

• A revered pohutukawa at Cape Reinga, the northernmost tip of New Zealand, is reputed to have been there for more than 800 years. The site is sacred to Māori people as the departure point of the spirit from this world to their traditional homeland of Hawaiiki. This windswept pohutukawa marks the spot known as Te Rerenga Wairua 'the place of leaping'. It is from here that the spirits of the dead begin their journey leaping off the headland and climbing down the gnarled, twisted roots of the tree, descending into the underworld for their return journey.

#### Nga Waiata ~ Jeweller

Born in 1962 in Hastings, Nga Waiata has followed various creative pathways and following a long career in fashion and has, for the past 4 years, been focusing on jewellery as a creative and commercial venture. She has developed a unique range of crystal and native timber rings

and pendants with a raw natural style that has quickly made them highly coveted items in fashion circles around the world from Barney's in New York to fashion designer Paul Smith in the UK. Nga Waiata's jewels can also be found locally in design stores and private collections throughout the country. Recycled pohutukawa is an important part of her practice - as she says "the rich red wood works beautifully with dark crystals...". Nga Waiata works from her home studio in Napier.

*The Pohutukawa cabinet draws its inspiration from:*

- A boat knee form.
- A swing hanging from a tree.
- A coffin or casket signifying death.
- The twisted roots of the pohutukawa reaching for the ground, perhaps leading to the underworld as in the story of the Place of Leaping.

## Rimu

**Rimu and Ceramic Clay Cutter**  
by Chris Weaver  
**Rimu Cabinet and Puriri Cabinet**  
by Tim Wigmore  
2012



Māori Name: *Rimu* or *puaka* and often in its doubled up form *rimurimu*  
Common Name: *Red Pine*  
Botanical Name: *Dacrydium cupressinum*

Rimu is a slow-growing tree, eventually attaining a height of up to 50 meters. Its lifespan is approximately 800 to 900 years. The leaves are small and awl-shaped. The seeds are dispersed by birds such as the kakapo, which eat the fleshy scale and pass the seed on in their droppings. One of the most prized timber trees, Rimu is well known for its strength and durability and often used in furniture, although very little is milled these days. Much of New Zealand's rimu has been logged and in 1999 commercial logging was halted on the South Island's West Coast, the location of the last remaining large rimu forests.

#### Rimu Use

- The juicy red cup that holds the seed was eaten by Māori.
- The resinous heartwood was split into slivers and tied in bundles for torches.
- Used in beer brewing by Captain Cook.
- Where Kauri did not grow, European settlers used rimu as the main building timber.
- The bark was a common source of tannin in tanning leather
- Used most recently for furniture, woodturning and carving.
- The inner bark of the rimu tree was beaten into pulp and used as a poultice on burnt skin.
- The pulped bark was combined with water and hot stones in a calabash and dabbed on ulcers or running sores.
- The gum of the young tree was used to staunch bleeding wounds.
- The leaves were applied to skin sores.
- The aromatic leaves of this conifer were used for vapour baths.

#### Rimu Stories

- Not only is the foliage of young trees reminiscent of a feathery seaweed, but the red sap is said to have come from the blood of Tunuroa, a dreaded water monster.
- The demigod Māui, wanting to discover the secret of fire, visited the goddess Mahuika. She gave him one of her fingernails, which contained the fire. To trick her, Māui deliberately put out the flame and returned for another fingernail. He repeated this until Mahuika, realising she had been duped, cast the last nail down and set the underworld alight. Fire became implanted in kaikōmako, rimu and tōtara. Since then, fire has been made by rubbing sticks from these trees in grooves of māhoe or patatē wood.

#### Chris Weaver ~ Potter

Chris Weaver was born in Te Awamutu in the North Island of New Zealand and grew up in the South Island. His first memory of clay is as a young boy, finding some when his father was digging out steps in a bank down at the bottom of their property in Nelson. He made his first pots then and has been obsessed by clay ever since. He has earned a reputation as one of New Zealand's most accomplished ceramic tableware artists. His signature rimu timber handled 'Iron' tea pot has become an icon of New Zealand design and Chris's work is represented in private collections and museums throughout New Zealand, as well as in Australia, China and Japan. He works from his studio in Kaniere, east of Hokitika.

*The rimu cabinet draws its inspiration from:*

- The action of slicing clay.
- The relationship between the fire implanted in the rimu as in the above story, and the firing of clay.
- A stylized representation of the unique bark patterns.
- The form is inspired by the seed capsule.
- The form also references the whare (house) for which rimu was one of the favoured and predominant construction materials for both Māori and European builders.

1 FEBRUARY — 12 MARCH 2014

# Precious Cargo

Works by Tim Wigmore in collaboration with  
Brian Flintoff • Lyonel Grant • Veranoa Hetet  
Graeme Priddle • Nga Waiata • Chris Weaver

Tim Wigmore's *Precious Cargo* project stems from his research into the historical uses and physical characteristics of our native trees and plants and his exploration of Māori myth and legend. As an artist and furniture designer Tim Wigmore was drawn to the waka huia form. "I see it as an uniquely New Zealand perspective on the idea of jewellery or treasure or even tool boxes. They both conceal and reveal — an idea which is also inherent in furniture design.

For *Precious Cargo* Tim approached six renowned makers and asked them identify a tool emblematic of their practice. "I wanted to collaborate with other artists and find out which tools were precious to them, which tool was worthy of its own special case." The *Precious Cargo* collaborators are; musician & carver Brian Flintoff, carver Lyonel Grant, weaver Veranoa Hetet, wood turner Graeme Priddle, jeweller Nga Waiata and potter Chris Weaver. Wigmore has designed and made a cabinet for each of these six tools, predominantly constructed from the same plant material as the tool. Each cabinet, in its design and finish, explores unique aspects of the history, properties and stories of its particular material.

*Precious Cargo* demonstrates how the acquired and inherited material knowledge and expertise of leading makers, gathered from their disparate making traditions, transcends those differences. And how that expertise can be harmonised in the creation of new works that share the inheritance of multiple making traditions.

Tim Wigmore acknowledges the assistance of Creative New Zealand with *Precious Cargo*

# Matai

***Matai Koauau** by **Brian Flintoff***
***Matai Cabinet** by **Tim Wigmore***
**2012**

Māori Name: *Matai*

Common Name: *Black Pine*

Botanical Name: *Prumnopitys taxifolia*

Endemic to New Zealand the matai tree grows up to 40 m high, with a trunk up to 2 m diameter. The leaves are small linear or sickle-shaped. The seeds are dispersed by the Kererū (New Zealand Pigeon), which eats the ‘berries’ and passes the seeds in its droppings. The matai was a revered tree by Māori who used the timber and gum extensively. Europeans appreciated the matai for its properties of hardness, wearing ability and dimensional stability.

**Matai Uses:**

• Although quite slimy the fruit are sweet and were eaten by Māori.

• Māori also traditionally used the gum as a lashing sealant and binder for attaching spear points to handles.

• The thin wiry juvenile timber branches were used for making hinaki (eel pots).

• When matai was being felled for timber, bushmen drilled the base of standing trees to collect a sap known as matai beer.

• The peak period of matai milling was in the 1950s where it was used for bridges, construction, framing, weatherboards, and bed plates for heavy machinery.

• The hard, reddish-brown wood made excellent flooring timber and window sills and was used extensively for such.

• Used for musical instruments due to its acoustic properties.

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## Tōtara

***Tōtara Mallet** by **Lyonel Grant***
***Tōtara with Pohutukawa Cabinet** by **Tim Wigmore***
**2012**

Māori Name: *Tōtara*

Common Name: *Tōtara*

Botanical Name: *Podocarpus tōtara*

Māori valued trees that had many uses and tōtara was a prized tree. Not only did it provide easy to work durable timber, but its berries attracted birds, an important source of food. A mature tōtara tree reaches up to 30 metres in height. The leaves are small, narrow at both ends and are dull brownish-green. They are stiff and prickly to touch. Tōtara is also recognized by the distinctive stringy bark, which flakes off in thick brown slabs.

**Tōtara Use**

• A waka taua (canoe), capable of carrying 100 warriors, was often hollowed out from a single tōtara log.

• Māori used the wood for large carving and framing for whare (houses).



**Matai Stories:**

• The wishing tree of Matai Tapu on Hongi’s Track: He who pays a fern-frond’s tribute at the root and walks around the crusty bole, shall have his secret wish fulfilled”. *A Love of Trees — Grammaticus 1982*

• The Goddess Hine Raukatauri is the casemoth who lives in her elongated cocoon that hangs from many native trees. The male casemoth pupates and flies away, but the female remains in her case. At night as the breeze blows through the cocoon, the call of the female moth to her lover is heard as a sweet but barely audible sound. This has been the inspiration for Māori flute music.

**Brian Flintoff ~ Flute Maker**

Born in 1943 Brian Flintoff began bone carving as a hobby in 1976. Working in isolation from other carvers for several years he developed techniques which have uniquely influenced his work. Brian has now been focusing on the art of taonga puoro (Māori musical instruments) for more than 20 years and is widely regarded as one of Aotearoa’s pre-eminent makers and an expert in Māori musical instruments. Both his carvings and his instruments can be found in collections and museums worldwide. Brian lives in Nelson where he works from the Tidal Access Studio.

*The Matai Cabinet draws its inspiration from:*

• The action of drawing breath.

• The form of:

• The Pahu (an oval shaped slot Drum) tradition-ally made from matai.

• The Hinaki (eel pot) made with young matai branches.

• Surface texture reminiscent of the bark of the matai tree.

• A stylised cocoon form containing the subtle sound of the case moth as in the story of Hine Raukatauri.

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• The inner bark was used for roofing and for storage containers.

• A pointed tōtara stick could be scraped on a slab of softer wood such as mahoe to make fire.

• The smoke from the wood was used as a cure for a skin complaint, and boiled bark was used to reduce a fever.

• A valued food Māori collected the bright red fruit, which are sweet and juicy with a slightly pine-y flavour.

• Since European times, huge areas of tōtara have been felled to supply general building timber, railway sleepers, telephone poles, house piles and fencing due to its natural durability and dimensional stability.

**Tōtara Stories**

*Rata and the Tōtara.* Needing to build a waka (canoe), Rata went into the forest and felled a large tōtara tree. Exhausted he went home to return the next day to carve the waka. When he came back to the site the next day he found the tree standing upright again. Rata was confused so, after felling the tree again, he hid in the forest and waited and watched. After dark, thousands of birds and insects began putting the tree back

together again, chip by chip. With powerful chants they lifted the tree back onto its stump. Rata leapt from the bushes angry that the hakaturi (forest spirits) were playing a trick on him. They chastised him for cutting the tree without asking Tane’s permission. Humbled, Rata performed the karakia (prayers) and built a mighty waka from the tōtara tree.

Proverb. *He iti te matakahi pakaru rikiriki te tōtara. A wedge may be small, but it can reduce the tōtara to splinters.*

**Lyonel Grant ~ Carver**

Lyonel’s tribal affiliations include Ngati Rangitihi, Ngati Pikiiao, Ngati Whakaue and Ngati Rangi-wewehi of Te Arawa. He was born in Rotorua and was brought up in a close-knit Māori

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## Harakeke

***Shell Scraper/Kuku and Muka Sheath** by **Veranoa Hetet***
***Flax Cabinet** by **Tim Wigmore***
**2012**

Māori Name: *Harakeke*

Common Name: *Flax*

Botanical Name: *Phormium tenax*

No fibre plant was more important to Māori than harakeke (flax). Each village typically had a pa harakeke (flax plantation). Different varieties were grown for their strength, softness, colour and muka (fibre content).The first European traders called it “flax” because its fibres were similar to that of the flax plant found in other parts of the world. It is unique to New Zealand and is one of our oldest plant species. Harakeke has a distinct appearance as its long pointed leaves fan out from the root up to a height of about three metres in some species. The plants have a mass of thick, fleshy roots sprouting from the rhizome which hold the plant firmly in the soil. There are many different varieties of harakeke. All have tall, tree-like flower stems called korari, which grow high above the leaves. From November to January, when they are in bloom, they are a great attraction for birds especially tui, as they are full of nectar.

**Harakeke Use**

• Pre-European Māori used harakeke as their main fibre plant for making many things including: kete, nets, mats, cloaks, sandals, and ropes.

• The leaf or root was pulped, heated and applied to boils, aching teeth, wounds, burns, eczema and scalds.

• The juice of the root was used to kill intestinal worms and as a purgative.

• In the mid-nineteenth century, harakeke began to be harvested by European settlers and exported to Australian and English rope manufacturers. Harakeke became a major export industry in the 1800’s and early 1900’s with hundreds of large flax mills operating over ‘the boom years’. The advent of cheaper synthetics and the 1930’s depression saw the decline of the industry.

**Harakeke Stories**

• Traditionally only the older leaves on the outside of the harakeke plant were cut when

community at Taheke. Trained as a classical carver Lyonel is recognised as one of New Zealand’s preeminent sculptors who’s work spans between the traditions of traditional whakairo rakau (Māori wood carving), and the cutting edge of contemporary art production.

*The tōtara cabinet draws its inspiration from:*

• The action of using a wedge to split a tōtara log ready for carving.

• The form references a house pile (one of its popular uses as a durable timber).

• The surface represents the distinctive bark pattern of the tōtara tree.

• The wedge cut from the cabinet refers to the story of Rata and the Tōtara with the small forest creatures rebuilding the ‘trunk’ of the tree.

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taking leaves from the plant. It is believed the three inner layers of the plant represented a family. The outer layer represents the grand-parents, whereas the inner layer of new shoots or the child remained to be protected by the next inner layer of leaves, the parents.

• *The Snaring of the Sun.* Maui promised his mother to slow the sun so that the days would be longer and they would have more time to find food. Carrying the enchanted jawbone of his grandmother, Maui and his brothers journeyed eastwards, to the pit from which the sun rises each morning. They waited and as the sun began to emerge from the pit, the brothers leapt out and snared the sun with huge harakeke ropes. As they held it still, Maui beat the sun with the enchanted jawbone, until it was so feeble that it could but only crawl slowly across the sky — and continues so to do to this very day.

• Flax was so crucial for Māori that when nineteenth century missionary William Colenso told chiefs that it did not grow in England, they replied ‘How is it possible to live there without it?’ and ‘I would not dwell in such a land as that’.

**Veranoa Hetet ~ Weaver**

Veranoa is of Ngati Tuwharetoa, Ngati Maniapoto and Te Atiawa descent and is the daughter of master carver Rangi Hetet and master weaver Erenora Puketapu-Hetet. As such she grew up totally immersed in Māori Art and has been weaving for over 32 years and continuing the Hetet family tradition of creating artworks of an incredibly high quality. She is married to carver and teacher Sam Hauwaho of Tuhoe and Te Aitanga a Hauiti descent. They have five children and live in the tribal settlement in Waiwhetu, Lower Hutt, New Zealand. Her work can be found in private collections around the world as well as public galleries and buildings throughout New Zealand.

*The Harakeke Cabinet draws its inspiration from:*

• The action of weaving to open and shut the cabinet.

• The form of the sun being ensnared and restrained by flax ropes.

• The angular long sharp leaves of the flax plant.

• The containment and protection the young leaf (in this case the artwork) within the older outer leaves (the cabinet doors).

# Puriri

***Puriri and Brass Chisel** by **Graeme Priddle***
***Puriri and Brass Cabinet** by **Tim Wigmore***
**2012**

Māori Name: *Puriri*

Common Name: *Puriri*

Botanical Name: *Vitex lucens*

Lowland puriri forests were once widely found throughout the upper half of New Zealand’s North Island however the tree was extensively logged. Puriri tends to be associated with fertile or volcanic soils and early settlers often sought out and burned puriri rich areas to obtain good farmland. By the 1940s the supply of puriri timber was almost exhausted. When logged only the best trees were felled, leaving the gnarled twisted puriri often still found on farm paddocks. This has created an impression that puriri is incapable of growing straight, but early reports of puriri describe naturally clear trunks of up to 20 meters tall. Puriri is an evergreen tree endemic to New Zealand. The Puriri tree can grow up to 1.5 m in diameter, often thicker, with a broad spreading crown. The thin bark is usually smooth and light brown in colour but can also be very flakey. Puriri is one of the few native trees with large colourful flowers which range from fluorescent pink to dark red, rose pink (most common) or sometimes even to a white flower with a yellow or pink blush.

**Puriri Use**

• Strongest and hardest of the New Zealand timbers Puriri is usually greenish dark-brown, but sometimes nearly black or streaked with yellow, it was often used for implements and structures requiring strength and durability such as paddles, handles, bridges and fencing.

## Pohutukawa

***Pohutukawa and Chain Ring Sizer** by **Nga Waiata***
***Pohutukawa and Rope Cabinet** by **Tim Wigmore***
**2012**

Māori Name: *Pohutukawa*

Common Name: *NZ Christmas Tree*

Botanical Name: *Metrosideros excelsa*

This iconic New Zealand tree has become an important symbol for New Zealanders and it often features on greeting cards, artworks, poems and songs. Pohutukawa’s scientific name, Metrosideros, is derived from the Greek words metro, meaning middle and sideros meaning iron, referring to the hardness of its dark red heart wood. The pohutukawa is well known for its spreading shape and distinctive red flowers in December and January. Slow growing, pohutukawa eventually reach 15-20 metres in height. Short trunks to 2 metres in diameter often have thick, twisted roots looking more like branches helping it cling to coastal cliffs where it thrives withstanding wind, salt spray and drought. The leaves are greenish blue on top and white underneath. White seed capsules follow the flowers and open around May to release multitudes of thin, brown seeds.



• Puriri is an invaluable food source for native wildlife, as it provides both fruit and nectar in seasons when few other species produce these, thus it is often used in restoration planting

• Māori preferred other timbers to puriri as its cross-grain made for difficult carving, but puriri garden tools and weapons had a long life and legend has it that buckshot used to ricochet off puriri palisades.

• It was used in the construction of hinaki (eel traps) because it was one of the few timbers that would sink.

• Puriri was sometimes used to dye flax fibres yellow.

• Puriri sawdust can produce intense yellow stains on concrete floors and can be used as a perfume.

• The European settlers used great quantities of puriri timber for fence posts, railway sleepers, shipbuilding and house blocks, as it is ground durable without treatment for 50 years or more.

• Puriri was also favoured for furniture and decorative wood work.

• Māori used infusions from boiled leaves to treat sprains, backache and sore throats and as a remedy for ulcers.

• The infusion was also used as a wash on the bodies of the dead to help preserve them.

**Puriri Stories**

• Puriri was sometimes so difficult to split that timber-workers often resorted to dynamite.

• Puriri trees or groves were often tapu because of their use as burial sites, bodies often being placed in the crook of a branch. Because of this the puriri has a special significance and an association with death. For example puriri leaves are often worn on the head or carried in the hand during a tangi (funeral).

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**Pohutukawa Uses**

• It was traditionally used by Māori for paddles, weapons, digging sticks and spade blades.

• The nectar was collected for food and to treat sore throats.

• Early European bushmen made an infusion (tea) from the inner layers of the bark to cure dysentery and diarrhoea.

• It was used in bearings and machine beds due to its hardness.

• The kinked branches and roots were prized by European settlers for stems and knees in boatbuilding.

**Pohutukawa Stories**

• E hoa. Rukea atu to kura. Ka nui te kura kei uta a ngangahu mai nei O friend throw away your red feather head-dress! There are many red plumes dancing on the shore. This proverb which has a similar meaning to the English one “Don’t count your chickens before they hatch” refers to an incident that occurred when the Tainui canoe arrived from Hawaiiiki at the east coast of New Zealand. The tohunga on the canoe wore a red topknot or decoration made from red feathers, a marker of status. The tohunga threw away his prized red feathers, when he perceived a sea of red plumes which he discovered were just flowers, not feathers, which quickly discoloured in the sun.