

Soldier finds his "Maoritanga"



Standing left to right: Whaingaroa Walker, Atria Pomare, Felicity Day, Basil Johnson, a kaumatua from Ruatahuna, Pera Tahi, Whare Biddle, Chas Rihari, Adrian Hillary, Bruce Aranga, Dan Heke, Bunny Tumai, Mirinoa Sanford.

Sitting: Brenda Tahi, Margaret Biddle, Charlotte McCreanor, Rana Tahi, Huirangi Waikerepuru and Teariki Mei.

Profile

Bunny Tumai — 18 years in NZ Army — South Vietnam in 1966 and 1968.

At present Warrant Officer in Royal Regiment of the NZ Artillery.

Whakapapa: Mother's side — Ngati Hine of Ngati Hikairo — original marae of her grandmother was Waipapa marae in Kawhia.

Father's side — Ngati Kiriwai — his father was Waikato and his mother was Ngati Whatua.

Own marae is Horahora, in Rangiriri where the poukai celebrations is held on new year's day each year.

Ardent but passive supporter of the King movement, he is one of several kaikorero for the Army. Papakura Camp is represented by Sergeants Heta Tobin (Ngapuhi) and Cliff Waaka (Tuhoe).

Waiouru Camp by Chaplain Sonny Melbourne (Tuhoe), Warrant Officer Junior Manihera (Waikato) and Sergeant Dave Ahuriri (Ngati Porou).

Linton Camp by Warrant Officer Oma Nepia (Kahungunu).

Wellington by Warrant Officer Jeb Brown (Te Aupouri) and Sergeant Ra Paenga (Ngati Porou).

Burnham Camp by Whi Wanoa (Ngati Porou).

WO Tumai is currently based at Ngaruawahia Camp and works in Knox Street, Hamilton.

Maoritanga is learnt at all levels from the marae to polytechnic institutes. The following article is a learning account by Bunny Tumai, a soldier in the Fourth Medium Regiment, Royal N.Z. Artillery.

I was delighted to be told by my superiors I was accepted to attend the Level 3 Maori Language Course at the Polytechnic School in Buckle Street, Wellington in June of this year.

Delighted for a number of reasons. The need to consolidate my personal experience and knowledge gained through reading, to learn tribal history other than my own, to attain that level of proficiency and confidence required to speak at length in any given situation, formal or otherwise.

It is not difficult in assessing why I, and the eleven others who comprised the course class, applied.

For some, it was the desire to 'go back' to the people, to the marae, to the land after having neglected it in the pursuit of career-chasing in the cities and towns where the English language was and will be, the spoken tongue.

For others, it was the chance of learning to understand the Maori, as he was, why he is, and why he is still clinging to the sets of values that only the Maori could fully comprehend, even in this age of changing attitudes.

Personally, it was the gradual decline of my kaumatua meaning there will come a time when there will be no one left and the onus of whaikorero would be left to the likes of us.

So, at the age of 38 years, I did not feel any sense of inferiority about applying, I enjoyed the course even if I was one of the oldest on it.

The breakdown of my fellow students is set out below:

Felicity Day of Wellington: School Teacher.

Dan Heke (Tai Tokerau) of Hataitai: has just completed 20 years in the Army.

Adrian Hillary of Rhodesia: Former Army Officer with his country's Forces.

Hana Jackson (Taranaki) of Auckland: Maori Affairs Dept in Ponsonby.

Basil Johnson of Trentham: Police Sergeant at Porirua College.

Charlotte McCreanor of Wellington: University student, from Christchurch.

Mirinoa Sanford (Tai Tokerau) of Masterton: Of the Post Office in Masterton.

Simon Winterburn (Ngati Raukawa) of Otaki: Well known paraplegic for his sporting efforts.