

# Design with a difference

Two young Maori architectural students were part of the team that carried off the coveted Monier Architectural Design Award for 1979. Tere Insley (Te Whanau a Apanui), from Omaio, and Mike Barnes (Ngati Tuwharetoa), from Onepu, joined with Brian Sharp of Opotiki and Alastair Gaudin from Auckland to produce the winning plans – a development scheme for Otuwahiwhi marae, Bowentown.

The marae belongs to the Whanau a Tauwhao people of Ngaiterangi, in the western Bay of Plenty. It sits on a beautiful site, with the ocean on one side and Tauranga Harbour on the other. The local people, through marae committee member Dr Evelyn Stokes, approached Mike Austen, a lecturer at the School of Architecture, Auckland University. Their main concern was a new meeting house and dining hall, but the four students saw in the site an interesting possibility. The sixty-acre site was in danger of subdivision and “development”. Surely the land could be utilised in another manner?

They saw here an opportunity to re-establish a community, not merely build buildings. In their own words, “We believe the paramount concern is the way the people relate to the land, manipulate and form their own environment and lives. . . . We are not concerned with glossy overseas trends, we see ourselves as tools to the people who own the land.”

So they proposed the formation of a family/tribal co-

operative or incorporation under the Marae Enterprises scheme. They suggested the outline for a twenty-year plan which made use of local resources, local skills and local knowledge. From farming familiar crops and mussels, the incorporation could branch out into newer crops with good markets, breaking in new pieces of land. Houses would be built, families would return to the area. As these developments occurred, a new community feeling would develop, also enhanced by a whare wananga and maybe even new primary and intermediate schools. It would be more than a merely agriculture venture.

It was certainly far more comprehensive in its scope than the average architectural venture. But, says Mrs Tizard, an Auckland city councillor who was a member of the judging panel, one of the reasons for the competition is “to show the architectural profession and their colleagues what services they should be providing to a much wider range of clients”.

Nevertheless, there was some negative response to the award, mainly from within the architectural profession. And Te Whanau a Tauwhao themselves? Well, they’ve been given more than they bargained for, and are considering the proposals.

*“Tools to the people”*: left to right are Alastair Gaudin, Brian Sharp, Mike Barnes and Tere Insley.

