

WEEKEND SPECIAL

SPOTLIGHT
FINAL
END OF SEASON
Clearance
SEE INSIDE
FOR GREAT OFFERS!

WEEKEND SPECIAL

Celebrating the kiwiness of it all

■ Puzzles ■ Humour ■ Profile ■ Books ■ Music

The heart
of the
North

SATURDAY, February 6, 2010

The Northern Advocate

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Gold hunt on in North

by Mike Barrington
Some Northlanders could quite
literally be sitting on a gold



WELCOME John Key, flanked by Titowhai Marweira and Maori Piri (top right), being welcomed on to the Te Toi Marae.

**INSIDE
TODAY**

Terrorising addict jailed

A paranoid drug addict who terrorised Kaitiaki residents with a gun because he thought his gang members were after him has been sentenced to two-and-a-half years in prison. Chris Young, 28, a fisherman of Rongitapu, appeared for sentencing in the Whangarei District Court.

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WEATHERKIWI!



WEEK
END

Television

with
Roger
Moroney

P14

Musical
minister

P15



Lightly presented, but not light in questioning content

Forget notions of sensible debate or even a good old-fashioned politically incorrect ding-dong... Northern Advocate features editor **Lindy Laird** has a "conversation" with artist **Lester Hall**

SO YOU thought you knew what Northland looked like? Travelled it often in your lifetime. Seen plenty of maps.

But you probably haven't seen a map like the one above, which depicts a journey — geographically, historically and culturally — through Te Tai Tokerau by Aotearoa's Maori and Pakeha tangata.

Okay, you are now groaning. That all sounds a bit silly really, too Ngati-PC, a load of tripe. (And, for the record, a tongue was firmly in the cheek while it was being written.)

Looking at the map, readers might say: "Where the hell's that? If that's meant to be Northland, it's not even the right way up."

Aha, you got it, the map's creator, Bay of Islands artist Lester Hall, might respond. It's time to reassess the lie of the land, metaphorically speaking... the shape of things. Time to get over our cultural cringe about history, language, art, culture and Maori Pakeha race relations, Hall says.

New Zealand Aotearoa, today, is a sum of all its historic parts and Hall's map of Northland is his gift on Waitangi Day.

"To celebrate Northland and the kindness of it all," he says. "Everyone is represented in the image."

The map itself had whimsical beginnings.

"It was painted on to my desk in boat paint as a celebration of my being in the Bay of Islands for 10 years," Hall says.

"It is a piece of Kiwiana inspired by memories of holidays when I was a kid in the '60s and the holiday maps we would get at service stations."

"But these are different days, so far more ideas are present. It is fun, but also a representation of some of the journey I have taken into understanding the

Maori-European contact and history I have painted for 20 years."

"Waitangi Day represents the convergence of two cultures in what we now call a founding document, but the two cultural ideals had no true idea of where they were going."

"This map shows some of that ground and how the two live together in a mottled but sometimes specific way."

It's time to stop being afraid that having a bit of fun, taking artistic licence or lightening up the "conversation" will water down the spiritual essence of either tangata whenua or tangata pakeha culture, Hall says. (Note: In 2010 we don't have debate, discourse, discussion or even a good old ding-dong; we have a conversation.)

If Pakeha are a little afraid of what they might hear, Maori, on the other hand, Hall says, are very proactive about standing up for what is theirs historically and culturally, despite — or because of — gross misinterpretations in the retelling by... well, frankly, mainly Pakeha.

"And that's great. That's stopped the homogenisation of Maori history."

But New Zealanders in general have been a little slack in mining the rich vein that is this country's history, says Hall.

He cites the great Tai Tokerau warrior chief Hongi Hika as an example of a character and story that should be legendary — as in the rip-snorting adventure variety.

"There was a neolithic man from Te Tai Tokerau and he went to England. He met royalty. He was the toast of London. He visited Sydney and bought his own ship. He traded the gifts he got from British royalty for guns... He was a master strategist, a highly intelligent man, a brilliant commander, a desperado adventure stuff."

"But were we told stories about him? No, we were told stories about Geronimo and General Custer."

Hall is not afraid to bend and blend icons from Maori and Pakeha cultures in his own art, nor afraid of accusations of cultural plagiarism or disrespect.

"It's pop art. While I try to keep my ideas light in presentation, they are not light in content. My works have always said, have a concept of the Maori ideals but that is not to say that the Pakeha angle is not resonant and important."

Take his image of a tattooed Sir Edmund Hillary. Hall says no one ever questioned Sir Ed's ethnicity — he was a New Zealander.

"The Hillary image is 15-odd years old and asks the main question running through my work — who is tangatawhenua?"

Another work (which can't be reproduced here) is of early 19th century English sailor Barnet Burns, one of the first Europeans to live as a Pakeha Maori and wear a full moko.

Burns returned to Europe in 1835 and spent most of his remaining years as a showman, describing Maori customs, performing the haka and recounting his adventures in New Zealand.

"A true historical character from our past who almost no one knows about because our history is delivered in small, boring details of 'Cook arrived, Hone Heke cut down a pole and there were some Maori wars'."

"My art asks Pakeha to step up to the conversation with Maori. Be informed, as they are and be strong. It is not about being culturally sensitive all of the time. The over-sensitising of the subject makes it impotent for growth. My work pushes the idea of the Ngati Pakeha tribe and it asks 'are we a bi-cultural paradise?' — but it says, 'yes, forever, forever, forever'."



DIFFERENT: No one ever questioned Sir Ed Hillary's ethnicity — he was a New Zealander.

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Images courtesy of Lester Hall (lesterhall.com)

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