

Te Korāri: My Kelmarna Story...

I first came to Kelmarna for the Seedling Sale in October 2022

At the end of July 2022, I was about to go on holiday to Rarotonga it was my first holiday in nine years, - and then suddenly I got made redundant (after another Council restructure, my fifth in 7 years)

I was unemployed the day before leaving on my holiday

Also my mother had been very unwell through Covid & for the two years since the end of Covid, and I'd been looking after her, and then she'd passed away, just before I was made redundant.

But I said "no I'm just gonna put it all out of my mind, and just enjoy my holiday because I've been looking forward to it - for my 60th".

So, after I came back from Rarotonga, I had decided there were lots of other things I could do. I thought: "I'm gonna have a break for a while."

My job (was a Librarian - 17 years) for Council, and you can't apply again for a year after being made redundant - so I thought: "yeah, I'll do lots of things I haven't had the chance to do". So I came to the Seedling Sale here, and then I took up the ukulele, and Kapahaka, things I'd been wanting to do for a long time.

My mother was a gardener and she used a lot of chemicals, and I didn't believe in using chemicals. When she was living with me, I said to her: "this property is organic, I don't want to introduce harmful chemicals" - so there's another reason that tied me to Kelmarna, was the fate and benefit for me to grow my veggies organically.

I also started taking on a course, (Kai Oranga Level 3 & 4) with Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi run out of Whakatāne. It was interesting - doing it online and with a whole group of people from over the country.

So the teacher, she was based in Hastings, actually south of Hastings it's a little coastal place, Pōrangahau. This was at the time I began to volunteer for Kelmarna and took on performing Kapahaka.

I was also travelling to the East Cape a lot where my Papa Kāenga & my marae is located.

Once I was up North spending time with my cousin who was very unwell, I was also doing a class there, staying in a motel, and weeding the garden in the motel - as we were learning about weeds - I always took a trowel, spade and secateurs with me when I travelled!

I applied to work in the Farm Shop as I was used to working with customers because of the library, it's good to be with people all the time, and the staff are good here. I really got all the discussion with the staff and the other volunteers. I thought it was a good place and most people love to come here, most of the time it's pretty chill here.

There is all this organic food everyone loves, and people are quite positive when it comes to the food here and that's good. Also they ask for a lot of advice with how you eat and prepare new foods. There's lots of interesting and exotic foods here - talking about lots of things, like giving people samples and introducing them to new foods like sapote.

I love this place, you know the plants and the trees, the air, just the people. Talking organic food and farming with the staff and Adrian. There is always something to learn, like edible

flowers, or hot compost or edible weeds, foraging, there's more to the land and what you imagine when you're seeing it for the first time.

I completed the farm hands course in my early days here, this was a very interesting & helpful course & I met lots of other people...

Over Covid I planted my Rongoā garden - also my veggie garden, all organic, all raised beds to help with my mobility issues, and for Mother as well.

A group of us did a one year Rongoā course (Māori Medicine) with Te Wānanga Aotearoa on (Lincoln Road) We all knew the tutor, we learnt about the different plants, we learnt to make panipani, (ointment) tinctures, lip balm & tonic, we attended several weekend noho & different marae.

One of my friends was making soap outside in the garden, with goggles, white overalls and a mask, and the armed defenders turned up, with a helicopter buzzing around - they thought that she was making P!

She had been making soap for some time, and she got our whole group into Rongoā - Māori medicine.

Now I make tinctures, lip balms, ointments and tonics. I'd love to be able to bring the lip balms and panipani - from kawakawa, all organic, to have in the shop here. That's an idea.

