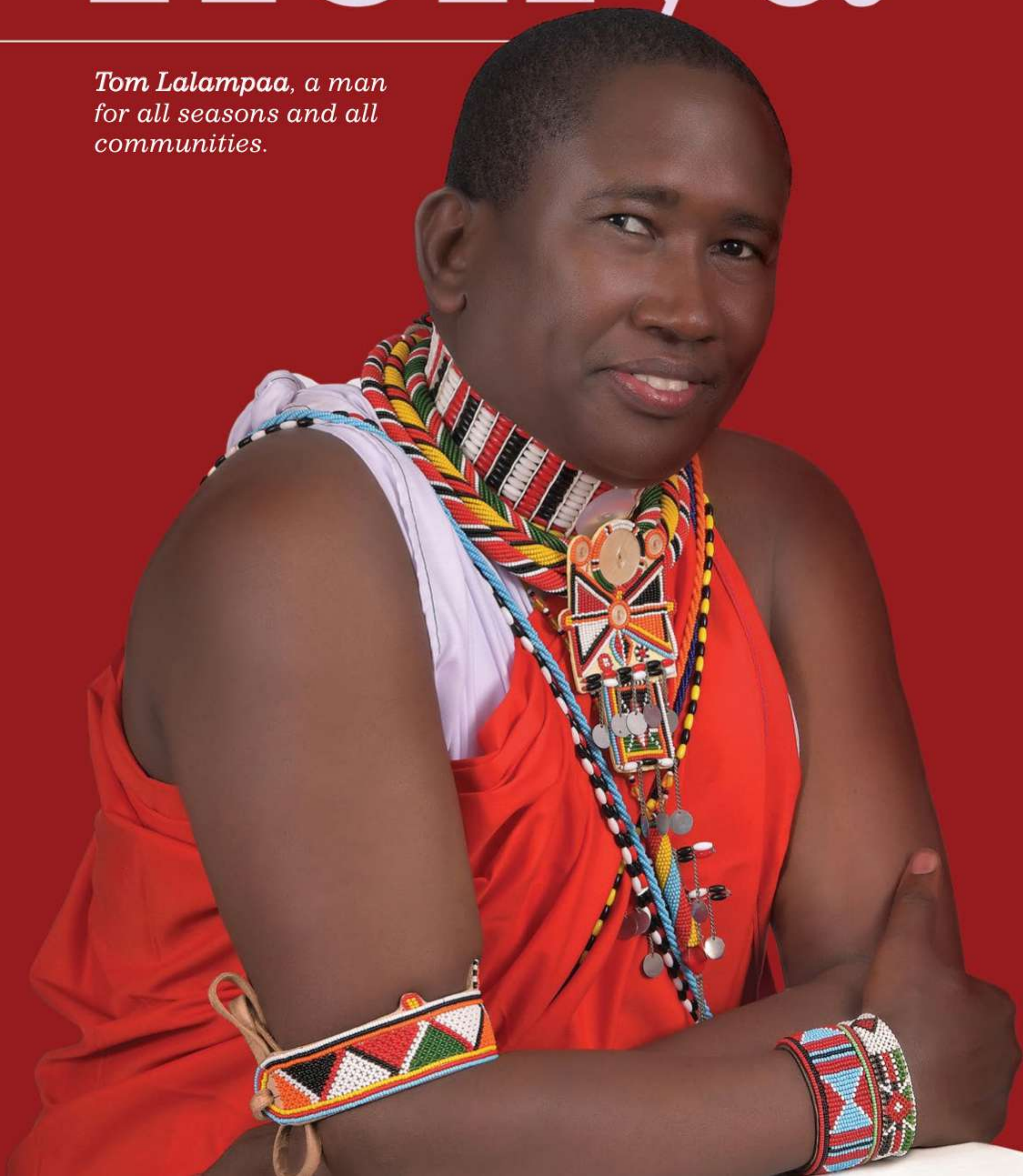


Why I Love Kenya

*Tom Lalampaa, a man
for all seasons and all
communities.*



In this issue, leading conservationist, Tom Lalampaa, tells us why he loves the land of his birth. Tom, a much respected figure on the dynamic landscape of current Kenyan wildlife conservation, is Chief Executive Officer of the **Northern Rangelands Trust**. One of Kenya's most prominent conservancy groups, NRT brings together over 30 community-owned conservancies covering over ten million acres of communally owned land. Reared a pastoralist, Tom has devoted his life to facilitating and promoting the ideals of community-led conservation. In 2013, he was awarded the **Tusk Conservation Award** in recognition of his outstanding contribution to northern Kenya's communities and wildlife. In 2016, he won the Stanford University Law School 'Bright Award for Environmental Sustainability'. A Samburu himself, Tom has earned immense respect amongst the 15 different ethnic groups with whom he works, he also founded and now chairs the **Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association**, while being a trustee of the **Kenya Wildlife Service Board** and Vice Chair of the Kenyan Government's **Wildlife Security Task Force**.

Tell us about your early life

I was born and reared a pastoralist in Northern Kenya where I grew up looking after livestock and thus interacted with nature from an early age. I recall gathering together with all the other young boys, all of whom were herders like me. Occasionally we would become so involved in our games that we would lose sight of our charges. Then they would be preyed upon by lion, cheetahs, or wild dogs – an early lesson in the challenges of conservancy. Now I love to see the wildlife such as Grevy's zebras, elephants, elands and giraffes grazing in harmony alongside our cattle goats and camels on the lush rangelands and savannah of Northern Kenya.

How has Kenya shaped your life

I have a great pride in my homeland. I love the wilderness and serenity of the dry lands of Northern Kenya where I am constantly amazed by the diversity of our wildlife and the unplumbed depths of the culture and heritage of our people. For me, Kenya is a unique African country, stable and peaceful, she offers a wealth of opportunity for people and investment alike, an unbelievable diversity of landscape and an unrivalled treasure trove of wildlife and wilderness. I have spent over a decade working with the NRT and growing it from just six community conservancies to over 30. I love my work with local communities where I promote sustainable conservation from the grassroots. It was for this reason that I founded the Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association as a forum for private and community land owners alike to share ideas on how wildlife, wilderness and community might flourish in unity and harmony.

What typifies the Kenya for you?

I love the Kenyan people, they're so warm and friendly, and they always wear a smile – no matter what challenges they face. I have also been greatly influenced by the cultural traditions of the northern Kenyan peoples. I love to see them performing their dances together – so different, and yet so beautifully harmonized. I even love the fact that all the Northern peoples have their own very special way of roasting their meat for Kenya's national dish, *Nyama Choma* which, like all Kenyans, I LOVE.

In the wilderness, I love the *Acacia tortilis* tree, or 'umbrella tree', not only because it's such an iconic feature of the landscape but also because it is of such benefit to all. It's pods, for instance, are nutritious for the animals, as are its leaves; its branches provide shade for animals and people alike; its wood provides fencing, and its bark and roots contribute to our herbal medicines. From the wildlife cast I'd choose the Grevy's zebra because it mingles so well with the community livestock on the open plains. Finally, I love the rustling of the Doum palms in the evening because the sound takes me back to my evenings on the banks of the beautiful dry riverbeds of Northern Kenya where I carried out my early field work.



In 2013, Tom Lalampaa was presented with the Tusk Award - for outstanding work brokering peace through conservation amongst feuding tribal groups in northern Kenya - by Prince William. Tom has been key to creating a conservation area of 3 million acres under the Northern Rangelands Trust, benefiting over 150,000 people. NRT is recognized as the leading model for community conservation in Kenya – and increasingly across Africa – with a proven impact on peace, livelihoods and conservation. The Tusk Award was sponsored by Land Rover.