

Don Ahipene — marae elder

A while ago, a bunch of pretty difficult Maori high school kids came to stay on the Awahou Marae, in Rotorua. Marae elder Don Ahipene smiles as he recounts the story. "These were the hard-case eh, and the girls too". Stuffing food into their pockets at meal time was quickly stopped by Don and his people and replaced with education in marae protocol. By the end of the week the kids, having been treated with consideration and "like human beings", were thriving on the life.



Don cites this example to back up his belief that the marae plays a big part in bolstering Maori identity and cultural awareness. Performing a spirited powhiri to visitors, the diminutive elder reveals a youthful vitality that belies his years.

Later, sitting comfortably in the sun on the maraetea, Don expands on his role as elder for the marae of Ngati Rangiwewehi. A retired carpenter, he and his wife Mei spend their time keeping the marae in order and welcoming visitors, including busloads of school-children from all over New Zealand.

For Don, it is important for Maori and Pakeha to get in touch with New Zealand's indigenous culture. For young Maoris in particular, Don believes there is nothing better than to experience the marae environment — here there is support and "a different atmosphere altogether". Those Maoris

who have lost their cultural link soon gain a pride and identity that comes from knowing their heritage

Speaking of problems facing Maoris in society today, Don believes Maoris have to find solutions themselves. He concedes that on this point there are many different opinions, but thinks the best way to solve problems is to "get down to the drawing board and see what can be done". Don believes the marae is the only place to discuss Maori affairs, as there is always "that air of responsibility... the knowledge you're being helped along by what your forefathers have done".

While optimistic about the future, Don believes it is up to Maoris to learn their language and culture. He admits that on the road ahead there are plenty of difficulties, but says he can draw on his culture to overcome them.

Vern Rice.

Maori rugby league players set to tour Britain

1983 is being looked on as a vintage year for New Zealand Maori rugby league after their representatives beat the touring English professionals, Hull, 16-4 and with a tour to Britain to start in October.

With the Kiwis in the side — there are 11 past and present New Zealand representatives chosen — the team will be a near full international side. Before the tour which begins with a match against Halifax at Thromhall on October 21, the Maori side will play a "test" against Papua New Guinea in Auckland on October 3.

All the signs are there for another pre-tour win. In both 1975 and 1977, the Maoris walloped all opposition, including Papua New Guinea, to win the Pacific Cup on both occasions the trophy was played for.

But if Papua New Guinea are now a full member of the International Rugby League Board, so too have the Maori side grown in strength and status.

The tour to Britain will be a historic one. Not since the Pacific Cup tour in 1975 have the Maoris toured overseas.

The last major tour undertaken was to Australia in 1956 when among the tourist were the Kiwis, A. Berryman (coach of the 1983 tour), J. Murray, J. Ratima and G. Turner.

Among the missing eligible Kiwis were Bill Sorensen, Keith Roberts and John Yates. If they had been present on tour, it was the opinion of the tour manager, Ernie Asher that the team would

have lost only one of the 14 games instead of eight.

Even higher hopes are held for the 1983 tourists. Their tour will be hosted by the British Amateur Rugby League Association because the English Rugby League could not fit in the tour as an international one in a tight schedule.

Eight games against amateur sides will be played. Apart from the opening match, four days after they arrive in England, the games are:

Sunday, October 23, v Batley at Heavy Woollen, Batley;

Wednesday, October 26, v Humberside at Craven Park, Hull;

Sunday, October 30, v Barrow at Barrow;

Wednesday, November 2, v West Cumberland at Whitehaven;

Saturday, November 5, v Oldham at Watershedding, at Oldham;

Wednesday, November 9, v York at Wiggington, York;

Saturday, November 12, Test v Barla at Boulevard, Hull.

The team chosen will be captained by the Manukau captain, Ian Bell, aged 28, a second row forward who can hook and has the turn of speed to play in the backs. His vice-captain will be fellow 1983 Kiwi Ron O'Regan from the City-Newton club, Auckland. Aged 26 he has