

DIVERSE CAREERS WITH FONTERRA

LEADING A TEAM WITH COMMON GOALS

writer **PETER WHITE** // photographer **ALAN STEVENS**

TAI TUHIWAI works as a maintenance manager with the Fonterra Co-operative Group based in Morrinsville. The 25-year-old has previously held positions as a process project manager, process team leader and environmental manager with the company.

"In my role as maintenance manager for the Morrinsville/Waharoa sites, one of the key accomplishments is working together collaboratively with a team. It is always about us all rowing in the same canoe – in the same direction – making sure everyone has the same common goal," says Tai.

"I find working as a team is far more efficient and easier than working by yourself. This role is fairly unique – not every day is the same. You dabble in the people space now and then, management of projects and budgets, and making sure the performance of the site is running efficiently."

Tai attained a Bachelor of Engineering degree with Honours from University of Waikato – before joining the Fonterra Graduate Technical Programme (FGTP) and gaining a Masters of Dairy Science.

"It was a bit of a game-changer for me. I found the FGTP programme developed my understanding for how vast Fonterra is. You get to be part of many of

the business units at Fonterra – and what I probably enjoyed the most was connecting with a diverse range of people who I touch base with now on a daily, weekly or monthly basis.

"It really helps leverage your early career as you are quite visible in the company. I found in this programme, the biggest influence is the amount of exposure and practical experience out on site with the multiple product streams that Fonterra makes, like cream, butter and powders."

One of the many things Tai has enjoyed at Fonterra is the company's passion for involving Iwi and Hapu and the wider community. This was particularly evident in his environmental manager role.

"I led one of the work streams to work alongside Iwi and engage them with the change in consent conditions that were going to be compromised by the wet weather we had last year.

"It was quite unique for me as my full name – Tairongo – is actually one of the chiefs from the

Whakatane area, so every time I turned up for those Iwi and Hapu engagement meetings they already knew my name."

Tai attended Kawerau College (now Tarawera High School) from Years 9–12 before shifting to Rotorua Boys' High School, where he took Physics, Calculus, Chemistry, PE and History in Year 13.

"In those Years 9–12, I was not actually aiming for uni but had the Fonterra sparky apprenticeship in mind – but then I moved schools and my grades were good enough to pursue a different avenue.

"I have a few positions with Fonterra I am keen on pursuing in the future, including the regional manager role.

"I also wouldn't mind doing some sort of corporate role and getting some experience in that world – and also the subject matter expert role around mechanical engineering."

Tai's advice to school leavers – just be keen and always try your best.



“IT IS ALWAYS ABOUT US ALL ROWING IN THE SAME CANOE – IN THE SAME DIRECTION – MAKING SURE EVERYONE HAS THE SAME COMMON GOAL.”

TAI TUHIWAI

KEY FACTS



- **TAI TUHIWAI** IS A MAINTENANCE MANAGER WITH THE **FONTERRA CO-OPERATIVE GROUP**, BASED IN MORRINSVILLE.
- HE TOOK **PHYSICS, CALCULUS, CHEMISTRY, PE AND HISTORY** IN YEAR 13.
- **TAI** ATTAINED A **BACHELOR OF ENGINEERING DEGREE WITH HONOURS** FROM THE **UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO** BEFORE JOINING THE **FONTERRA GRADUATE TECHNICAL PROGRAMME (FGTP)** AND GAINING A **MASTERS OF DAIRY SCIENCE**.



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