

Maori students face a lonely track

Maori university students should use their skills to help their own people, says Maori student leader, Pakake Winiata.

Pakake Winiata, aged 21, has taken up the post of tumuaki Maori — a position formerly known as Maori vice-president — of the New Zealand University Students Association.

One of his first duties this year was a tour of New Zealand universities in March, gauging the feeling of Maori students, making himself known and sharing ideas.

The main thrust of his campaign is for Maori university students to contribute more to maoridom — because he believes that at present, most of them do not.

"I think a lot of Maori university students aren't aware of what is going on around them," he says.

"And they certainly don't have much knowledge of the important issues that are facing maoridom.

"It's a reflection of their 'lonely track' through the school system, often where they're the only ones in the sixth and seventh form.

"They suppress their Maori side to fit in with the pakeha students around them."

Pakake says that once the students make it to university, they often say they do not have the time to become involved in things Maori.

"Yet they go out at night, play sports and so, and I don't know whether they hold Maori things in high priority."

A big problem for the students is they have nowhere they can come together, to discuss issues and the things going on around them, he says.

To help solve this, Pakake is among many Maori students who are promoting the idea of a national association of Maori university students.

The association would provide a forum for the students, who could decide on work to be carried but by the tumuaki Maori and Nga Toki (the Maori university students' executive).

Another aim this year is to promote the Maori language.

One step Pakake has taken is to sound out Maori lecturers on forming a group to modernise the language, and he says the response so far has been positive.

Another aim is to form a national runanga rangatahi (Maori youth council) to tie together all the different Maori youth groups.

"It would plan projects and programmes towards developments of Maori youth, to secure funding for such

programmes," says Pakake.

"A major primary objective would be to try to re-establish and strengthen links between urban Maori youth and their tribal organisations."

Pakake, who is taking a year off his medical degree for his new job based in Wellington, believes the skills that Maori students gain at university are sorely needed to help maoridom as a whole.

The ability that students gain to examine and look critically at what is happening around them is the kind of training their own people do not have, he says.

Academic qualifications "open doors" in the pakeha world, enabling Maoris to get into decision-making positions which benefit the Maori people.

Pakake will finish his degree in 1989. He then plans to return to his tribe, Ngati Raukawa, to set up practice — "rather than gaining my degree and bugging off to Australia and getting heaps of money but not really doing much to help my own people."

At present, he is involved in a series of young people's hui for the particular marae and hapu in his region.

The hui have been taking place at a tribal level, and they will be "moved down a notch" to hapu level, to strengthen the grass roots.

Pakake's tribal affiliations also include Ngati Toa, Te Arawa and Ngati Awa.

He was born in Michigan in the

United States, and moved to Vancouver, Canada, at four.

His father, Professor Whatarangi Winiata, of Victoria University, was teaching there at the time.

The family returned to New Zealand when Pakake was 12.

"I remember soon after we got back, going out to one of my marae in Levin. My father was saying 'this is yours, the houses, the marae, all these things here.'

"It was like having a gigantic Christmas present, I've always remembered that.

"People think it must have been a real disadvantage growing up overseas. But I think in a way the advantage of it was that I've never ever taken any of my marae or my hapu or my iwi for granted."

He also believes the experience has given him a better international perspective.

This year, he says, will be the last he has to help Maori university students before "switching worlds" to clinical school.

Another idea he will be pushing is for Maori university students to gain autonomy to make their own decisions within the New Zealand University Students Association.

And as for plans in the far future: "Most of my efforts will be in the medical field, working towards helping the people, rather than helping me, the individual."

New Adviser for Support



Presbyterian Support Services (Northern) has appointed a new polynesian adviser to its community services in Auckland.

Mr Paraire Huata, 38, will be responsible for increasing the awareness of services offered by Support among Maori and Pacific Island people.

Widely experienced in many fields, his career has spanned teaching, youth development work, cultural entertainment and even a spell as a taxi driver.

His family has had strong ties with the Anglican church since 1860 and a commitment to the development of the Maori people.

Mr Huata sees his role in Support as one of "informing, performing and, where necessary, reforming."

"I will be responsible for identifying areas of need in the community and ways we can best direct Support's resources to meet those needs.

"Importantly, the job entails advising Support community service staff about the values and traditions of all Polynesian people.

"The understanding has to be a two-way process," he says.

"Commitment, attitude, kinship and empathy are all important for me and this applies to everyone in the community.

"Empathy will help me to deal with many situations, for example knowing how it feels to be on the dole."

Born in Napier, Mr Huata has spent most of his life in the Waikato, returning to New Zealand seven months ago following five years in Australia.

The director of Support's community services, Mr Pat Thomson said: "Paraire's appointment is the culmination of a year's intensive planning for this post."