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Japanese-born 'Genta' has

Restaurateur helps enrich his community

RUSSELL PHIPPS

SURROUNDED by his hydro-gardens and environmentally friendly lifestyle, a descendant of Japanese whalers has finally found peace and tranquillity on the shores of Dicky Beach.

Susumu Tsukimori has certainly thrown himself into the community over the past decade – becoming everything from surf lifesaver to restaurateur to organiser of a happiness symposium.

And in August this year, he will again help organise the Japan Festival Sunshine Coast.

Born in the Wakayama Prefecture on the south coast of the main island of Japan, he was given the nickname "Genta" in remembrance of his ancestors.

"Genta was a great mythical mariner and the name was taken by my people who hunted whales in the area over 100



FUSION OF CULTURES: Maiko and "Genta" Tsukimori in the lead-up to last year's Japan Festival Sunshine Coast.

Photo: Warren Lynam

years ago," he said.

He can't remember much of his time in Wakayama as his

family moved to Osaka when he was five but admits "it must have had an effect on me".

"I liked to go to the ponds where I would fish or hunt crabs," he said.

When Genta was in junior high school he tried to be cool and began to hang around with the wrong crowd.

"Because of this, I failed my entrance exam into high school and was forced into one of the poorer schools," he said.

"This was a turning point as they had a fantastic rugby coach who taught me a good work ethic so I had little time to get into trouble."

After school, Genta decided to challenge himself and subsequently migrated to America.

"After completing my MBA in Phoenix Arizona, I worked for the San Diego Hospital Association where I specialised in patient escort services," he said.

Realising that the program could be beneficial to the Japanese Hospital system, Genta began commuting backwards and forwards to Japan.

"In my travels, I found the Japanese had a great love for quality American products, so I started up a trading company," he said.

"The company went gangbusters and I was rolling in money. But what goes up must

come down and within a few years, I was fighting off bankruptcy."

It was around this time Genta met an Australian girl who saved his life and gave him three children. As time progressed, both he and his wife realised America was not the place to bring up a family and decided to move to Brisbane.

Working with the University of Queensland's physiotherapy department, Genta and his family soon settled into the Australian lifestyle.

"During Christmas a few years ago, I had friends camping at Dicky Beach who invited us for a barbecue," he remembered. "I fell in love with the area so I found a caravan for sale and bought it."

Only using the van for weekends and holidays, he secretly craved a permanent move.

"I always wanted to make Dicky Beach my home but my family didn't share my passion," he said.

Eventually he decided to take the plunge.

"At first, it was hard because my family weren't with me but ultimately I was happy with my decision," Genta said.