

Matariki

He Tikinga Mahara

Mahia kaitiaki remembered

OBITUARY

THE Mahia community are mourning the loss of one of their champions and a staunch advocate of Rongomaiwahine iwi, Te Paia Sophie Dodd QSM, who passed away suddenly on Easter Sunday in April.

Te Paia Saphire (Sophie) June Dodd nee Cracknell known as Sophie to many, was born in 1942 to parents mother, Maraea Cracknell nee Paeoneone and father, George Cracknell.

She was the beloved wife of the late Sam Dodd and mother of Ellen and Cheryl.

Te Paia (Sophie) was of Rongomaiwahine, Ngati Hikairo and Hinewhata descent. She was raised in Nukutaurua, living below her maunga Maungakahia where she developed a love of the ocean which later shaped her keen interest in the protection of the fisheries and the environment. She learned how to be a kaitiaki from a young age.

Sophie and her siblings gathered food / kaimoana according to Maramataka (the lunar calendar) taking only what was needed to last winter or a season.

She often spoke of how they would load a cart and horse and travel to Tawapata where they would camp and gather seafood.

Rongomaiwahine kua Pauline Tangiora QSM/QSO (Queen's Service Medal/Queen's Service Order) said Sophie was a champion for her people, helping set up Te Whanau o Rongomaiwahine Trust in its early stages when a lot of the old locals turned up from Wellington and Auckland for the initial meeting.

"Sophie was one of the strong ones and after a long debate, we set up the trust which operates to this day looking after the wellbeing of the Rongomaiwahine people."

Mrs Tangiora would bring back information about the international fisheries to help Sophie with issues at Mahia where she and her brother the late Buff Cracknell were guardians of Nukutaurua.

"If she caught someone with under-size paua, she would make them go back and place them back into the ocean. She cared about tangaroa."

Mrs Tangiora said Sophie was a great businesswoman and at one stage started up a course where she made fish leather skins into purses and clothing which were extremely durable and very light. She had great business acumen which served her well on the Rongomaiwahine Iwi Trust Board and as a kaumatua representative on the

Tatau Tatau board.

"Sophie was honest in everything she did, she was well-deserving of her QSM.

"We owe a lot to her, but even though she was dedicated to the iwi, the most important thing in her life was her family.

"She would ring me up at 2 o'clock in the morning and say 'I'm driving to Auckland or Hamilton, do you want to come? The mokopuna need me'.

"She was a wonderful nanny to her mokopuna."

Her life in her community was a busy one. Sophie was involved with the Whangarei Catchment Management Group and according to Sue O'Brien and Nicolas Caviale-Dezescaux, she was a tireless advocate in making the community and environment a better place to live in.

She cared about the community especially the ocean and represented Hinewhata hapu/marae, Te Apaapa-A-Rangi marae. Mahia and was appointed as a tangata kaitiaki in February 2007 representing her whanau, marae, hapu and iwi, Rongomaiwahine.

Sophie together with the late Bill Greening, Bill Blake QSM and Mlin Cooper through the Mahia Maori Committee, led the establishment of three matatata around the peninsula, Toka Tamure, Te Hoe and Horokaka, two of which have gazetted bylaws upholding traditional Maori values for the people and environment.

Mr Cooper said the kaimoana regulations and customary fishing was important to her, especially around local management. The kaimoana regulations were developed as a result of the Treaty of Waitangi (Fisheries Claims) Settlement Act and supported local fisheries management by tangata whenua.

These matatata continue to be an important tool for sustainability supporting cultural practices, ensuring fisheries are available for future generations and building partnerships.

Sophie fully understood this, and was exemplary in her role as a tangata kaitiaki, because she believed in it for her people and the tiao (environment), said Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) senior implementation adviser, Sandra Mauger. Prior to this, she was an active honorary fisheries officer for her rohe moana together with her late brother Buff.

"Sophie was fully committed to the protection of the fisheries especially in her own rohe moana, either in her role as an honorary fisheries officer, or

when she accepted nomination as a tangata kaitiaki.

"Sophie was, and still is, a well-respected kuaia who worked tirelessly, who guided, advised, supported many individual people, hapu, marae and iwi fisheries forums for the betterment of the customary fisheries kaupapa in Aotearoa," Ms Mauger said.

Sophie also supported other kaitiaki around the motu achieving their aspirations and had a huge knowledge of Maori customs, traditions and practices.

History was very important to Sophie who worked with Heritage New Zealand (formerly Historic Places Trust) to register waahi tapu, urupa and sites of significant importance for the benefit of future generations.

"Without a doubt Sophie was a great kuaia with a big heart who helped, guided, moulded and touched many hearts and was a fantastic person and friend to many. She will be missed greatly by all of us in the customary fisheries team."

Sophie's work did not go unnoticed. She was awarded a QSM (Queen's Service Medal) in June of 2010 in recognition of her services to Maori, from fisheries kaitiakitanga (guardianship) to historical work as well as cultural involvement in the Mahia area.

She was instrumental in advocating the return of the Rongomaiwahine iwi status to the people of Mahia and was an honorary fisheries officer for the Ministry of Fisheries for more than 10 years.

Then Prime Minister, John Key said the work she had done was not for Maori alone, but for all New Zealanders.

Upon accepting the honour, Sophie said she did not do it for herself, but for her people.

She said at the time: "It gives some recognition to our people and to the work that we're involved in — because this mahi (work) is really for them."

Locally Sophie was a stronghold for Tuahuru marae for the past 30 years. She dedicated the later years of her life to Tuahuru marae where she spent time on the pae pae as the kaikaranga (caller) and during that time held many wataia wananga. She enjoyed teaching and was an assessor and tutor in wataia tawhito (traditional Maori songs) and Te Kauwae Runga. In particular she shared two songs only last year and put a tune to them, Ka Piki Au and Hine Te Rongo.

Her passing was a huge loss for Mahia, especially for the iwi,



❑ **RESPECTED KUIA:** The late Sophie Dodd, Rongomaiwahine champion and respected tangata kaitiaki.

said chief executive officer of Rongomaiwahine Iwi Trust, Mo Rongo.

"Sophie was staunch about Rongomaiwahine, staunch about giving people choices and staunch about looking after everybody," Mr Rongo said.

"Sophie was the leading kuaia for the Treaty of Waitangi settlements, especially passionate about

Rongomaiwahine — she was a real champion for the Rongomaiwahine cause.

"She had a great saying which was 'get the head of the snake right and the body will follow'.

"Sophie was a 'rock', a great sounding board and the work she did for the Rongomaiwahine iwi will live on to benefit future generations to come," Mr Rongo said.