

Labour of love reforests former Araparera dairy farm

Another step in the transformation of a dairy farm into a native forest reserve, overlooking the Kaipara Harbour, was celebrated at CUE Haven last month.

Property owners, Thomas and Mahrukh Stazyk, were joined by representatives of local iwi, contractors, school students and officials at the opening of a viewing platform, at the top of the property. Master of Ceremonies was Kaumatua Haahi Walker, of Ngati Whatua o Kaipara.

Thomas told the gathering that the day was about expressing gratitude to the many volunteers, businesses and organisations who had made the viewing platform a reality.

“You came from many different walks of life to work together and you have created something for the community that will be here long after we have gone,” he said.

Thomas and Mahrukh bought the 24ha Araparera property in 2003 with the intention of building a retreat where people would come together to share ideas and learn from each other. But a concern about the effects of grazing on water quality and the lack of public native reserves in fast-growing Auckland, prompted them to re-think their vision.

Restoration work started in 2008, and the property was gifted to the CUE (Cultivating Understanding and Enlightenment) Haven Community Trust in 2017. Mahrukh says the vision is to create a place where people can explore nature, disconnect from technology, relax, share ideas and cultivate an understanding about themselves, other



Thomas and Mahrukh Stazyk.

people and the universe.

More than 170,000 native trees have been planted and ‘then and now’ photographs along some of the tracks tell the story of the transformation of the land. Three kilometres of walking track and boardwalk have been constructed, and more than three kilometres of access roads established.

Volunteers have also converted the old milking shed into a plant nursery and workshop, and built a volunteers’ cottage.

Mahrukh says CUE Haven is increasingly being used by schools and tertiary institutions as an outdoor classroom and research site.

The viewing platform is named Te Rite o Taranaki.

More photos online at localmatters.co.nz



Semisi Potauaine played the Tongan fangu fangu or nose flute.

“The local hapu, Ngāti Rango of Ngāti Whatua, use the CUE Haven cottage weekly to conduct te reo and wellness classes for children, and cultural classes for adults are planned for this year.”

But before the haven can open to the public on a regular basis, public toilets and car parking have to be built. Fundraising for these has started.

Donations can be made via the CUE Haven Givealittle page or through the CUE Haven website cuehaven.com



Wharehine provided gravel for the roads and was involved in the installation of the foundation poles. At the platform opening were managing director Rob Gibson, left, and general manager Andy Booth.



Unitec student Rick Kaufusi carved the platform, inspired by the restoration work at CUE Haven.