



### **Neil Challenger Tuia Pito Ora (NZILA) Fellowship Citation**

By virtue of his extensive activities in the teaching and practice of landscape architecture, together with his leadership and outstanding service within the profession, Neil Challenger has made a significant contribution to the status and advancement of the profession of landscape architecture in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Neil's greatest contribution to the profession is in the area of Kaupapa Māori Landscape Architecture. Through his teaching and research activities, his advocacy work and his firm belief in the importance of recognising and embracing Tikanga Māori (Māori customary beliefs) and Mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) Neil has both "walked and talked" the kaupapa.

In keeping with the whakatauki "Kaore te kumara e kōrero mo tona reka" (the kumara does not boast how sweet it is), Neil has typically been content to operate primarily behind the scenes, supporting others and ensuring that the momentum of acknowledging and championing kaupapa Māori landscape architecture is maintained.

Yet, when called upon, Neil's knowledge, skills and teaching experience have been invaluable - never more so than in his role as the lead presenter for the travelling wānanga jointly undertaken by Tuia Pito Ora (NZILA) and Te Tau-a-Nuku (the collective of Māori landscape architects) which in 2016 visited various centres in Aotearoa focussing on Kaupapa Māori landscape design.

Neil's mana in the Kaupapa Māori Landscape space and within the Māori design realm generally is demonstrated by the leadership role he has held as Kaituhi of Te Tau-a-Nuku and through his receipt of seldom-conferred Kaupapa Whanau membership of Nga Aho (the recognised national collective of Māori design professionals) in recognition of his understanding of, and commitment to, kaupapa Māori design.

In his academic role, Neil has had a significant influence on the education of an entire generation of Lincoln University-trained landscape architects who have benefitted, in particular, from his knowledge of, and enthusiasm for, landscape design and management in Māori cultural contexts where his skills in Mana Whenua engagement and tikanga and tōhu-related design have set the standard in landscape education programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand. In 2005, the quality of Neil's work at Lincoln was recognised through his being awarded the Lincoln University Teaching Award, and in 2013 he was awarded the Taumutu Prize for Māori Leadership.

Neil has also provided support and encouragement to numerous graduates over a period of at least four years in his role of managing the Registration portfolio for the Canterbury Westland Branch and is currently the Deputy Chair of the NZILA Registration Interview Panel.

Neil has given generously of his time and expertise to Tuia Pito Ora at both Branch and National level, having served a term on NZILA Executive (2015-2017) and in a variety of roles at Canterbury-Westland Branch level from Student Rep in 1984-85, and two periods (1995-2001, and 2008-2018) as a Branch committee member, including a term as Branch Chair (2010-2012).

Neil demonstrated outstanding leadership qualities in the aftermath of the 2009 and 2011 Canterbury earthquakes, as he has selflessly put the interests and well-being of the community ahead of his own interests. This generosity of spirit was epitomised by his organising of a working bee of landscape architects to help shore up and weather-proof the home of one of his colleagues immediately following the second earthquake.

Neil's organisational and teaching skills have been to the fore at an international level as well through his efforts in leading IFLA (International Federation of Landscape Architects) student charettes in Singapore (2001), Taiwan (2003), Malaysia (2007) and Auckland (2013). Neil also served as the NZILA Rep on the IFLA Asia Pacific Region Education Committee.

Neil has been an active participant in conferences, both as a presenter and, when the occasion has demanded, as kaikōrero (orator) at pōwhiri, mihi whakatau and poroporoaki.

Neil has achieved excellence in his own landscape architectural work as demonstrated by his being Highly Commended in the NZILA Awards for his design for the Hokitika Quayside (working with Andrew Craig, c1992), and for the Haast Visitors Centre (c1995).

Finally, Neil is a treasure trove of knowledge about both indigenous and exotic plants, perhaps further proof of another saying that "the acorn doesn't fall far from the tree".

The above summary amply demonstrates the significant contribution to the status and advancement of the profession in Aotearoa New Zealand that Neil Challenger has made. His elevation to the membership status of Fellow of Tuia Pito Ora (NZILA) is therefore thoroughly well deserved.