects the developmental stage of the town of Pegasus.”

“**Mere** honours the tūpuna (ancestors) that fought for this land or were involved in overseas wars. The form represents the concept that to move forward into the future, one must not forget the past.”

The six entry pou took eight months to complete and have been carved from wind-felled tōtara logs sourced from the Ōkiwi Valley just north of Kaikōura and gifted by Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura on behalf of the people of Ngāti Kurī.

The Pegasus site was identified as having rich historical significance before construction of the town began in 2006, leading Infinity Investment Group to initiate a major archeological survey in conjunction with local Māori. A significant number of Māori artefacts have since been uncovered, including the discovery of an ancient pou (carved post) in August last year.

The pou – found just south of the old Kaiapoi Pā – is believed to have been part of Kaiapoi Pā’s palisade defences, which were breached by fire in the 1830s. While there are a number of surviving examples of pou from abandoned pā in the North Island, experts believe this pou is a rare find for the South Island.

The pou was discovered during the clearance of vegetation from a remnant waterway channel (Tairutu Gully) that had once led past the pā, providing access to and from the pā for ocean going waka, and feeding its residents with an abundance of water fowl and aquatic life.

Since the discovery of that pou last year, workers have unearthed a treasure trove of items, including pounamu (greenstone), adzes and the remnants of a waka, all of which are

associated with an even earlier pā site that pre-dates Kaiapoi pā and the arrival of Ngāi Tahu into the South Island.

As part of conservation efforts, Pegasus will establish a whare taonga (cultural centre) near the ancient pā site to house and celebrate the rich local heritage. It will be located within the development, between future houses and the Mapleham golf course.

Once the centre has been constructed, it is hoped that some of the many artefacts discovered on this landscape during archaeological digs in the late 1960s and early 1970s may be returned by Canterbury Museum for display alongside the items found during Pegasus' own archaeological dig.

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