

COROMIND



Issue 30

INTREPID WOMEN OF THAMES

Stories from the Gold Rush Era

WEAVING AGAINST SILENCE

Sandy Gaskell and the
Art of Kākahu that Speaks

CONNECTED OR EXCLUDED?

Digital Inequality and its
Impact on Social Inclusion

WINTER SKIN SURVIVAL GUIDE

Your best Skin – Without the Guesswork

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Version



Puanga

The Herald of the New Season!

This year, the national Matariki celebrations shine a light on Matariki mā Puanga. But who is Puanga, and what is her significance?

While Matariki is widely known as the marker of the Māori New Year, in regions like Te Taihauāuru, parts of Northland, and the South Island, we look first to Puanga – a star just as important in our skies and stories.

Puanga is known as Rigel, a brilliant star in the Orion constellation. You'll find her just north of Orion's Belt, shining boldly with her three children below. In many traditions, Puanga appears before Matariki, acting as a celestial signpost – a signal of change and preparation.

'Ko Puanga te kairūri i te tau tawhito, ko Matariki te kaihuaki i te tau hou.'

Puanga closes the old year; Matariki opens the new.

Across Aotearoa, iwi mark seasonal transitions differently, shaped by the whenua, the skies, and local knowledge. In my rohe along the Whanganui River valley, Matariki is hidden from view due to the terrain and prevailing westerlies. So, we look to Puanga to gain insight into the year ahead. Our tūpuna, ever adaptive, would journey from the riverbanks to the central plateau to catch sight of Matariki – observations remembered in the names of places, rivers, and landmarks around Koro Ruapehu.

'Ka hua ngā pua, koia ko Puanga.'

When the berries blossom, there is Puanga.

This whakataukī signals an important seasonal marker. As the miro berries ripen, the kererū feast and become heavy – easier to harvest. Around the same time, the piharau (lamprey eel) begins its run. Both were vital food sources and powerful symbols of Puanga.

Like Matariki, Puanga is a time of reflection. We look back on the year, honour our loved ones who've passed, let go of burdens, and prepare to begin again. Some kōrero tuku iho speak of Te Rua o Puanga, a lake that disappears in summer and returns in winter. In its waters, on a clear night, it's

said you could see Puanga reflected – a reminder that what is above is mirrored below, here on Papatūānuku.

Puanga also signals preparation. Māra (gardens) are tended – weeds cleared, kai stored in pits or raised storehouses, and native trees like harakeke (flax) are planted. The cold season offers ideal conditions for transplanting and preparing the land. With fibres harvested during warmer months, kākahu (cloaks) and rain capes were woven to protect whānau through winter.

As physical labour slows, the mind and spirit are nurtured. Winter is a time for wānanga – to learn karakia, waiata, and whakapapa. It's a time to turn inward, reflect, and strengthen our sense of identity. Intentions are set, and our connection to te taiao (the environment) is renewed. Gratitude keeps us grounded – a gentle warmth that clears the mind and steadies the heart through the darker months.

Puanga is also linked to procreation. Our ancestors saw winter as a time for closeness, warmth, and the continuation of whakapapa. Puanga's three daughters – Poananā, Tahumate, and Pikiarero – are remembered in the night sky and in the blooming clematis flower. Their appearance on the earth signals the end of winter and the arrival of new life.

So while Matariki may be the more familiar name, Puanga carries just as much wisdom – guiding us through a sacred cycle of release, renewal, and readiness. Though observed at a slightly different time, with slightly different ceremonial practices, the essence remains closely aligned.

Matariki mā Puanga offers a beautiful and inclusive perspective to honour in this year's Matariki holiday celebrations – proudly hosted by my iwi, Ngāti Rangī.

 Words by
Billie Hunter

30 ISSUES IN AND WE'RE JUST GETTING STARTED!

Over the past three years, we have worked non-stop to publish Coromind, a monthly celebration of the people and places that make this rohe (region) so special. Every issue has been crafted to reflect the best of our communities. And when you do good mahi (work) with heart, the right people show up – readers, businesses, organisations, and collaborators who believe that good things grow when we uplift one another.

What's clear now is that Coromind is more than a magazine. We're a platform. One that produces and promotes events, partners with incredible creatives and businesses, and offers an online outlet where the world can see what makes our corner of Aotearoa NZ so unique – and feel inspired to visit, support, and celebrate it.



Here's just a glimpse of what we've been up to recently:

- **Aladdin Jr.** – Our partnership with Mercury Bay Performing Arts brought Disney's Aladdin Jr. to the stage in Whitianga, featuring 55 young performers, 13 crew members, and a strong lineup of local sponsors. Tickets sold out halfway through the season, with 1,000 attendees and a waiting list of 200+.
- **Sip & Paint at the Coroglen Tavern** – We teamed up with the Coroglen Tavern for a sold-out Mother's Day event hosted by artists (and mother-daughter duo) Emma Evangeline and Ali Gustafson.
- **Coromind ArtWorks** – Our first pop-up art gallery in Whitianga featured five collaborative exhibitions, 50+ artists, and live music from solo acts, bands, and DJs on a SHURE-powered stage.

What's Coming Next:

- **Coro Cine Film Festival** – We've partnered with Mercury Twin Cinemas to bring another film celebration from 22nd to 24th August, showcasing shorts and features from local legends.
- **Coromandel Open Studios Art Tour** – This October, we're teaming up with one of the region's most iconic art trails. Over 30 artists will open their studios across Coromandel Town for two weekends of art, kōrero, and connection.
- **Coromind Online Store** – Launching soon! Local deals, exclusive merch, eats, attractions, and top-quality threads from our own brand – all in one place.
- **Festival Collabs** – We've already brought mural artists and live painting to the Coro Classic and Coro Summer Fest. Plans are underway to make next summer even bigger.
- **The Studio** – We are also in the final stage of building a creative studio for video production, photography, podcasting, and music – a space for our community to create, share, and thrive.

None of this would be possible without you – our community, our readers, and the amazing local businesses who choose to advertise with us and align their brand with our kaupapa. Thank you for your support, belief, and enthusiasm.

Every project we take on is about strengthening the well-being of our people and celebrating the incredible things happening in our region.

Visit www.coromind.nz to become a member and join us on this journey. And if you're a business looking to be seen – you're in the right place.



COROMIND

HERE'S TO 30 ISSUES – AND MANY MORE TO COME!

THE ULTIMATE COROMANDEL GIG GUIDE

Coromind now brings gigs and events from across the region into one place – powered by Eventfinda. From live music and exhibitions to festivals and community gatherings, our guide at Coromind.nz helps you stay in the loop.

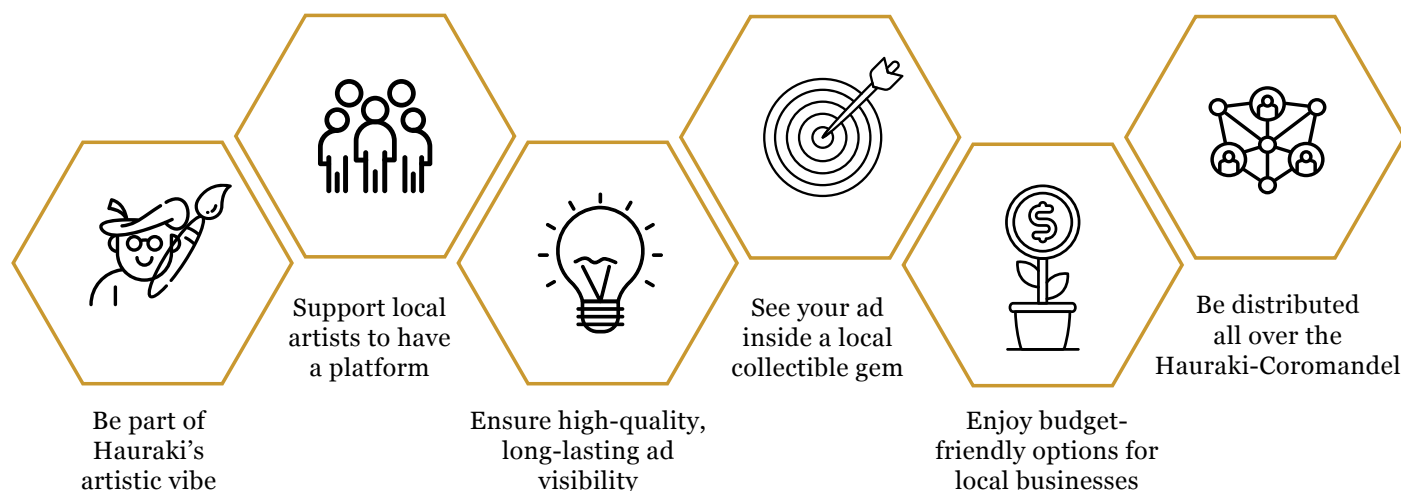
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Contents

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- 5 Cindy Alger
- 8 Language Learning Made Simple
6 Proven Methods to Make Language Learning Easier
- 10 Intrepid Women of Thames
Stories from the Gold Rush Era
- 12 The Power of Conscious Energy Healing
Exploring the Life Force Within and its Role in Well-Being
- 14 Connected or excluded?
Digital Inequality and its Impact on Social Inclusion
- 15 Weaving Against Silence
Sandy Gaskell and the Art of Kākahu that Speaks
- 18 Proud to be Local
Monica Harris
- 19 Ross' Ramblings
Wars and Women in Southeast Asia
- 22 Meet Hauraki-Coromandel's Rare Species
And How You Can Protect Them
- 24 Coromind Games
- 25 Winter Skin Survival Guide
Your Best Skin – Without the Guesswork
- 26 Plumbing that Keeps Up with Your Lifestyle
Leak-Free, Stress-Free, and Beach-Day Ready!
- 28 Coromandel Watchdog of Hauraki
Coromandel/Hauraki Too Precious to Mine
- 29 The Three Fried Bread and a Doughnut
Matariki Art Exhibition in Kūaotunu

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June 2025 - Coromind magazine is published by Flock Media Group

Readers' contributions of letters and articles are welcome. Publication of these is at the discretion of the editorial team and may be edited. Contributions will only be considered for the publication with the author's full name, residential address, and contact number. Opinions expressed in Coromind magazine are not necessarily those of the publishers.

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In our previous issue, we misspelled the name of the lovely Eggsentric Café in the Wāhi Tukurua article. Read the full story at: coromind.nz/from-coffee-to-conservation-how-eggsentric-cafe-champions-waste-free-living/



Featured Artist CINDY ALGER

Impressionist, quirky, cartoon-like painter and sculptor Cindy Alger was born and raised in Coromandel. She graduated from the Elam School of Fine Arts – Auckland University in 1990 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts. She has continued to paint and sculpt for the past 38 years while raising three children. Her work celebrates rural life but often has an underlying conservation or social message with a particular passion against gold mining on the Coromandel Peninsula. On average, Cindy paints around 20 paintings per year, but has aimed at ensuring her paintings are priced to be accessible to collectors who may not have big budgets as she believes that art is for everybody. She has illustrated children's books and did a 19-year stint illustrating a Moon Gardening Calendar. Her earthy values and passion for sustainable living and herbal medicine have greatly influenced her style and chosen subjects. Her works appeal to gardeners and people who enjoy the outdoors in particular.

"I have recently been revisiting another series on dreamscapes. People find these paintings very relaxing and conducive to a restful sleep when hung in bedrooms. I've also been making authentic replicas of indigenous American dreamcatcher mobiles. These offer a culturally sensitive spiritual cleansing in a bedroom. I avoid toxic pigments and mediums wherever possible".

Cindy has continued to make caravan murals and is open to more commissions for producing large bespoke in situ works and manages to complete these works on a tight budget and within a reasonable time. In addition, she creates clay garden sculptures using locally sourced Coromandel clay and firing in potter and sculptor Kay Ogilvie's kiln. Cindy's work will be available to see on the upcoming Open Studios Arts Tour, where she will be exhibiting with fellow artists Genevieve Morley and Natasha Armstrong Hunter. Her latest works will be available to view at Ashley Thor's new art gallery which will be opening soon in Coromandel Town. Over the last 35 years, she has shown her art in various art galleries New Zealand wide, including Lopdell House, Christchurch City Art Gallery and the Auckland Museum. If you are interested in knowing more, you can contact Cindy on 0210772595.

Words by
Genevieve Morley



Discover more through
Cindy Alger's video

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Language Learning Made Simple

6 Proven Methods to Make Language Learning Easier

Whether you're a first-time language learner or an experienced polyglot, the language learning process always comes with its own unique challenges. Luckily, you can apply some excellent language-learning tips and strategies to make the journey a little easier.

1. Accept the challenges that come with learning a new language

Nobody becomes fluent in a new language overnight, and it is so common to see language learners get frustrated because they haven't got this right or that perfect, or because things are taking longer than expected. Learning a new language means making mistakes, forgetting and relearning things, mixing words up, and so on.

The reality is that learning to speak a new reo (language) will take as long as it's going to take, so just keep at it each day. A mate told me once that "the only way to eat an elephant is one piece at a time."

2. Be conscious of what motivates you

Being aware of what drives you is a valuable tool for achieving any goal in life, and it applies to language learning too.

At some point during the language learning process, your enthusiasm and energy levels will drop, and you might lose interest, albeit temporarily, so remember why you chose to learn the language. Go back to what inspired you and see if you can reignite that spark.

Knowing what motivates you helps to keep you on track towards the overarching goal. What motivates us changes over time as well, so if you've completely lost the spark to learn, don't quit. You can find a new motivator instead.

3. Your environment is more important than a study book

It's common to believe that knowledge comes from studying books. While reading skills are essential (especially if your target language has a different writing system), bookwork doesn't stimulate the areas of the brain responsible for speech production and listening comprehension.

You need to spend as much time with the actual living language as possible, not with books about it. Where possible, surround yourself with speakers of your target language, even if you can't speak it yet. Your ears will adjust to the different speech patterns, and you will hear the language in context, learning real-world uses that are much easier to remember.

Grammar books are great for learning the basic grammar, but it's essential that learners graduate to immersion and speaking quickly. This fast-tracks learning progress and reduces the number of errors second-language speakers hold onto.

4. Make it personal

Use your newly learned language at the end of each day (or anytime during the day!) to say something funny, creative, expressive, or personal. Relating language to yourself in a personal, honest, and fun way will help you attach meaning and emotion to the words, cementing them in your mind faster.

5. Build specific vocabulary lists targeting what YOU want

Practice this step after learning some of the language's basics to ensure you get all the vital things first. Once you have acquired some of the most commonly used nouns, adjectives, verbs, etc. (or whichever word classes that exist in the language), try writing a list of 100 words YOU want to learn. Think of your hobbies, preferred professions, favourite animals, foods, music, and more.

One way to approach this is to convert your life, activities, and daily routines into your target language. Once you have learned your list, move on to using these words in phrases and real-life contexts to make the language a part of your everyday experience. This step requires a conscious effort, but once the routine is formed you won't be able to help yourself.

6. Don't expect an app to be all that you need

Apps are great because you can take them anywhere and practise anytime. However, just like learning from a textbook, you need face-to-face speaking experience to really stimulate the production and reception areas of the brain. So, apps and textbooks are great for basic grammar and structural stuff but always need to accompany speaking and learning in person.

In summary, language learning can be challenging, but it is challenging for all of us. All it takes is a bit every day, chipping away at it. Find what motivates you, bring your language into your daily life, and see if you can join a community of like-minded learners or speakers of the language.

Words by
Matt Bowden

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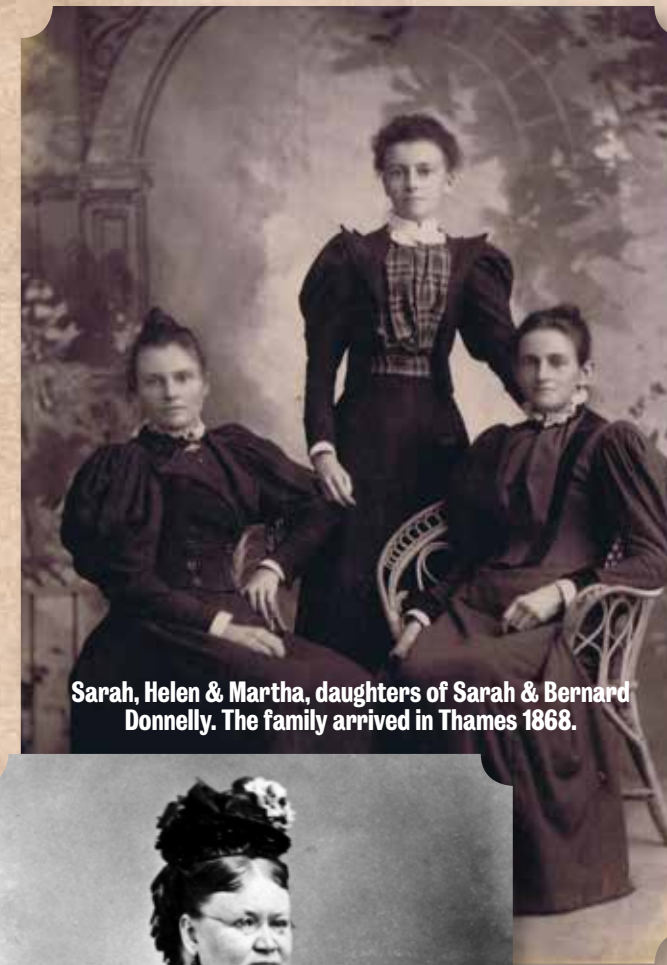
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INTREPID WOMEN OF THAMES

Stories from the Gold Rush Era



Sarah, Helen & Martha, daughters of Sarah & Bernard Donnelly. The family arrived in Thames 1868.



Mary Ann Colclough

Kate Twohill

The women who settled in Thames during the gold rush of 1867 came from a variety of backgrounds and circumstances, which influenced their standing in the community. All classes were drawn to the goldfields by the prospect of striking it rich!

A woman's life on the goldfields was hard, primitive living conditions and a sense of isolation adding to their burdens. Unsealed roads, limited access to safe drinking water and rudimentary sanitation made life difficult, and the ever-present noise of the stamper batteries crushing the quartz to extract the gold would have added to the stress of life on the goldfields.

Despite the challenges, women came into their own; they established businesses, were shareholders, nurses, dressmakers, entertainers, and more. Women were often involved in the provision of food and accommodation, like Mrs Cole of Brown Street Grahamstown who sold oysters, pies and coffee; Mrs Norbury and Mrs Hodge, as listed in the 1892 Wisers directory, who ran their own grocery shops; and Elizabeth Brown, who owned the Diggers Restaurant. Other women supplemented their income by providing board and lodging in private homes. There were women publicans in Thames, such as Sarah Jane Vaughan who was the proprietress of the Queen's Hotel, corner of Albert and Queen Streets; however, many women, like Kate Twohill of the Brian Boru, ran hotels alongside their husbands.

The women of Thames whose transgressions brought them before the courts were condemned, not only because of their so-called crimes and antisocial behaviour, but because they did not conform to the image of a 'respectable' woman. Other women brought their troubles into the public arena for reasons such as desertion, abuse, the need for financial support for themselves and their children, control of property and earnings, and divorce.

Philanthropic work came to the fore during the harsh early days on the goldfields. The Hauraki Ladies' Benevolent Society was founded in December 1869 to raise funds and dispense charity. Eliza Sophia Mackay was elected the first president and treasurer, and Kate Macdonald her deputy.

Mary Leavitt of Boston, Massachusetts was sent to New Zealand in 1885 by the Women's Christian Temperance Union of America. One of the first places she visited was Thames, the union's objective being to totally ban the sale of liquor. In March 1885, the Thames branch of the WCTU was established with Mary Ann Stone, as president and Miss James as secretary/treasurer. Social reformers argued that alcohol caused poverty, ill-health, abuse, neglect and social and economic instability.

Education was considered an important part of life on the goldfields, and schools sprang up all over town. Private schools were available to the children of the more affluent families of Thames, Miss Isobella Cary being one of the first teachers to start a school for ladies in 1869. Another teacher of note was Miss Sarah Gott, who taught at Tararu School for 26 years. Thames Museum, Te Whare Taonga o te Kauaeranga, is honoured to be caretakers of the plaque raised in Miss Gott's memory. A number of teachers in Thames held university degrees, and applications for teaching positions came from around New Zealand and overseas. Mary Ann Colclough, who was a teacher in Thames from 1873-74, actively upheld the rights of women, and wrote many letters under the nom-de-plume of 'Polly Plum' to Auckland and local newspapers.

The women of Thames, and the men who supported their cause, heeded the franchise message. On the 19th September 1893, Governor Lord Glasgow signed a new Electoral Act into law, New Zealand becoming the first self-governing country in the world to grant women the right to vote in parliamentary elections.

There are women residing in Thames today whose ancestors came to the goldfields with hope in their hearts, and a pioneering spirit; relentless in their courage, they stayed to raise future generations, names forever recorded in the annals of this place they called the Thames.



Words by

Robyn Pearce

Volunteer of Thames Museum

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The Power of Conscious Energy Healing

Exploring the life force within and its role in wellbeing

Ancient spiritual traditions and modern quantum physics each suggest everything in the universe including humans is composed of vibrating energy. This energy field, often referred to as the 'life force', Ka (an ancient Egyptian term) or 'chi', flows through and around us, created by us and for us. The core belief of conscious energy healing is that we are all made up of energy and the mind, body, and soul are interconnected.

When this life force energy is balanced and flowing freely, individuals typically experience health and vitality. However, when someone has been traumatised, has unresolved emotional pain or does not feel love or connection with the people around them, then their Ka, or life force, becomes blocked or stagnant, which can lead to physical illness, emotional distress and spiritual disconnection. Conscious energy healing seeks to restore balance, promoting harmony and well-being.

Verna Carr is an accomplished energy healing facilitator. She has been on her expansion and spiritual journey for over 30 years. She calls herself a facilitator of universal healing. "I am a conduit that allows the energy to flow to you from the universe. I can see and feel in your body where there are blockages, and why they have occurred. I direct the flow of universal energy to enable the flushing of energy and the releasing of blockages; that, plus the client's intention, brings about the healing. I am a support and guide for people to bring about their own healing. I expect the unexpected and allow what needs to happen. I often experience the most amazing things, as do the recipients."

Conscious energy healing is easy to understand and learn. No, it is not Reiki; it is similar but different. Conscious energy healing focuses on the strong relationship between the soul, mind and body. Your energy field, Ka or life force is living, dynamic and ever-changing, recognising that beliefs, thoughts, feelings and actions affect

your life and create your reality. A component of the healing process involves teaching that thoughts are powerful and can be trained to work for you, not against you, enabling you to make better choices, therefore living a life of peace and joy.

Verna is offering to teach conscious energy healing in weekend workshops. These workshops provide a comprehensive introduction to energy healing techniques that can be used for personal well-being and to help others. You will learn, facilitate, and receive healing. Guided by an experienced practitioner, you will get to practise hands-on techniques, ask questions, engage in discussion and meet with other like-minded people who are conscious and spiritually aware. In a safe, supportive environment, you are encouraged to develop psychic, spiritual and healing gifts. You will also receive a manual to take home with you to support your continued practice after the workshop ends.

If you want to learn more about Verna or spirituality, then go to her website:

vernacarrspiritualhealing.com and download your free 96-page PDF, Wisdom for Changing Consciousness, which explores all concepts of spirituality and consciousness.

If you would like a private healing session or would like to attend a conscious energy healing workshop, please contact:

Verna 027 320 0079 or email vernajcarr@gmail.com

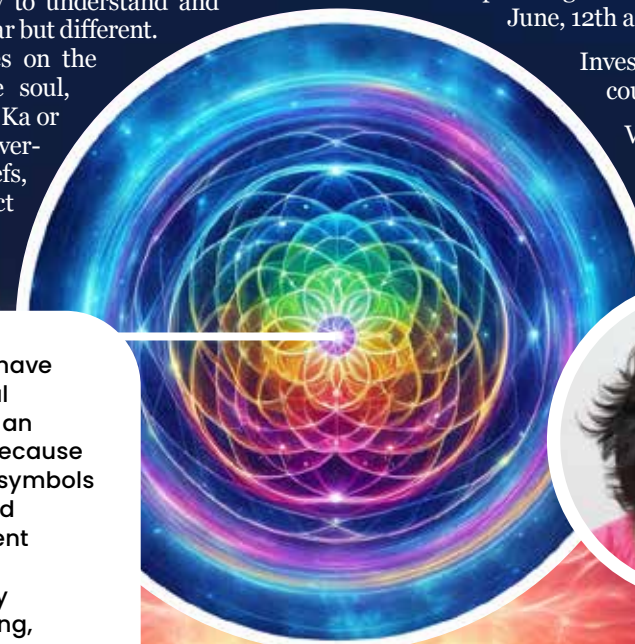
Upcoming workshops will be held on 14th and 28th June, 12th and 26th July.

Investment cost is \$350; this includes course materials and refreshments.

Verna is happy to create a bespoke workshop for small groups.

Ka is the life force energy. I have chosen the rainbow toroidal field to represent myself as an energy healing facilitator because rainbows are the universal symbols of hope, love, happiness and acceptance, and the different colours represent different frequencies. It is completely balanced and self-regulating, and always whole, continually refreshing and influencing itself. It is a perfect self-organising system and the primary pattern for life.

When your torus field is healthy and spinning in all directions with no obstruction, this generates an infinite amount of energy, vitality and life force – creating inner balance and raising your vibration.



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BEYOND THE CLICK SERIES

CONNECTED OR EXCLUDED?

DIGITAL INEQUALITY AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIAL INCLUSION

In today's world, having digital skills and internet access is essential for staying connected and being involved. But not everyone has the same opportunities to participate in this digital landscape, and the 'digital divide' can seriously affect a person's sense of belonging – both online and in the real world.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, four large-scale surveys of New Zealanders found that digital proficiency leads to a feedback loop that increases feelings of belonging and participation in both online and offline contexts. But this sense of belonging and participation is not universal: for example, about 91% of households have internet access, but this number drops significantly to less than 60% for people living in poverty, in rural areas, in social housing, elderly people or those with disabilities.

The rising costs of devices, data plans, and other tech can put pressure on families and make it harder for everyone to stay connected. For children growing up without reliable internet, this can mean fewer opportunities to develop the digital skills that are now a basic requirement for so many areas of life, from schoolwork to job applications. It's not just a matter of convenience; it's about having access to the same opportunities as everyone else.

Online communities strengthen social connections, provide support, and offer a sense of belonging. Whether it's participating in gaming forums, social media groups, hobby sites or online marketplaces, digital spaces allow people to share experiences, find information, buy products or connect with others who have similar interests.

When people don't have digital access, they miss out on these interactions, which is particularly concerning when it comes to children. Research shows that growing up with limited digital access affects the ability of kids to participate fully in civic life or access essential digital resources for education, healthcare or employment. It creates a cycle of exclusion that can be hard to break, making it more challenging for them to thrive later in life.

Access isn't just about being able to go online. It's also about digital literacy – having the skills and confidence to navigate online spaces, find the right information, and advocate for yourself. People who have digital literacy skills can confidently engage in online discussions, make their voices heard, and be more active members of their communities. Those without digital literacy are more likely to be sidelined, and their perspectives are less likely to be represented.

While most schools have strong digital literacy programs, many older New Zealanders struggle with digital tech. Community based programs like SeniorNet aim to bridge that gap. Addressing these inequalities means going beyond providing devices or internet connections. It's about creating supportive environments where people can build the skills they need to confidently use digital spaces. This could mean offering more digital literacy programmes and creating policies that ensure equitable access for everyone.

The issue of access isn't just limited to skills or physical devices either. Most major digital platforms are dominated by English and reflect Western worldviews. For people whose primary language isn't English, this can be a major barrier to participation. In New Zealand, for example, te reo Māori – one of the country's official languages – is often underrepresented on public media sites. Additionally, many online discussions and platforms focus on Western views of success, happiness, and what's considered 'normal'. These ideas can ignore indigenous perspectives or other ways of looking at the world. When your culture's language and beliefs are silenced, the effect is feeling excluded from public conversations and, in a way, from society.

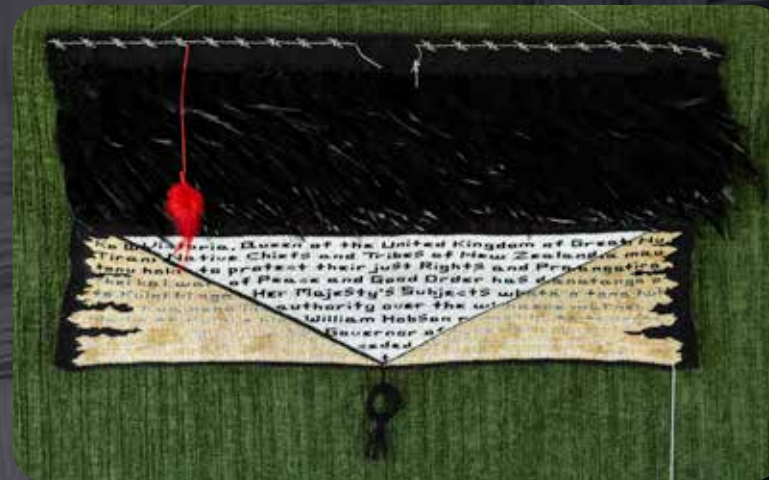
Digital belonging is just as important as belonging anywhere else. Feeling like you can participate and be included in online spaces is crucial for your overall well-being and sense of social inclusion. Whether it's by ensuring access, supporting digital literacy, or championing the inclusion of different languages and worldviews, we need to demand digital spaces that reflect the richness of our offline lives. Doing so will help us create a more connected, informed, and inclusive society, where everyone has a place to belong – online and off.

Words by
Stella Pennell



WEAVING AGAINST SILENCE

Sandy Gaskell and the Art of Kākahu that Speaks



Ko Putauaki tōna maunga. Ko Tarawera tōna awa.
Ko Matātua tōna waka. Ko Ngāti Awa tōna iwi. Ko
Sandy Gaskell tōna ingoa.

From her home in Whitianga, where her roots run deep through generations of family, Sandy Gaskell has been quietly and powerfully expressing stories of Aotearoa through the intricate, absorbing world of te whatu kākahu.

Only four years into her weaving journey, Sandy's work already holds a strong voice. She began with kahu huruhuru – feather cloaks – as taonga for loved ones, but soon felt the pull to create pieces that speak to a broader historical truth. “I am inspired by historical events which have greatly impacted Māori,” she says. “Art allows me to express views about things that may still be difficult for many to talk about.”

Her work brings together traditional Māori weaving techniques with contemporary materials, not only for aesthetic effect but also to underscore the tensions and truths she explores. One recent piece, No. 8 Wire, uses familiar and loaded imagery to question the legacy of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. “Te Tiriti, perhaps the first example of Kiwi No. 8 wire ingenuity – a quick fix, a practical solution – here it is woven, barbed and broken,” she explains. The piece is a quiet protest: layered with tāniko, feathers, discarded quills and faded documents. “While the ink fades on arguably NZ's most important document, new laws are written and woven into our society – often without care for the meaning and mana of Te Tiriti.”

Sandy doesn't call herself a full-time artist. She and her husband Eric have run Fun Zone Adventure Park in Whitianga for many years, raising their children and now enjoying their mokopuna. Yet the weaving has carved a meaningful place in her life. “Learning te whatu kākahu was an honour,” she reflects. “And I felt an obligation to learn more about the culture and history of Aotearoa.” That learning deepened her interest in colonisation, the New Zealand Land Wars, and the long shadow cast by land confiscations.

Her most treasured early works were deeply personal. Mere, made in honour of her Great Great Grandmother Mereteuia of Ngāti Awa, was gifted to her daughter Stacey. Another, Ngā Tama o Te Ngahere (Sons of the Forest), was woven for her son

Daniel. “I wove 27 generations of our lineage into the tāniko,” she shares. “It was quite an emotional journey. These taonga will be passed through the generations, hopefully keeping the memory and history of our whakapapa alive.”

This deep care for legacy is woven through all her pieces, whether personal or public. Her art isn't about nostalgia – it's about preserving knowledge and provoking thought. “Art can retain a connection, understanding, or bring knowledge of a history which need not be forgotten.”

In 2024, Sandy's piece Mō Te Aroha Ki Te Whenua (For the Love of Land), which speaks to the loss of life and whenua during the Land Wars, was named a finalist at the Molly Morpeth Canaday Awards. And in 2025, her work No. 8 Wire won the Māori Art Award at the prestigious 11th Hibiscus Coast Art Awards, judged by Holly Aymes and Dina Jezdic. Though she is modest about such recognition, both honours reflect the strength and significance of her artistic voice.

Her connection to Whitianga, where her whānau has lived since the 1800s, runs deep – but her creative spark reaches even further back. “My creativity doesn't come from this place alone,” she explains. “It comes from our shared history, from the impact colonisation has had on tangata whenua. This is what interests me most.”

We were lucky to feature Sandy in the Coromind ArtWorks pop-up gallery this past summer. Her work brought so much life and mana to the space – drawing people in, inviting reflection, and reminding us that art can be a bridge between past and present, beauty and truth.

What's next for Sandy? She says she's waiting for the ‘ahhhh moment’ – the spark that leads to her next piece. “Inspiration can't be forced,” she says. “Weaving takes time – and I'd be happy creating just one meaningful work a year.”

For Sandy Gaskell, weaving is a way of holding memory, shining light on uncomfortable truths, and keeping whakapapa alive.

Words by
Leonardo Magri

Photos by
Karen McLeod
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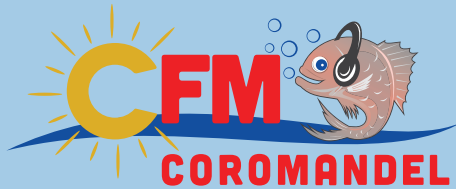


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PROUD TO BE LOCAL

Monica Harris

WHAT ARE YOUR FAMILY LINKS WITH MERCURY BAY?

My parents, Rob and Debbie Harris, moved to Whitianga in 2001 for my dad's work with Hopper Construction on the Waterways development. Mum owned and ran Mercury Bay Pharmacy from 2004 to 2017. I grew up in Whiti with my twin sister Ainsley, and our older sisters Carly and Rochelle.

WHERE ARE YOU LIVING NOW? HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN THERE?

I'm currently living in Los Angeles. I moved to join my partner here just a few weeks before the pandemic hit in March 2020 – definitely an interesting time to relocate overseas! We've been based in Venice Beach ever since. I love the feel of Venice – it has a small-town vibe and an eclectic, creative community.

One of my favorite hobbies is cycling down the beach bike path to Manhattan and Hermosa Beach, or up north toward Malibu. Sadly, the northern stretch of the path and nearby hiking trails are still closed after the devastating January wildfires that tore through Pacific Palisades and Malibu. Although we were safely about 14km away, it was frightening, from our neighborhood, to see massive flames engulfing homes and businesses.

WHEN DID YOU LIVE IN THE COROMANDEL? WHICH SCHOOLS DID YOU ATTEND, AND FOR HOW LONG?

I lived in Whiti from age 3 to 17, before moving away for university. I last lived there in 2015, but would still come home each summer after that. These days, I try to visit at least once a year – it's a bit more of a commute now!

I went to MBAS from Year 1 through Year 13. We had some incredible school trips. One of the highlights was our Year 7 camp to Great Barrier Island. Mr. Morgan coordinated local charter boats and launches to get us there. It's still a camp we talk about today.

WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING SINCE SCHOOL?

After a few years working at New World after school and waitressing during summers, I moved to Wellington to study at Victoria University. I juggled uni with catering jobs – from delivery driver to office assistant to coordinator – and made lifelong friends, great memories, and met my now-partner. I'd return to Whiti in the summers to see family and friends, and work in the kitchen with the amazing crew at Blue Ginger.

After graduating, I stayed in Wellington for another year before moving to the US. I've been finding my way and exploring as much of the country as possible. I've had all sorts of jobs – waitressing on the Venice Boardwalk, working at a friend's sourdough bakery, and stints at a few

restaurant-tech startups – before landing my current role at Calm, the meditation and sleep app.

HAVE YOU BEEN BACK TO THE COROMANDEL RECENTLY? IMPRESSIONS?

Whiti's definitely grown since I last lived there, but it still feels like home. I admire the energy the next generation of business owners is bringing – it's awesome to see new places popping up to serve the community.

WHAT ARE YOUR FONDEST MEMORIES OF THE COROMANDEL?

All my childhood memories are tied to growing up in the Coromandel – fishing off the Whitianga wharf, getting ice creams in Kūaotunu, surfcasting at Otama, spending hours skating and biking down School House Lane, and after-school swims at Wharekaho/Simpsons Beach. I couldn't have asked for a better place to grow up.

WHO WERE SOME OF YOUR FRIENDS IN THOSE EARLY YEARS?

Grace Balsom, Franci Mathew, Tammy Greig, Marie Everth, Rose and Edward Selby, Andrew and Michael Proctor, Matt & Grace Gordon, Patrick & Steven Ruggle. I'm still in touch with most of my friends :)

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Ron Morgan

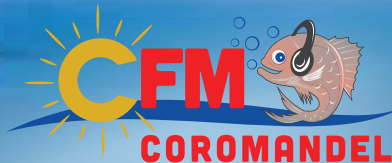
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Ross' Ramblings – Part 1

Wars and Women in Southeast Asia

In 1973, due to civil and religious unrest, travellers were advised to avoid areas of southern Thailand, so my travel buddy Nigel and I decided to head for Koh Samui Island. There were no tourists or hotels there at that time, so we stayed on the balcony of a local family's house. We spent a few days with the family who took us snorkelling and squirrel hunting. Apparently, the squirrels ate the coconuts growing in the forest and had to be shot.

One day we walked to the end of the village wharf, where we met the captain and engineer of a tugboat waiting for the raft full of produce they were to tow up the Gulf of Thailand to markets in Bangkok, a week's sail away. The captain invited us aboard for a dinner of rice, fish and chilli vegetables followed by several glasses of the local Mekong whiskey. A little later,

feeling very content with the world, we happily followed the captain when he beckoned us back along the wharf towards the village, where we were welcomed by a crowd of locals who guided us to two rooms, each housing a girl wearing white make-up and trying to entice us inside. We quickly realised that these were the local ladies of the night intent on a public performance with the two young white boys. "Oh dear," I thought. "How do we escape this situation, being quite tipsy and after having enjoyed the hospitality of the local tug captain and crew?" Fortunately, a kind god answered my prayer in the form of a local dog which took offence at my presence and sunk his teeth into my leg. Despite the pain and the blood, I was mightily relieved as I could escape back to the boat to access the required medicine, depriving the locals of their hoped-for entertainment.



The next day the captain offered to take us to Bangkok which entailed a journey of seven days, calling in at small coastal villages to buy provisions on the way. What an adventure. On some days we saw hundreds of brightly coloured striped sea snakes swimming on the surface, and at night flying fish, attracted by the ship's lights, would land on the deck to be scooped up by the engineer/cook who fried them Thai style to supplement our rice and veges. What feasts we had.

As we approached Bangkok, we started to encounter more and more cargo ships waiting to dock at Bangkok and when we entered the Chao Phraya River our captain said he would drop us ashore as he didn't want his boss to know about his two Kiwi hitchhikers. Thank you captain for a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

In Bangkok, Nigel and I had arranged to sleep on the floor of a hotel room occupied by two Kiwi friends, Jan and Bicky. When we arrived, we were also introduced to Gam, Bicky's new boyfriend, a giant, jovial African American who was part of the US army drug squad, who were trying to stop the export of illegal drugs to the US. It was around the end of the Vietnam war during which Bangkok was used as an R and R base for US troops during their breaks from the fighting. It is hard to imagine how those young soldiers could return to killing North Vietnamese after a few weeks partying hard in Bangkok. I am sure that, being a bit of a pacifist and not a very brave one, I would have risked court martial and deserted that army that was involved in yet another unjust and unnecessary conflict.

Thinking about the tragedy of what transpired in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, I am reminded of Anzac Day and the phrase 'Lest we forget'. I often wonder what these words really mean. They are rightly a reminder to honour the young lives that were lost at Gallipoli and subsequent wars. But should we also be reminded of the idiocy and futility of becoming involved in ill-conceived foreign wars, often involving deception and dubious motives. The Vietnam and Iraq wars are two that come to mind. But hey, what is decided in the halls of power is often kept from the general population, and after all, when all is said and done, war is good for business.

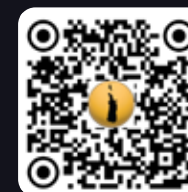
An obvious example is that of George Bush's vice president, Dick Cheney, whose former company Haliburton received \$39 billion worth of contracts during the Iraq war in the early 2000s. Could this have been a conflict of interest?

At our Bangkok hotel, there was a Thai girl called Lek who was staying with an Australian businessman who was working in Bangkok. She had nothing to do during the day while waiting for her Aussie beau to get home and sometimes we chatted around the pool. One day she asked if I would like to visit her family. "Yes, please" was my obvious answer so off we went on the bus and ended up in a poor district where her family of eight lived in a tiny two-roomed apartment. They had one room for cooking and living and the other for sleeping – her parents, grandparents, brothers, sister, and her young daughter, the offspring of an American soldier who had promised Lek the world during his R and R breaks, but had left her alone pregnant and returned to the US when the war ended. Lek supported her daughter and family with the money her Aussie companion gave her. She told me that a lot of her working girlfriends were in a similar situation, sending support money to families in distant villages. It was certainly an eye-opener and a lesson not to judge the girls who earned money like that.

Another group in Thailand that deserves recognition is the kathoey or ladyboys, or as many refer to themselves, phuying, the Thai word for women. Unlike in the US where the Trump government has declared there are only two sexes, male and female, most Thai people have a more tolerant attitude towards sexual diversity, possibly because the main religion of Buddhism teaches kindness and non-judgement, with no damnation to a Christian hell if you are gay, trans or any other sexual genre.

To be continued ...

Words by
Ross Liggins



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Meet Hauraki- Coromandel's Rare Species

For more than 80 million years, New Zealand's native species evolved without mammalian predators. Now, more than 4,000 of Aotearoa's native species are threatened or at risk of extinction. They face threats from possums, rats, stoats, other introduced predators, and habitat loss. In areas where these predators have been eradicated, nature heals, allowing native wildlife to return and recover. This is evident in many of our predator-free offshore islands, and in predator-free sanctuaries on the mainland. Meet some of the rare native species found in Hauraki-Coromandel.

Archey's frog / Kurī peke

Found: Damp forest in Coromandel, Whareorino and Pureora

Status: At Risk – Declining

Archey's frogs are living fossils, unchanged for 150 million years. Growing up to 37mm, they are New Zealand's smallest native frogs and can camouflage well. They cannot croak and communicate by scent. Their eggs hatch into fully-formed frogs, skipping the tadpole stage. Preyed on by rats, mice, pigs, stoats, possums, and cats.



© Amy Blair

Long-tailed bat / Pekapeka

Found: Throughout the mainland, including Hauraki, and offshore islands

Status: Threatened – Nationally critical

The long-tailed bat/pekapeka is one of only two surviving species of native bat – and Aotearoa's only native land mammal. They are very small, about the length of your thumb, weighing only 8–11g, and can fly at 60km/hr. They eat insects, nectar and pollen. Preyed on by rats, stoats, possums, cats and impacted by habitat loss.



© Chris Hillock

Dactylanthus taylorii / Pua o te reinga

Found: Damp forest from Northland to Wairarapa, including Hauraki

Status: At Risk – Declining

Dactylanthus is an unusual plant – Aotearoa's only indigenous fully parasitic flowering plant. It attaches to host tree roots, forming a unique fluted wooden rose. Primarily pollinated by the native short-tailed bat, its nectar attracts native insects, geckos, and birds. It is threatened by the browsing of possums, rats and pigs.



© David Mudge

Coromandel striped gecko

Found: Dense forest in Coromandel

Status: Threatened – Nationally vulnerable

The Coromandel Striped Gecko is a rare nocturnal gecko only found in the Coromandel. Grows up to 85mm with distinct stripes running down the length of its body. Preyed on by rats, cats, stoats, and pigs. Initially considered extremely rare, monitoring efforts have shown they can become common in heavily protected areas.



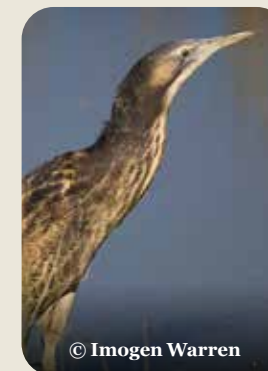
© Sabine Bernert

Australasian bittern / Matuku-hūrepo

Found: In wetlands in the North Island, Coromandel, West Coast of South Island

Status: Threatened – Nationally critical

Australasian bittern/matuku-hūrepo are highly secretive birds. Males have a distinct booming call. Mottled brown feathers help bittern blend into their wetland habitat. They hunt by sight, feeding on eels and fish. With less than 800 birds left in Aotearoa, matuku-hūrepo are threatened by introduced predators, polluted waterways and habitat loss.



© Imogen Warren

Hector's dolphin

Found: In the South Island; sightings in Thames/Coromandel, Hawke's Bay

Status: Nationally vulnerable

Hector's dolphins are one of the world's smallest dolphins, with a unique round dorsal fin. Many dolphins communicate with whistles, but Hector's dolphins use short, high-pitched clicks. They also use vision and touch, slapping their tails on the water or leaping into the air. They face threats from bycatch in fishing nets, pollution, and disease.



© Danica Stent

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- Record sightings: upload photo observations of rare species to iNaturalist.nz
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Winter Skin Survival Guide

Your Best Skin – Without the Guesswork



Let's face it – **winter on the Coromandel can be brutal for skin.** Salty winds, indoor heating, chilly mornings and (believe it or not) those sneaky UV rays all lead to one thing: a thirsty, stressed-out skin barrier.

Imagine an apple slice left out on the bench. After a while, it turns dull, dry, and wrinkly. Now picture your skin exposed to winter air without protection – losing bounce, hydration and glow day after day.

So, how do we keep that juicy, fresh-skin glow alive in winter?

1. SPF is your BFF (Yes, even in winter)

Heads up ... UV rays don't hibernate. Even on cold, grey days, **UVA rays (the ageing ones)** are still active – causing invisible damage that shows up as pigmentation, fine lines, and dullness.

It's like a microwave – you don't see it happening, but your skin's still getting cooked.

Our advice? **Wear SPF daily.** A lightweight, broad-spectrum sunscreen is your non-negotiable – even in winter.

2. Hydration Starts on the Surface

Enter **DMK Hydroloc** – our winter skin hero. This occlusive cream acts like glad wrap for your skin – sealing in moisture and shielding your barrier from dehydration (Transepidermal Water Loss – TEWL). It's rich, nourishing, and packed with protective oils that dry, flaky or sensitive skin will love.

Still unsure? Picture two plates of leftovers in the fridge – one with glad wrap, one without. You know which one looks better.

3. Winter Is Prime Time for Advanced Skin Treatments

Winter isn't the time to hibernate – it's the perfect season to transform your skin. Less sun = better recovery and stronger results.

At Pamper Me MediSpa, our most popular winter treatments include:

- **Laser Genesis** – to target redness, texture, and collagen loss
- **Dermal Needling** – to stimulate collagen and improve fine lines, texture, and pigmentation
- **Laser Therapies** – to treat pigmentation, diffuse redness, and target vascular capillaries

- **DMK Advanced Enzyme Therapy** – corrective, restorative, and brilliant for deep revision and barrier repair

- **DMK RP Peel** – a powerful 10–14 day skin reset; it comes with downtime – but the results are worth it

Short on time? We also offer mini clinical facials – no discomfort, no downtime – ideal for results-driven, time-conscious clients.

4. Three Skin Tips You Can Start Today:

- **Avoid over-exfoliating** – in winter, less is more; focus on feeding and repairing your skin

- **Add a barrier-support serum** – think ceramides, vitamin E, or beta glucan for resilience and skin immunity

- **Hydrate from within** – water helps, but omega-3 and omega-6 fats are essential

The **key omegas** for skin:

- **Omega-3** – calms inflammation, hydrates, and supports barrier repair

- **Omega-6** – locks in moisture and helps heal and strengthen skin

Whether you're a beach regular or curled up by the fire, your skin deserves support this winter.

We're here to educate, personalise, and empower you to love the skin you're in.

Visit us in Thames for a complimentary skin chat, book a professional skin scan, or simply explore what's possible.

Your Skin, Our Passion - Backed by Industry Awards and Proven Results.

 Words by
Pauline De Thierry

SKN | Pamper Me MediSpa
info@pamper-me.co.nz
www.pamper-me.co.nz
537 Pollen Street, Thames

Plumbing that Keeps Up with Your Lifestyle

LEAK-FREE, STRESS-FREE, AND BEACH-DAY READY!

Whether you're living in the Coromandel full-time or just making the most of your bach during the sunny season, one thing's for sure – your plumbing needs to be ready for anything! And with water now being charged by volume in much of the Hauraki-Coromandel region, even a sneaky little drip can end up costing big.

That's where we come in! With over 20 years of hands-on experience, the Matarangi Plumbing team knows how to keep your plumbing running at its best – especially in coastal environments where salt air, moisture, and everyday wear can take their toll on your pipes and fixtures.

It's all about staying one step ahead:

For permanent residents, it means peace of mind, fewer surprises, and systems that just work.

For Bach owners, it's rolling in for a weekend away without being greeted by funky smells, soggy surprises, or a call from the neighbour saying there's water pouring down the driveway!

Did you know?

Coastal homes are exposed to unique environmental pressures like salt air, moisture, and changing temperatures. All of which can wear down your plumbing over time. Regular checks and leak detection aren't just about saving water; they help protect your home from hidden damage and costly repairs down the track.

Here's a few of our quick tips to keep you ahead of the game:

Be prepared for all elements

Coromandel weather can turn in a flash! We can help set you up with storm-safe drainage, shut-off know-how, and smart systems that cope when the weather doesn't.

Make it a habit to check your plumbing for leaks

That tiny drip could turn into a not-so-tiny water bill. So, give your Hot Water Cylinder and taps a quick once-over every few months.

Know your plumbing

If you don't know where your main water valve is, or when your plumbing was last checked – it's time for a general check-up.

Time for maintenance

Just like your car, your plumbing needs regular maintenance to keep everything running smoothly! Small issues like leaks, slow drains, or low water pressure can turn into big (and expensive) problems if left unchecked. Let's catch those sneaky issues before they catch you!

Whether you're here all year or just for the holidays, we'll tailor our advice to suit how **YOU** use your home. With expert knowledge, friendly service, and good old-fashioned local know-how, **Matarangi Plumbing** is here to help you stay stress-free and water-wise.



Give us a call – your trusted **Master Plumbers** across Matarangi, Whitianga and the wider Coromandel region. And don't forget to follow us on Facebook for monthly tips, tricks, and plumbing know-how!

Website | www.matarangiplumbing.co.nz

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COROMANDEL /HAURAKI TOO PRECIOUS TO MINE

Gold prices are high, and big companies are coming to our area planning to extract it. They aim to mine in and under the forests and mountains – and, as seen in Waihi, even beneath our homes.

Most locals want to protect freshwater, forests, and communities long-term, not be left with a legacy of toxic waste. While we have protected areas north of Kopu/ Hikuai from open cast mining with the Schedule 4 (open cast mining ban) for the past 20 years, mining companies now propose another pit at Waihi and mining under homes and a new mine in conservation land.

Economic risks and threats from mining

- Minimal Returns** 2% royalty and many tax breaks make it economically insignificant even if royalties increased.
- Jobs – for how long?** Mining isn't sustainable and automation could replace miners.
- Offshore profits** Billions in gold went offshore. Despite decades of mining, Waihi faces deprivation and toxic risks.
- Environmental economy** The environment IS the economy - you cannot buy it back!

Fast-track law, RMA changes and our right to be heard

The Government changed the law so companies can Fast-track mining, overriding other laws. OceanaGold applied to Fast-track the Waihi North Project meaning only 'expert panels' and Ministers decide. There will be limited iwi input and no public consultation. Our concerns and local knowledge will be excluded. Proposed RMA changes will also exclude hapū, iwi and limit public participation.

Who are the mining companies?

OceanaGold, RuaGold, Mineralogy, New Talisman Gold, Zealandia and Otagold are foreign-owned miners (mainly Canadian/Australian) focused on shareholder profit. Some cause serious overseas damage while promising offsets like pest control, yet use fossil fuels to blast under homes of at-risk species and communities.

About Coromandel Watchdog of Hauraki

Our group has protected the area from gold mining damage for 45+ years. We support local groups from Kūaotunu, Coromandel, Whenūakite, Karangāhake, Whangamatā, Thames Coast, Thames, Pāeroa and beyond. We are local people with positive vision. We support mining e-waste to reuse gold and minerals instead of digging up land.

For more information,
please visit our website:
www.watchdog.org.nz





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UNDERGROUND MINING - THREATS AND RISKS:

Environmental

- Toxic legacy** Heavy metals from gold extraction remain toxic for generations in huge earth dams behind Waihi.
- Blasting under homes** Underground blasting causes land subsidence and disturbs endangered Pepeketua (Archey's Frogs).
- Water depletion** Underground mining requires "dewatering" tunnels, affecting aquifers and surface water. Heavy metal leachate threatens future water supplies.
- Tourism impact** People come to experience the environment, not mining degradation.
- Historical contamination** Communities will pay for cleanup. We already have 100+ years of polluted mine waste. The Ōhinemuri River turned orange from heavy metals, with arsenic affecting watercress and tuna.

Top left: Beautiful river in the threatened Pāraikiwai forest. Photograph courtesy of Coromandel Watchdog **Top right:** Ōhinemuri river polluted by old Comstock Mine leachate, Aug 2024. Photograph courtesy of Coromandel Watchdog **Above left:** Pepeketua (Archey's Frog) under threat. Photography by Ian Preece **Above right:** Protest against gold mining, Thames, Oct 2024. Photography by Gaysorn Thavat

THE THREE FRIED BREAD AND A DOUGHNUT

Matariki Art Exhibition in Kūaotunu

This Matariki, three unapologetically Māori voices—Jason Tahatika, Roimata Taimana, and Walter Baker—bring bold, powerful new work to Kūaotunu in a special exhibition titled The Three Fried Bread and a Doughnut. Their creativity calls us to reflect, remember, and connect.

Through carving, painting, digital illustration, and pen-and-paper, the artists offer a deeply personal lens on what Matariki means to them and their communities. Visitors can expect a journey of light and shadow, whakapapa and whenua, loss and renewal—delivered with aroha and intention.

Coromind is proud to support and partner with the artists for this exhibition, helping share their voices and stories more widely across our rohe.

We had the chance to kōrero with the artists, who shared some of the thinking behind their pieces for the show.

Roimata Taimana says, “I’ll be bringing two pieces that express what I see Matariki to represent for me—the connection between the stars, the whenua, and us.” Raised without much exposure to these traditions, he describes the beauty of learning later in life. “To understand what sits in the sky above year after year, and what it represents, reveals how our ancestors read the heavens. It’s about

new beginnings, the prospects of the year ahead, and acknowledging those who’ve passed.”

Jason Tahatika’s pieces focus on light—as symbol, story, and guide. “Each work is a reminder that even in darkness, light shines through—helping us navigate the past, celebrate the present, and look forward with strength and unity.” He adds, “Matariki brings people together to reflect, remember, and start again. While I’m still learning the deeper meanings and traditions, each year I gain more understanding and respect for what it represents.”

Walter Baker, a Māori artist working across carving, digital art, and painting, shares: “I will be bringing a range of different mediums within a te ao Māori view—from canvas to rākau. Matariki means to me a time of celebration—yes, Māori New Year—but for myself, it’s also a time to be creative, with a window of past, present, and future. Matariki provides this space for me.”

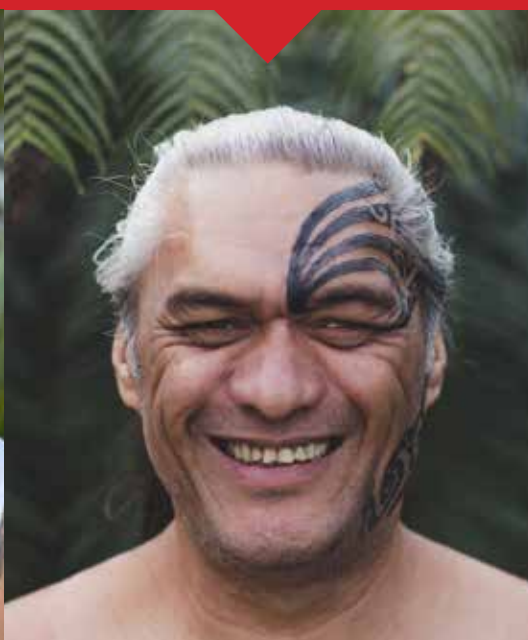
Come join us to celebrate the spirit of Matariki through creativity and kōrero.

The Three Fried Bread and a Doughnut will be held at 1 Irishtown Road, Kūaotunu from 10am to 4pm on the 20th, 21st, and 22nd of June.

WALTER BAKER

ROIMATA TAIMANA

JASON TAHATIKA



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