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Jenniferann.com, regional development, and realising the aspirations of mana whenua in Pōkeno

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Abstract

During the 1990s, the township of Pōkeno was held up as an example of a declining rural Aotearoa/New Zealand. By-passed from the national state highway, it lost its status as a service hub and drastic measures were introduced to revitalise the town, including renaming the town "Jenniferann.com." Pōkeno has since undergone an unlikely transformation, with foreign investment and its location within an extended Auckland commuter zone meaning that the township has grown exponentially. This article describes the transformation of Pōkeno and uncovers what has been missing from discussions about Pōkeno's reinvention, namely, the place of mana whenua.

KEYWORDS

colonialism, mana whenua, Pōkeno, regional geography, regional transformation

1 | INTRODUCTION

The township of Pōkeno lies south of Auckland, between the southern side of the Bombay Hills and the Waikato River (see Figure 1 in the Introductory paper in this issue). In their paper entitled "A town called Jenniferann.com," Bell and Lyall (2002) describe Pōkeno as a small conservative New Zealand town that fell into decline as a result of the motorway bypassing it in 1992. Prior to this, Pōkeno had been branded as "bacon country," due to the popularity of the local butcher shop. Smiling pink pigs on roadside signs greeted 12,000 motorists daily, and the butcher shop was one of many businesses that relied on motorists passing through the town.

With the construction of the motorway and as Pōkeno was by-passed in 1992, the town's status as a service hub changed. Compounding this, the long-lasting effects of deregulation and government restructuring meant that Pōkeno became an example of a rural New Zealand town in decline (Le Heron & Pawson, 1996; Pawson & Scott, 1992; Wilson, 1995). It was an important time in the town's history and, according to Bell and Lyall (2002) local business people, worried about the impact that the bypass would have,

turned to drastic measures. One of these measures related to the re-naming and re-branding of the town itself. In the year 2000, Pōkeno unofficially became Jenniferann.com. The new name was a marketing stunt designed to increase Pōkeno's visibility and the publicity of the owner of Jenniferann.com—a company selling women's lingerie.

It is ironic then that, 19 years later, Pōkeno is no longer the example of a declining rural New Zealand town, but a rapidly growing and changing settlement, where the growth of Auckland, introduction of foreign investment, and its location within the North Island's "Golden Triangle" means that Pōkeno has a new strategic purpose and importance. Severe housing shortages in Auckland have been a driver for large-scale residential development on the northern parts of Pōkeno and many new residents commute to Auckland daily. In addition to new residential development, a large commercial and industrial zone has been developed within the town.

This article expands on the transformation of Pōkeno described above and, in doing so, uncovers what has been missing in discussions about Pōkeno's reinvention and revitalisation, namely, the place of mana whenua and Māori. Specifically, it seeks to answer the question—how

has colonisation, early European settlement and modern-day planning and development served to exclude mana whenua from Pōkeno and what are the lessons for other towns in regional Aotearoa/New Zealand? Through a focus on the history of Pōkeno, its naming and branding through colonisation, and its recent rapid growth, our article describes a settlement that has always had great importance to mana whenua but that this importance has been rendered invisible. As a case study, Pōkeno is an example of the type of change and transformation occurring across many of Aotearoa/New Zealand's regional towns and highlights the ways in which Māori are misrepresented and underrepresented in the making of places. As Simmonds et al. (2016, p. 103) state: "if Aotearoa/New Zealand is to capitalise on regional distinctiveness, then this needs to be done in partnership with iwi and hapū and in ways that recognise and provide for the diversity of mana whenua relationships with place."

Internationally, while there is an absence of specific research about the exclusion of indigenous peoples from the planning and development of small towns, there is research about the long-term impacts of colonisation on indigenous communities through planning (e.g., see Matunga, 2013; Sandercock, 2004). For example, Matunga (2013, p. 5) states that "indigenous people have had to respond/react to the systematic and institutionalized application of colonial practices whose primary aim has been to eradicate them" and that "the colonial enterprise systematically excluded Indigenous peoples from the various decision, planning, and management processes over their lands and resources." There is also separate research about the structural barriers to the participation and representation of indigenous peoples in contemporary planning (Cosgrove & Kliger, 1997; Goetze, 2009; Hayter & Nieweler, 2018; Ryks, Wythe, Baldwin, & Kennedy, 2012). Goetze (2009) suggests that, while there are legal and regulatory structures to provide for engagement and participation, power or resource imbalances lead to a lack of compliance or motivation to follow through by non-indigenous parties. Our use of Pōkeno as a case study draws on both areas of research highlighted above in order to understand the complex ways in which mana whenua are excluded from the planning and development of regional Aotearoa/New Zealand.

2 | A BRIEF HISTORY OF PŌKENO

2.1 | Early Māori settlement

According to Dench (2018), the current name and location of Pōkeno is based around a Māori settlement called Pōkino

that was established at the confluence of the Mangatāwhiri Creek and Waikato River. As Dench (2018, p. 217) states:

> It seems likely that the name Pōkeno is a misrepresentation in English of this earlier Māori name. Pōkino may be derived from pō, which can be translated as darkness, night, or perhaps the underworld, and kino, bad or evil. Therefore, the name Pōkeno, far from being an acknowledgement of the indigenous name and its history and meaning, has been transplanted to a different place, albeit nearby, and altered so as to render it meaningless in Māori. Perhaps this was just as well. It is certainly one of the clearest examples of the phenomenon whereby Pākehā co-opted Māori names without reference to their traditional meanings, but simply as exotic. It is unlikely that Pākehā settlers would have been lining up to buy sections in a town they knew to be named "Evil Underworld."

The original site of Pōkino and its surrounding areas would have been occupied by Māori since the earliest days of Māori settlement in Aotearoa/New Zealand. According to a recent heritage report by the Waikato District Council (2016, p. 46), "Pōkeno is geographically close to the Tamaki isthmus, the lower Waikato River and the Hauraki Plains, all areas densely occupied by Māori in pre-European times."

Ngāti Tamaoho and Ngāti Naho were the local iwi that claimed ownership of Pōkino and surrounding areas, although the area experienced repeated attack by Ngā Puhi war parties during the inter-tribal wars of the 1820s and 1830s. By the early 1840s the area had come under the influence of Church of England missionaries and missionary Robert Maunsell had a key role in influencing local Māori to sign the Treaty of Waitangi at the Waikato Heads signing in late March and early April 1840 (Waikato District Council, 2016). In 1846, the area of what was to become the current town of Pōkeno, became part of the Ramarama Block, purchased by the Crown from Ngāti Tamaoho. The remaining blocks to the east of Pōkeno (including Pōkino) came into Crown ownership through confiscation following the war in 1865.

2.2 | Military outpost and the Waikato wars

The European settlement of Pōkeno was established when the Great South Road was extended by the military to provide access to the northern Waikato. Military forts and redoubts were constructed along the road, with the military headquarters moving further south as the road progressed,

culminating in the construction of the Queen's Redoubt military camp in Pōkeno in 1862.

According to the Waikato District Council (2016, p. 48) "Pōkeno Camp, as it became known, remained a focus for settlement in the valley for some time" and "local Māori, witnessing the build-up of troops and the preparations by Lieutenant General Duncan Cameron for the invasion of the Waikato, were further confronted by Governor Grey's edict of 9 July 1863 that Māori living north of the Mangatāwhiri Stream swear an oath of allegiance to the Queen or be expelled southwards." Large scale war broke out on July 12, 1863 when troops crossed the Mangatāwhiri Stream a few miles south of Queen's Redoubt. The village of Pōkino was destroyed by "an unauthorised expedition of soldiers" from Queen's Redoubt on the eve of the invasion of the Waikato (Waikato District Council, 2016). The Waikato war ended with the Māori defeat at the battle of Orakau in April 1864. The redoubt remains are in present-day Pōkeno, which stands near the junction of state highways 1 and 2, and the start of the Waikato Expressway (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2019).
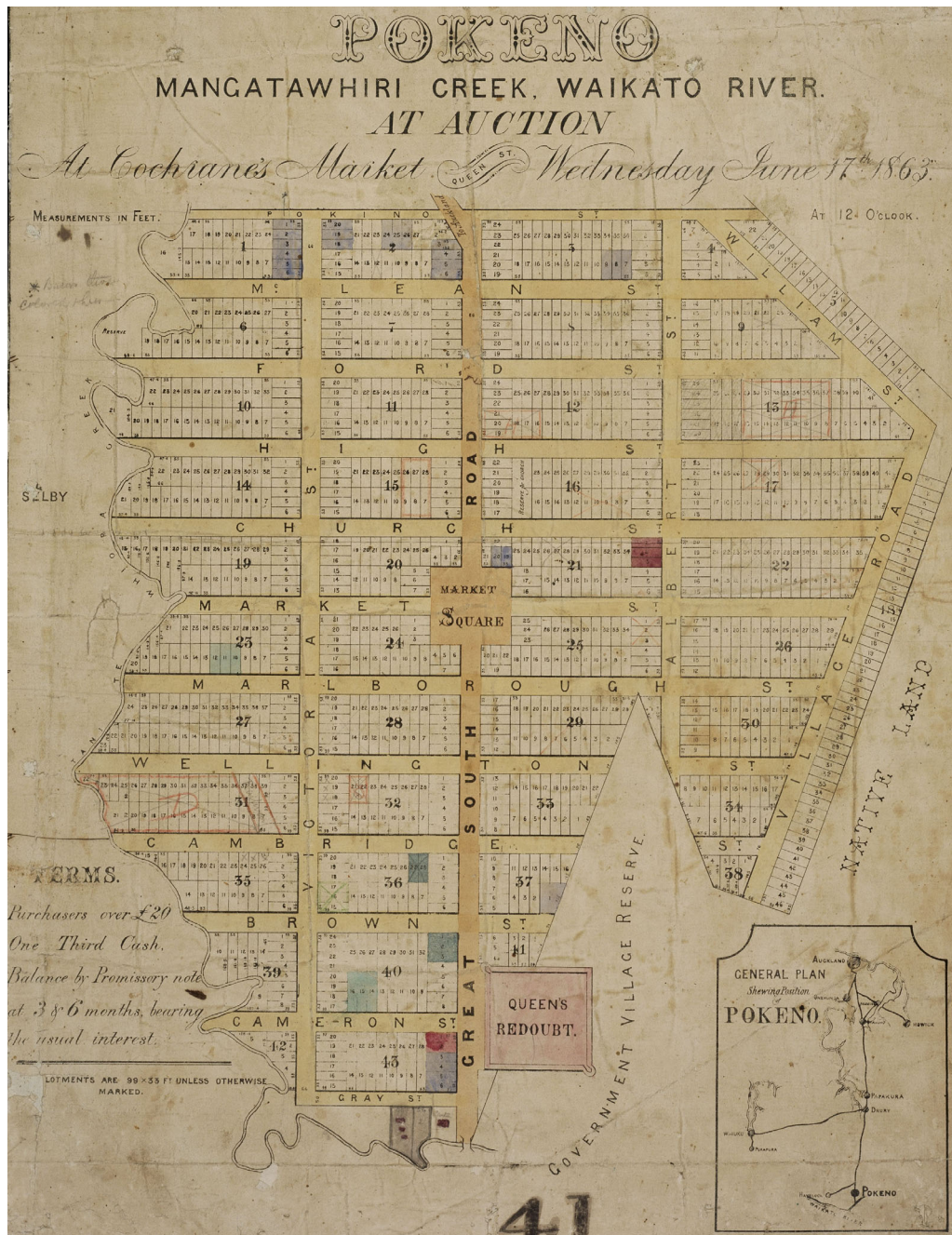

FIGURE 1 Early map of Pōkeno showing town and land to be auctioned
Source: Auckland Council (2019)

2.3 | Colonisation, Pākehā settlement and Pōkeno's growth as a service Centre

Colonial surveying, the demarcation of land, and land allocation were synonymous with military action during the mid-1860s (Byrnes, 2001). This was certainly the case in Pōkeno where, in June 1863, residential sections and rural allotments of the future town of Pōkeno were surveyed and auctioned (Figure 1). All were sold and it is believed that many were bought by speculators who later sold them (Waikato District Council, 2016). Dench (2018, p. 216) describes that "Pōkeno was advertised as 'The City of the Waikato' and its freehold building lots as suitable for 'Homes for Military Settlers and Traders'," and "reinforcing this point is the proximity of the area marked 'native land'. The detailed order and organisation of the Pākehā town is contrasted with the featureless surrounds, including the 'native land', which may have been interpreted as either potential benefit or hazard depending on whether it was viewed as territory for expansion or the home of hostile neighbours."

This short history of early Māori settlement, colonisation of the area by Pākehā and the contentious process through which the area was developed, has shown how gradually and forcefully mana whenua have been excluded from the area. Furthermore, in the modern-day development of Pōkeno much of this history has been re-written. For example, Dines Fulton Hogan (2011), the development company responsible for the largest residential developments within Pōkeno describe a one-sided history where the town was

> surveyed and those who laboured on the roads and surrounding countryside were allotted portions of land. These first titles established Pōkeno Village in its final location, and it wasn't long before the first settlers, many who were Scottish Presbyterians arriving from Clyde aboard the Helenslee, heard of the fertile ground and easy access to the wealth of gold being discovered around Thames. Churches, Schools, the Post Office and Railway Station became central to the town's growth and Pōkeno Village was now on the map. The community grew and their productivity blossomed, from the many flax mills, farms, timber mill and creamery. With the advent of motor transport, Pōkeno was once again recognised as a valuable rest and fuel stop at the foot of the Bombay Hills, while road construction and maintenance continue to be a source of employment for the village to this day.

2.4 | From boom to bust

In the early decades of the twentieth century, Pōkeno had a population of around 380 and "boasted postal, telegraph, savings bank and telephone services. The village also had a butcher, a draper, a postman, a greengrocer, a boarding house, and both a stationmaster and a postmaster" (Waikato District Council, 2016, p. 54). From the early to mid-20th Century, Pōkeno's development and growth relied on its status as a service hub and as a fuel stop. Until the late 1990s, Pōkeno was the last fuel stop for motorists heading north to Auckland before the motorway. Its distance approximately halfway between Auckland and Hamilton and close to the intersection of SH1 and SH2 (to Tauranga) was logistically important. In the mid-1950s the local economy benefited from the construction by the Government of a coal fired power station at Meremere, 14 km south on State Highway One. Work commenced on the power station in 1956 and it was commissioned in 1958 (Waikato District Council, 2016).

Pōkeno's growth and sustainability as a settlement through this period also relied heavily on the wider agricultural community, with farming communities from the neighbouring Onewhero and Mangatāwhiri areas and the horticultural community at Bombay using Pōkeno as the nearest settlement for basic farm and mechanical services, freight and postal services, local and regional transport, and schooling. However, deregulation of the agricultural sector and central and local government restructuring had a major impact on regional towns such as Pōkeno through the 1980s and 90s. According to Wilson (1995, p. 419), 1984 marked the start of a new, less regulatory relationship between the State and the economy as the newly elected Labour Government embarked on a programme of economic reforms.

As the Waikato District Council (2016, p. 57) reports, "By the mid-1960s… the pace of life in Pōkeno had begun to slow a little, with the population having reached a plateau and only a modest level of building activity. Between 1961 and the century's end the village population settled between 500 and 600 and there was a gradual ebbing away of shops and services." Agricultural deregulation and public sector reform both had direct impacts on rural communities and were key drivers of so-called rural decline (Pomeroy, this issue). For communities such as Pōkeno, this decline was accentuated by its status as a service town and its reliance on neighbouring rural areas. As Kearns and Joseph (1997, p. 21) describe "the removal of subsidies to agricultural production reduced the economic base of rural communities, while the withdrawal of central government support for rural public services made life all the more tenuous."

While the agricultural deregulation and the withdrawal of public services from Pōkeno had a significant impact, it was the construction of the motorway and the by-passing of the

town in 1992 that signalled Pōkeno's (seemingly permanent) decline. After more than a century as a popular rest stop on the Great South Road, with an estimated 12,000 vehicles passing through the town each day, Pōkeno was bypassed by State Highway One. Pōkeno's residents predicted that the town would fall into decline and one attempt to avoid this came from an initiative by a local entrepreneur who, in 2000, persuaded the Pōkeno community to change the town's name for a year and become the physical locale associated with an internet site selling women's lingerie (Waikato District Council, 2016). While the success of this initiative was limited and the town reverted back to the name of Pōkeno in 2001, it was only a few years after that, and despite popular opinion and prediction, that the prospects and future of Pōkeno were significantly altered by the proposed redevelopment of the township. Large-scale residential development aimed at housing a population of 6,000 people commenced and started to transform the town.

2.5 | To the present—Profiling the population and growth of Pōkeno

New Zealand Census data shows that Pōkeno's growth between 2006 and 2013 remained relatively stable. In 2006 Pōkeno had a population of 1,707 with a total of 624 dwellings. By 2013 the population and number of dwellings had both increased by approximately 4.3% to 1,782 and 651 respectively (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). The Māori ethnic group (MEG) residing in Pōkeno comprised nearly 15% of the town's total residents in 2013 (Ryks, Kilgour, Whitehead, & Rarere, 2018). Since 2013, Pōkeno has grown exponentially. Pōkeno's population has grown by a further 77% to an estimated 3,160 (Statistics New Zealand, 2018) and is projected to increase to 5,800 by 2028, which would represent a further 84% increase on the current estimated population (Statistics New Zealand, 2017a). The primary driver of this increase in population growth stems from new residential developments responding to severe housing shortages in Auckland, which has effectively extended Auckland's commuter zone to the Southern Auckland, Northern Waikato and Franklin regions.

From 2012 to 2016, there was a year on year increase in the number of new residential units granted building consent, and between 2013 and 2017 building consents were granted for 750 new dwellings (see Figure 2). Once completed, this would represent a doubling of the total number of dwellings in Pōkeno from 651 in 2013, to over 1,400. This increase has been rapid, and in 2014 alone there were more residential unit consents granted than in the previous 5 years combined (Statistics New Zealand, 2019).

Data from Statistics New Zealand (2017b) shows that new dwelling consents are spatially clustered in Pōkeno's
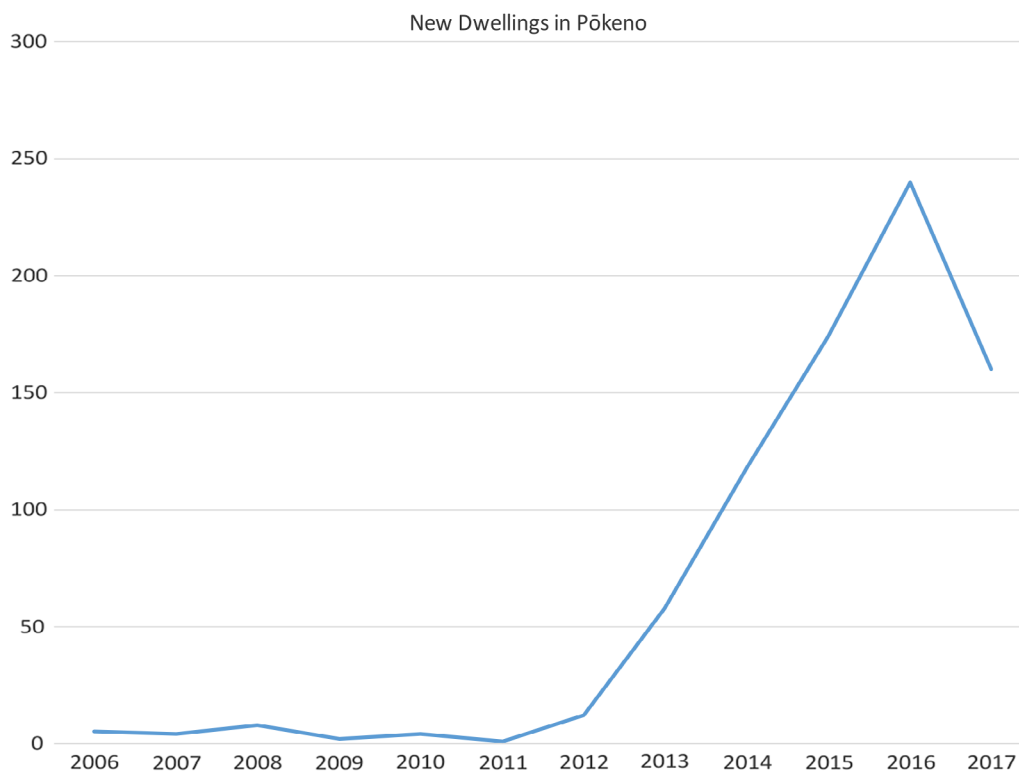
FIGURE 2 Building consents for new dwellings in Pōkeno, 2006–2017
Source: Statistics New Zealand (2019)

new subdivisions that are located to the north of Great South Road and the "old" town centre. Ninety-five percentage of new residential consents granted in 2016/2017 were within these new subdivisions. Commuter data suggests that new residents of these developments are likely to be commuting to places of employment outside of the town. In 2006, there were 486 people, just over half of Pōkeno's employed population that commuted outside of the town for work. By 2013, this had grown to more than 550 people, making up almost 60% of Pōkeno's employed population. Of these, 44% commuted into Auckland, with 32% employed in Pukekohe and the remainder commuting within the wider Franklin region to places such as Tūākau and Bombay (Statistics New Zealand, 2015). Although more recent commuter data is unavailable, it is likely that a significant proportion of new residents commute outside of the area for work.

Pōkeno's location within the "Golden Triangle" of Auckland, Waikato and the Bay of Plenty, and its proximity to State Highway One between Auckland and Hamilton, State Highway Two to Tauranga, and the North Island Main Trunk Railway Line has also been a driver for large-scale industrial development and a dedicated business park (Gateway Business Park). In 2015, the Chinese dairy company Yashili opened a $220 million manufacturing plant in Pōkeno's industrial zone. The Hynds Cement factory is also located within the zone and other proposed developments include the construction of Synlait's $280 million dairy factory and a whiskey distillery. Figure 3 shows aerial and satellite images for the periods 1981, 1988, 2013 and 2019, and illustrates the recent growth of Pōkeno and the transformation of the town through residential and industrial development.

2.6 | A service town with limited services?

Despite a rapidly growing population, the existing services and amenities within Pōkeno originate from a different time in Pōkeno's history and the introduction of new services have arguably not kept pace with the town's more recent and rapid growth. Waikato District Council (2019) lists Pōkeno's key services and amenities as including; broadband internet, a church, Pōkeno Hall, sports clubs (although many are listed as Tūākau based) and a bus stop. Other services or facilities located within Pōkeno include a police station, postal centre, petrol station, superette and the Queen's Redoubt and Heritage Centre.

Public transportation through and within Pōkeno is limited to the InterCity Bus service, and one bus each day linking Pōkeno, Tūākau and Pukekohe on the Hamilton to Pukekohe route (Waikato Regional Council, 2019). In terms
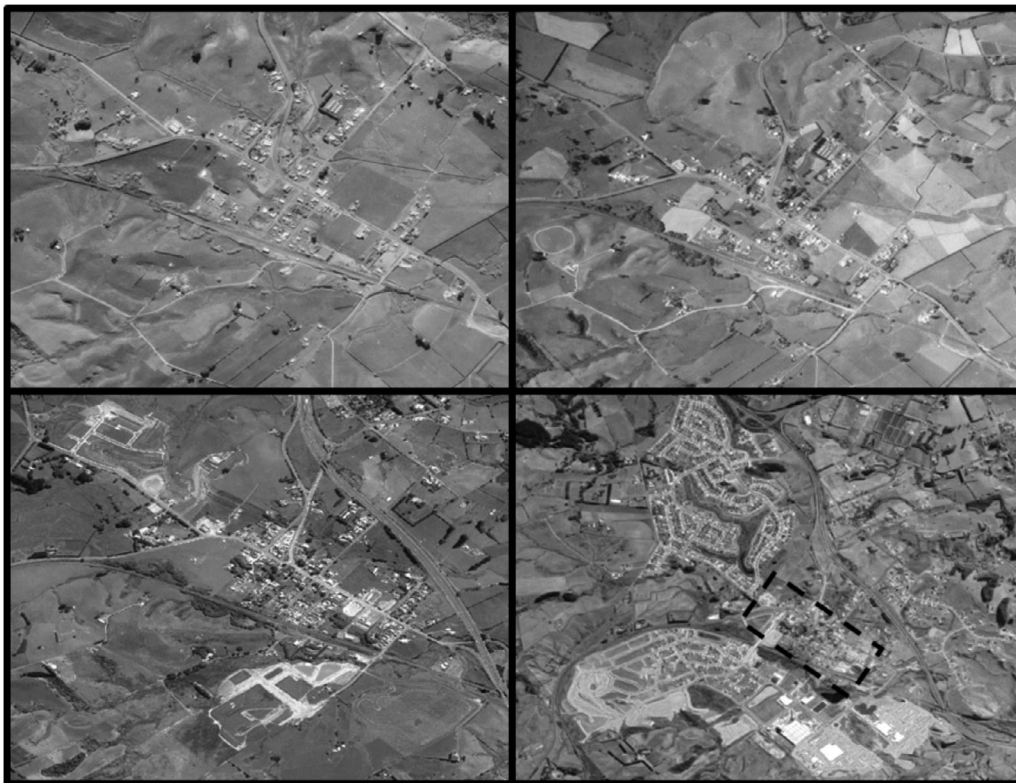

FIGURE 3 Aerial and satellite images of Pōkeno over time. Top left: 1981. Top right: 1988. Bottom left: 2013. Bottom right: 2019 (inset shows approximate boundaries of Pōkeno pre-2014)
Source: Retrolens (2019)

of health care, the town has a single health centre, while the nearest hospital is in Pukekohe, which has a small 26-bed facility that provides maternity services, home health care, public health nurses, some residential care, and an outpatient rehabilitation centre (Counties Manukau District Health Board, 2019). Pōkeno does not have a dedicated Māori health service.

Pōkeno has a primary school (years 1–8) with a growing school roll that increased from 64 to 163 between the years 2000 and 2010 and stood at 243 in 2018. Currently 35% of students are Māori, while 42% are Pākehā (Ministry of Education, 2019). Pōkeno also has three pre-schools, two of which were granted building consent in 2017 (Statistics New Zealand, 2018).

Most of the services, facilities and amenities described above were in Pōkeno pre-2013 and do not cater to a population that has more than doubled since that period. However, it seems that new services and amenities will be introduced over time as part of Pōkeno's transition from a small regional service town relying on passing motorists to a town of commuting residents. For example, in May 2019 it was announced that a major supermarket would be built in the town's centre (Polley, 2019).

3 | NAMING AS NORMING AND THE CASE OF THE MISSING MANA WHENUA

Place names serve to reinforce claims of ownership, power and control and represent a specific example of the politics of naming places (Berg & Kearns, 1996; Byrnes, 2001, 2002; Koch & Hercus, 2009). As Berg and Kearns (1996, p. 119) have shown: "place names and the maps used to present them, are the outcome of the appropriation of symbolic production by hegemonic groups, who impose their specific identity norms across all social groups." Similarly, Byrnes (2001) is critical of the manner in which a controlling linear perspective and a particular cartographic anxiety can bring about radical change to the spatial organisation and social order of society.

In Pōkeno, the process of place-naming has been based around British settlers demarcating and allocating land following military conquest, often at the protest of local Māori (Figure 4). This contributed to many streets in Pōkeno being named after British royalty and military leaders. As Dench (2018, p. 214) comments:

> Another contributor to Pākehā order [in Pōkeno] is the reassuringly familiar names given to the streets: British Royal Family (Victoria, Albert, William Streets and also the Queen's Redoubt), British military heroes (Marlborough, Wellington, and Cameron Streets—it is perhaps pushing it to describe Cameron in 1863 as a military hero in the same league as the other two… as well as descriptive names typical of English towns (Market, Church, Ford and High Streets).

In modern-day Pōkeno, the process of naming as norming is still commonplace and contentious. The new wave of residential and industrial development and the names that are normalised, also serve to marginalise. No acknowledgement or reference is made to Māori place names specific or relevant to the region. Instead names such as Kirklee Lane, Raithburn Terrace and Pyne Crescent feature within the new residential

FIGURE 4 Local Māori protesting a survey at Pōkeno
Source: The National Library of New Zealand (2019)

developments on the northern side of Pōkeno. Within the industrial zone on the south-west side of Pōkeno, names include Yashili Drive (in reference to Yashili Dairy Factory) and William McRobbie Road.

Names serve to represent much more than location—they are symbolic of the ownership of wealth and the hegemonic control that wealth brings to the community. Further, as Dench (2018, p. 218) points out, the name of Pōkeno itself has taken on new meaning and interpretation in the latest wave of growth and development:

> A recent online promotion claims "For those very first inhabitants, and many who have taken up residence since, Pōkeno—meaning 'a place of refuge'—has gained the reputation as a safe haven where people can escape the stresses of city life and relax amongst friends and family."

Other branding of Pōkeno includes the slogan used by local developer Dines Fulton Hogan (2011) describing the town as "an urban village in a rural setting" although it is unclear what this slogan means or points to.

4 | THE PLACE OF MANA WHENUA IN PŌKENO

The short history of Pōkeno above, from pre-colonial times to the present, describes the contentious process by which mana whenua and Māori more generally have been excluded from the Pōkeno area. Conflict and land confiscation, questionable land purchases and allocation and Pākehā-centred branding of the town through planning and development over time have all featured in the town's establishment and growth. Pōkeno and its surrounding areas have always been of great importance to mana whenua but this importance has been rendered invisible in the planning and development of Pōkeno (see Riddle and Thompson-Fawcett, this issue for a similar discussion in the context of tourism on the West Coast). So, what are the challenges and opportunities for mana whenua in Pōkeno?

Aligned research by Ryks et al. (2018) presented a measurement framework for understanding Māori wellbeing in the regions, including a focus on Pōkeno. The framework linked Durie's (1999) Te Pae Mahutonga model of Māori well-being to Emery and Flora's (2006) community capitals framework. This provided a useful statistical baseline for measuring Māori wellbeing and placed Māori at the centre using indigenised social statistics and indicators that were specific to Māori living in Pōkeno. One important finding from the research showed an overall decrease in Māori home ownership in Pōkeno (−12% from 2006 to 2013 compared with −2% nationally over the same period). However, the

research by Ryks et al. (2018) did not focus on the views of mana whenua in Pōkeno and the challenges and opportunities they face. The following section describes the first stage of research that aimed to capture those views (our work with mana whenua in Pōkeno is ongoing).

4.1 | Exploratory research with Mana whenua in Pōkeno

A kaupapa Māori approach was used to engage with mana whenua in Pōkeno. In this context, a kaupapa Māori approach was driven by Māori world views, including recognition of Māori indigeneity and the primacy of Māori interests (Mane, 2009). Our approach also aligned with the Building Better Homes, Towns and Cities National Science Challenge (2015) Research Plan that outlined seven principles to guide a kaupapa Māori approach, these being:

- Aroha ki te tangata (respect for people)
- Kanohi ki te kanohi (being a face that is seen and known and the premise of face to face interaction)
- Titiro, whakarongo… kōrero (look, listen, then later, speak)
- Manaaki ki te tangata (look after people)
- Kia tupato (be careful)
- Kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata (do not trample the dignity of the people)
- Kia māhaki (be humble).

Using this approach as a starting point for exploratory research, we worked with key staff from Waikato-Tainui (a tribal organisation) to identify mana whenua representatives for Pōkeno. Waikato-Tainui identified representatives from Ngāti Tamaoho and Ngāti Naho as being appropriate for the project. In April 2018, a wānanga with mana whenua was arranged and held at the Pōkeno Community Hall to gather mana whenua views. Relationships made with mana whenua during this process have been the basis for our ongoing work and engagement. A further wānanga was held with community members at the Pōkeno hall to gain additional insight about the aspirations of the wider community.

4.2 | Mana whenua views

There was a sense of both sadness and frustration shared by mana whenua about how Pōkeno is being developed. For those at the wānanga, they could recall that little effort was made by Franklin District Council (the previous Council) to engage with mana whenua during meetings held in 2008 about the rapid development of Pōkeno. Similarly, many of the mana whenua participants felt that the current planning process and proposed development of Pōkeno under the

Waikato District Council did not adequately provide for their perspectives, nor enable the meaningful involvement of mana whenua in Pōkeno. As Ryks et al. (2012) have pointed out, mechanisms and provisions for consultation with mana whenua, and Maori participation and representation in regional development more generally, do exist in the Resource Management Act (1991), Local Government Act (2002) and Local Electoral Act (2001), but are under-utilised and often interpreted differently across regions. For example, the requirement to consult with mana whenua under the Resource Management Act (1991) is often based on whether a resource consent for a proposed activity needs to be publicly notified and this is at the discretion of each council.

The lack of land to develop into a marae complex was viewed as a significant limitation for mana whenua. This along with an inability to mobilise funds to build a marae meant that their goals about having an anchor or place to call their own in the town seemed unlikely to be realised in the short term. It was felt that developing the identity of Pōkeno and a sense of place through Māori signage and carvings and based around a marae and tourism centre, could help the town to thrive. This was expressed in the context of the current absence of bilingual signage or Māori design within the town and that instead, Pōkeno was more commonly known for its ice-cream and bacon.

Much was said about the potential for local iwi to support their vision for Pōkeno through provision of land or funding opportunities to stimulate growth, particularly for business and community initiatives that would help boost employment for young people and provide care for whānau. There was also a sense of frustration with the view that Pōkeno is now a town that is closer to Auckland and comprised of commuters, than it being a town located within the Waikato region.

The challenges that mana whenua face in interpreting the ways that councils and developers operate meant that participants stated they felt disempowered and often unable to see how they could achieve their aspirations and goals. Participants felt that their interests and concerns about the development of Pōkeno were not being heard and were not always supported but did not know the appropriate methods to use to voice their concerns. One example that was cited was in relation to stormwater being discharged into local fishing and swimming areas. Discussions were also held about the local community board and the need to have greater mana whenua representation on the board in order to enable real change. There were concerns about the lack of understanding between mana whenua and the rest of the Pōkeno community and it was hoped that more unity could be developed. Participants voiced that they would like there to be a bringing together of the businesses, Waikato District Council, iwi and different cultures within Pōkeno. It was deemed that this would help to inspire development that was a true reflection of the entire community, rather than the current non-Māori focus.

5 | CONCLUSION

The transformation of Pōkeno and the ways in which mana whenua continue to be excluded from its development are not unique. Rather, the town's history and change over time parallels many other towns across regional Aotearoa/New Zealand. Simmonds et al. (2016) make a similar case with Putāruru, where early Māori history and the meaning of "Putāruru" have been ignored or changed to become part of a narrative that does not threaten the political autonomy of the local authority, or the developers who benefit from the use of land in the area. Like Pōkeno, unregulated development in Putāruru has influenced the place and prosperity of mana whenua.

These examples demonstrate that understanding the role of mana whenua in the regions calls for a new form of regional research that provides a critical lens on current planning and development practices. This extends to a critical understanding of the naming and branding of places. If mana whenua are active in regional planning and development, then there is also potential to affirm and value local Māori history and place names and create spaces and places for mana whenua to stand.

Regional development also requires local authorities to show leadership and willingly work with mana whenua to demonstrate a strong treaty-based partnership at the local government level. Existing mechanisms for mana whenua participation and representation, such as those provided for in the Resource Management Act and Local Government Act, fall short of achieving this partnership as these mechanisms continue to be underused and have become a token or discretionary matter for many authorities. This is unfortunate as there is much to be gained from a meaningful partnership with mana whenua. In Pōkeno, as with other regional towns in Aotearoa/New Zealand, there is the potential to support mana whenua to realise their aspirations through new forms of engagement and representation, including models of co-management and sole-governance—indeed, we would argue that this is a precursor to revitalising the regions.

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