



Read our CEO **Jonny Wilkinson's** regular column in The Northern Advocate

"A Different Light"

A Different Light – 4th February 2023 –“ Expect the Unexpected”

We all know to expect the unexpected. Wasn't that drilled into our brains with the dreaded C 19 word? So yeah, we get it -shit happens- but it seems to be happening increasingly regularly and somewhat more catastrophically. For Tiaho Trust, an organisation that prides itself on holding events to celebrate and highlight inclusivity, well... this ain't a great time to be an Event Planner! Since 2020 we have been plagued by the plague of Covid19. We peppered our vocabulary liberally with helpings of 'managed quarantine', 'isolation' and of course the dreaded 'lockdowns' and RATS'. At Tiaho Trust we put events on hold and just outright cancelled others, as we got into the swing of this thing. Our epic Disability and Seniors Expo was thwarted just days before the event where over 60 stallholders having to be told that the Expo was a no go. Then the International Day of People with Disabilities of 2021 took a nose dive and had to be cancelled. The next to be scuppered was the annual surf day at Ruakaka in 2022. The latter was a bitter pill to swallow, as disabled people lost that chance to "catch a wave" – a hugely popular pursuit.

Thankfully, the overall impact of Covid seems to have calmed down. My wife and I managed to avoid the virus until late last year. It wasn't nice with cold chills, hot fevers, headaches, drowsiness and agitation. Thankfully neither of us got long Covid, and I managed to get my hands on some antiviral pills which seemed to kick in. Four pills twice a day the size of horse tranquilizers, but well worth it!

We are now faced with new, unexpected events. The old saying "It doesn't rain but it pours" has developed a new nasty poignancy. We had it baddish in Northland, but thankfully it was nothing like Auckland: floating vehicles and currents of water where roads should be. As I write 4 lives lost and businesses and homes destroyed. It certainly caught people off guard at the time, notably

the new Mayor, the contribution of the Far North to the people of Tamaki Makaurau. The communication improved rapidly, once the shiny new PM stepped into the breach. In Northland our State of Emergency, was nervously preemptive, as local Government sought to avoid the mess made by their counterparts in Auckland. After some dramatic rain and wind the next day it was back to sunshine. Even my tomatoes stood up to the fickled Weather Event.

Now it seems we have another component to navigate when planning events- extreme Weather Events. We have absolutely no control over their fickle course and, as for their severity- it is a fool's game to predict. These days, the climate change chickens are sure coming home to roost, and event planners of any kind have to consider the distinct possibility that one of these monsters can descend seemingly out of nowhere. No one is immune to this newish plague, even mega stars like Sir Elton John understand the harsh reality of the Weather's own cancel culture.

Speaking of stormy, the stormy matriarch of Tai Tokerau Titewhai Harawira passed away last week. A prominent activist for Māori rights she was recognized as fiercely staunch and unrelenting in her cause to advance political aspirations for Māori. A true advocate.

Ngāti Hine leader Pita Tipene said there were conclusions drawn that, the heavens breaking as they did, were symbolic of Titewhai herself. Rest in peace, kuia.

We have our next surf day at Ruakaka beach lined up for the 11th of February. We respectfully send our prayers and wishes for skies and a gentle swell for the day.

Jonny Wilkinson is the CEO of Tiaho Trust - Disability A Matter of Perception, a Whangarei based disability advocacy organisation.