



## Mina Whare Living off the land

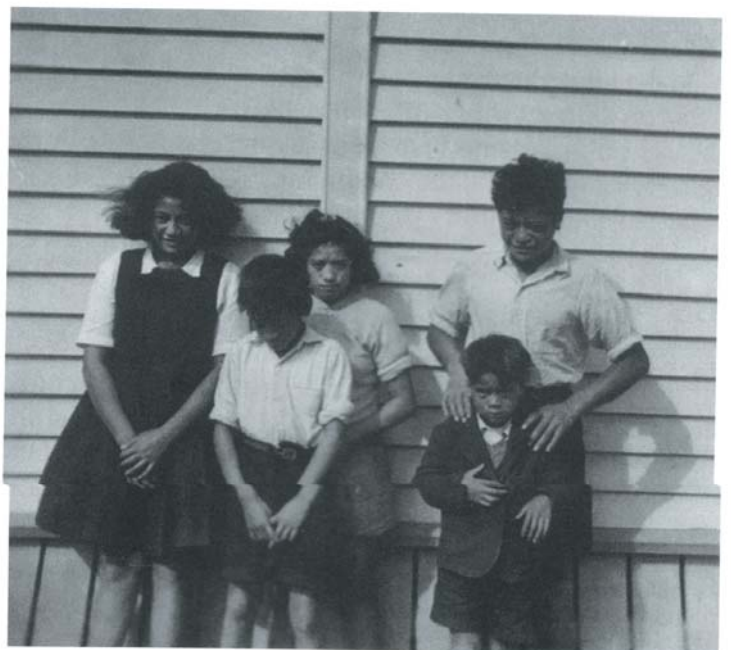
### Mina loved his life in early Pukerewa

"The biggest change I have seen in my lifetime is the reversal on the land – in the old days, there was bush and trees, a natural setting. The push was on to clear the land for agriculture – to make money from it. I worked with my father Toko and a couple of friends logging on the Pukerewa block. We owned the bigger part of a 1,000 acre block and cleared the bush and cut scrub - I loved it. People showed me how to chop a tree with a slasher, I didn't need an axe. When I got blisters on my hands, I had to find a better way to do it, so I soon learnt. When I got a chainsaw, it speeded up the work, but I had to learn to use it properly and safely. Now that the bush is all gone and put into farming, the experts of the world are telling us to go back to growing trees again. It just went too far."

Mina (Minarapa) Whare is sitting outside the meeting house at Pukerewa, remembering the days in his youth when life was very different, when the land provided almost everything needed and there was plenty of work "for those that wanted it."

"I was born in 1937. My family is Ngati Tahinga. My home was a one room dwelling surrounded by bush with a Puriri tree standing there – the house is gone but the tree is still there. We had half an acre of orchard – possums weren't a problem then. My grandmother planted kumara, watermelon, corn – everything we needed. We enjoyed pig hunting and sometimes a wild pig would come to the pigs in our pens. Someone with a good eye would shoot them. We did a lot of fishing for shark, crayfish, mussels, paua and kina in the early spring when they fattened. Fish and meat were dried by hanging fairly high up in a tree, because we had no refrigeration – but nothing went to waste. We milked 12 cows and the cream was kept in vats and stood in our spring stream to keep fresh. You couldn't make a living on 12 cows now – what you are earning now as I see it, is tax for the government. But it was a good life for us. "Most people shared what they had, we were a community and all our homes were open house to everyone. We hardly ever went to town. Once a week, we would telephone in an order for groceries. I am of the era when there were coupons to get sugar, salt, flour, benzene, smokes, clothing – unless you had a coupon you couldn't get anything. My granddad had shares in Farmers Trading Co – in those days they traded in livestock as well. So, he was able to get little bits of extras ordinary workers would not have. I saw the last coupon book when mum went to the shop where Aston's farm was at Waikaretu – after the second world war we started back to normal shopping."

Mina recalls with much satisfaction the years he spent clearing the bush and logging, originally with handsaws, on the Pukerewa block and how there was always work around. "In those days, you just went where someone was doing something and got in to help out – you didn't ask for pay. It might have been drafting sheep or carrying posts to a fence line. It was one way of getting a job, when people saw a person who was keen to work. All my life I was around



The Whare whanau at Waikaretu School in the 1950s,  
Mina (right) and Sally (left)