

# Te Wananga o Raukawa offers a fair share of the cake

A Maori university with its own degree structure and fee-paying students has opened in Otaki.

A team of qualified tertiary lecturers have volunteered their services and the former Otaki Maori Boys' College is being renovated as the main campus.

Renovations are expected to take 12 months and in the interim, marae will provide the lecture facilities.

Twenty marae from Wellington to Bulls will be offshoots to the university.

Te Wananga o Raukawa (The University of Raukawa) has been established by the Raukawa Trustees, initially to produce "bicultural administrators" who will complete a three year bachelor in Maori studies and administration degree course.

The Raukawa Trust is an influential confederation of tribes and sub-tribes, with a population of 40,000 between Cook Strait and the Rangitikei River.

Established under a 1936 Act of Parliament, with a welfare mandate for its own people, the trust has converted interest from land assets and a Maori racing club into funds to sponsor Maori schoolchildren through school.

Last year alone, the trustees spent \$66,000 in educational sponsorship.

The trustees say the university is a natural extension of "Whakatapuranga Rua Mano" (Generation 2000).

Launched six years ago, this represents the trust's big break into education and the most ambitious independent mission since the Maori leaders' schools last century.

The programme aims to place an allocated number of Maori surgeons, lawyers, accountants and teachers into key posts by the 21st century.

The philosophy behind the university is the same, but it will run separately from Generation 2000.

Te Wananga is consistent with the Maori Affairs Department's tu tangata (stand tall) ideals.

Because of the similarity of ideals and the initiative of the venture, the department is now considering a funding proposal presented by the trustees.

One of the key instigators is Raukawa trustee and Victoria University accountancy professor, Whatarangī Winiata, whose representations to the department led to its recently-announced commitment to sponsor Maori BCA students at Victoria.

## Potential

Professor Winiata sees the university as another example of Maori "do-it-yourself" enterprise — something, he says, that the Raukawa Trustees have practised for years.

"The present education system has failed to attract and hold Maori students," he says.

He notes the "great reservoir of untapped potential" and regrets that few Maoris are found in decision-making roles.

"Consequently, the majority of decisions affecting Maori people are made by non-Maori people. It is felt that there is a great need for bilingual, bicultural administrators capable of dealing sympathetically with minority group problems and aspirations, and at the same time, being at ease in majority group situations where decisions are made."

He feels a Te Wananga graduate would be at home in both situations.

Invariably any independent move by Maoris to better their lot is met by nervous cries of separatism, and in the education field "educational apartheid".

Such claims were levelled recently at Wellington High School, where Professor Winiata is chairman of the board.

## Open entry

But the Raukawa trustees can discount criticism by pointing to their open entry system — pakeha and Maori are both welcome.

Two of the inaugural intake of eight students are pakeha — the rest, Maori.

And to any suggestion that the trustees are trying to foster an elitist society, they say greater Maori representation in management and professions will have spin-offs for all Maoris — for that matter, all New Zealanders.

Heading the university's interim council is Mr Jim McGregor, the former principal of Wainuiomata College. He has Wanganui rather than Raukawa tribal affiliations, but was chosen because of his earlier contribution to Maori education.

Mr McGregor views the university as a positive way to realise Maori goals.

"Maori people are not getting their fair share of the cake.

"So many things have been tried over the last 100 years or so and nobody has come up with any answers."

He acknowledged efforts in schools to raise attainment levels such as those initiated while he was at Wainuiomata, but said progress was very slow.

## Status

Asked about the status of the degrees, which are to be conferred on students by Te Wananga o Raukawa, he said they would gain acceptance once the quality of the graduates was known.

Mr McGregor cited the American university system, where he said some degrees weren't "worth the paper they were written on".

He views the status question as a simple matter of Te Wananga proving itself.

The university has three functions — teaching, research and archival.

The level of fees is still to be determined, but Mr McGregor says it could amount to \$400 a student a year.

Although the lecturers are giving their services as "a labour of love", the fees are expected to help cover costs at the marae where some of the lectures will be held.

Besides producing BMA graduates, teachers in schools spanned by the Raukawa confederation will be encouraged to enrol for the purpose of "enhancing their understanding" of the region and their pupils.

The research side will focus on the confederation's "human and material resources".

Aspects such as the state of the language, health, land use, and the tribal activities will be studied. It is hoped that the information gained will provide a base around which the Raukawa people can plan their future.

The archival role will involve Te Wananga researchers in a search for past treasures, which will be stored and catalogued as part of the Raukawa heritage, using up-to-date technology of computers, microfilm, video and tapes.

A library to house these treasures will be a feature of the university.

While Te Wananga o Raukawa, is not expected to rival established universities, it hopes to make a name for itself on the strength of its graduation successes ... and prove that Raukawa enterprise is here to stay.