

It was the first time that state of Hawaii officials had been invited to New Zealand through the Department of Maori Affairs.

Rude awakening

As with the other two Hawaiian groups, the members of the delegation were deeply moved by the experience. As one of them remarked, after seeing the far greater amount of money and resources being poured into the Maori community as compared to Hawaii, "What a rude awakening this has been."

This was in late October and less than two months later, Puketapu was back in Hawaii, this time accompanied by his deputy, Dr Tamati Reedy and his accomplished wife Tilly, and John Rangihau, a lecturer in Maori Studies at the University of Waikato and consultant to the Department.

The team had come at the invitation of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs to conduct the leadership hui that Puketapu had suggested in July.

"E Hawaii Au"

The Hawaiians called the conference E Hawaii Au or "I am a Hawaiian." More than a hundred leaders, representing a cross-section of the community, had been specially invited. It was the first time in modern Hawaiian leadership history that an event of this nature had taken place. The general opinion among the Hawaiians was that it could not have happened without the presence of the Maori team.

There were conservative business executives, and outspoken young activists, monarchists and descendants of the ali'i or chiefly class, politicians and artists, and many others. Many had never met before; indeed, they would probably have never gone out of their way to meet each other under normal circumstances. But this was different — a spiritual coming together with one thing in common: their Hawaiianness.

Hawaiian leadership

Whether Hawaiian leadership would ever be the same again is a question some Hawaiians are asking with the hope that it won't be like before — fragmented and huki huki (fighting among oneself).

In December last year the businessmen formed the Hawaiian-Maori Business Council to promote the mutual interests of Hawaiian and Maori businesspersons. The Hawaiian side of the Council is headed by Kenneth Brown and consists of Charles Heen, president of Heen & Associates, an outstanding interior design firm, George Henrickson, president, GAH Inc., a well-known developer, Herman Lemke, president of his own CPA firm, and Joe Kealoha, a real estate executive. Other members will be added to the Council.

The group accepted an invitation by

The Hawaiian group with Maori hosts on the Bay of Plenty trip.

the Department of Maori Affairs to attend the first national all-Maori Business Development Conference, held in Auckland, February 3-5, 1982.

Polynesian businessmen

Brown believes that this is the first time a bi-lateral business group has been organised between Polynesians. "We are businessmen but Polynesians as well. For far too long Polynesians have been regarded by others as not having the stuff to be good businessmen. That stereotype should be discarded. We have outstanding success models and there is no real reason why others could not do the same."

He also views his "modest" beginning as a possible model for other Polynesians such as the Tahitians and Samoans, or Tongans and Hawaiians, and so forth. "Commerce and trade," he says, "have always been a basis for different nations and peoples to communicate and build mutual relationships. That's what we're doing but with a Polynesian connection."

While the Hawaiian-Maori Business Council seems to be the most visible part of the current exchange, other developments are looming in education, for both students and teachers, in sports and the arts, especially dance and music.

The momentum is bound to pick up and Maoris and Hawaiians may yet find themselves united together in Hawai-iki, the homeland from whence they journeyed apart into the Pacific centuries ago.

