



Okatia is carried into Palmerston North city. From left is the carver Te Aturangi Clamp, kaumatua, Mac Whakamoe, and Rev. Hapai Winiata (Photo: Evening Standard).

Pouwhenua now stands in City Council building



A pouwhenua representing part of the history of the Manawatu now stands in the Palmerston North City Council building on the edge of the Square.

Carved by Te Aturangi Clamp and named Okatia, the pouwhenua reaches two stories in the entrance-way of the council building.

The spirit of Okatia is represented on the upper torso with the lower reaches colourfully carved in birds and eels and trees. Okatia is the spirit figure reputed to have picked up a gigantic totara tree and carved his way to the sea thus creating the Manawatu gorge and the river.

The carving was done at Palmerston North Teachers Training College, outside the Maori Studies room. Kaumatua Polly Matenga of Rangitane and Matawhai Durie of Te Kauwhata and Rangitane officiated at the completion of the work. Mac Whakamoe put the 44 men who were to carry the pouwhenua, under tapu, and then the three kilometre walk to the council building began.

It was an impressive sight with the pouwhenua being carried amidst waiata and chanting down the main road into the centre of Palmerston North. What was thought by council engineers would take several hours in erecting the pouwhenua, took little time with foundation supports going down to the basement.

The tapu was then taken off the workers who returned to the Training College for kai. Later in the afternoon Okatia was finally blessed by Hapai Winiata in the presence of the Mayor, Brian Ellwood and fellow councillors.