

# Taura Eruera — putting the fire back in the belly

Lunchtime in Auckland city. Sounds float past on a cool breeze — people laughing, talking, eating and coughing as the nagging traffic continues its tirade.

Music teacher, Taura Eruera enjoys



it. Sitting on a bench in the middle of the busy babble he nods to passers-by and keeps an eye and an ear to the street.

His broad face partners a topknot of black hair. He talks easily, articulately and his fingers pluck an imaginery guitar.

"I really like this place. It's got a good feel," he says smiling, a broad smile.

Taura used to be an anthropology lecturer at Auckland University but in his heart he knew it wouldn't last forever.

"I was marking 600 exams and I got up to the 30th when I thought 'hey, what would you rather be doing?' and it was playing music — so I finished marking that exam and left."

Music, he knew, would "put fire back in the belly".

The first flame was lit when the street character, Chiefie entertained Taura's neighbourhood with tunes from his steel-stringed guitar.

Then there were the annual Ratana Church hui in Wanganui with the united sound of 35 brass bands and the heavenly harmony of the choir.

"I never really liked going to church because I was compelled to do so but the music was magic — it was like heaven on earth. I really loved it."

The following years of formal training at Westlake Boys High School left him cold and from there went to university — twice — before graduating with a BA in anthropology and Maori studies.

Taura says: "It was a good but I think I got on their nerves a little bit when I kept asking questions that couldn't be answered.

"People would go away to study a remote island for a year and come back with all sorts of observations. They'd talk about what the chief thought about such-n-such and what his wife thought about this, then I'd say "well, what did the gardener think?" and they'd be stuck because in all the time they were there they only talked to the so-called key people and not the others who mattered just as much."

By the end of 1976 Taura had had his fill of academia and had marked his last exam. Armed with his teaching skills he began to tend to the flickering fire in his belly.

"It was quite hard at first. Like coming out of the third form and going straight into a Ph.D. I didn't have much background but I knew what I wanted."

So for three years Taura stayed at home with his children training his