

## TAONGA TELL ALL AT MUSEUM



On 14 December the Museum opened a taonga Maori exhibition which is to remain on display for four months. The exhibition includes over 130 pieces from the Taonga Maori (Maori treasures) collection. It will be the showpiece for visitors over the summer period. These rare pieces show the range of taonga that the museum holds and include carvings from old meeting houses, greenstone and whalebone adornments, a wide range of weaponry, whariki, korowai, piupiu, and hunting and agricultural implements. Some have not been publicly displayed since they were put into the museum's vault in the 1950s. Some were donated to the museum and others were deposited as long-term loans.

The exhibition titled *He Whakaaraara: An Awakening* rouses visitors to the richness

of the traditional Maori art from the region. It also informs them of the state of the museum's collection.

Last year, Tairawhiti Museum carried out an audit of its Taonga Maori Collection, the first since the museum opened in 1954. The museum employed an independent auditor to answer three basic questions:

What and how many taonga does the museum have?

Where are they located in the museum?

What state are they in?

This was the first in a series of audits that the museum is undertaking on its collections which total over 100,000 items. *He Whaka-ara-ara* tells visitors what the audit found.



*Sir Henare Ngata accompanied by Dr Apirana Mahuika (left)*

Five days before his 90th birthday Sir Henare Ngata did us the honour of opening *He Whaka-ara-ara*, being the sole survivor of the original Museum Maori Committee that operated in the 1950s. Sir Henare gave a wonderful address of reminiscences, recalling some of the key personalities involved in the establishment of the museum, including Leo Fowler and Rongo Halbert.

## Summer Lectures Feature Race Relations And Settlements

Race relations and progress on Treaty of Waitangi settlements were the subject of the museum's summer lecture series held in December. Race Relations Commissioner Joris De Bres and the Chief Judge of the Maori Land Court and chairman of the Waitangi Tribunal, Judge Joe Williams were the speakers.

Joris De Bres focussed on the key race relations issues for the future and how New Zealanders needed to develop a common understanding of them. He discussed the recent anti-terrorism raids at Ruatoki saying, "Most of us are still wondering what lay behind such an extensive and forceful operation; we find it hard to believe that it could be justified under the Terrorism Suppression Act." He left his listeners with the understanding that New Zealand in 50 years time will find that as many as half



*Joris De Bres*

of its population will identify with more than one ethnicity.

The vision of the country's leaders would determine the future development of New Zealand society, was the key to Judge Joe Williams' address. The judge gave a brief outline of events in Gisborne in the 19th century, such as the siege of



*Judge Joe Williams*

Waerenga-a-Hika Pa, before outlining the attempts by 20th century Maori leaders to use the machinery of empire to deal with the trauma of colonisation. If the present round of settlements are to stick, he said, New Zealand has to resolve issues of criminality and low Maori achievement in health and education.

## Education

Another successful year has passed and we would not have been able to do it without the support of our community, local schools, principals, teachers, parents and caregivers. Thank you to all those people and organisations that have supported our

education programmes. We look forward to working with you in 2008. Te Unga Mai and the traveling C-Company education programs were definitely the highlights of our year, with many schools booked in for future lessons in 2008.

For teachers planning units for 2008 we have a range of exciting programmes that will extend and enrich your students learning. Information on all our programmes and exhibitions for 2008 can be found at [www.tairawhitimuseum.org.nz](http://www.tairawhitimuseum.org.nz)



## Collections

This year's repatriations included two large Maori carvings from England, at the donor's expense. From New Zealand we accepted a former local photographer's memorabilia, historic photographs, PhotoNews, letters and papers of an important early settler, also a fireplace by a significant Maori carver as a loan.

Items donated locally included historic photos, clubs' and groups' archives, theatrical programmes. Also a donor spotted pots by a former local potter in the Salvation Army shop. This was a great donation as we had none of that potter's work. Inscribed on the pots' bases is "Bola Silt".

We are extremely grateful for Professor Jack Richards' philanthropy. He kindly donated more Fine Arts items in addition to his annual underwriting of Toi Houkura's annual Ruanuku award to the top student. That artwork enters our Fine Arts collection, enabling us to accumulate a contemporary Maori Art collection of emerging local artists and to track Toi Houkura's development.

We thank all donors, each acquisition being another piece of the jigsaw that is this region's fascinating history.

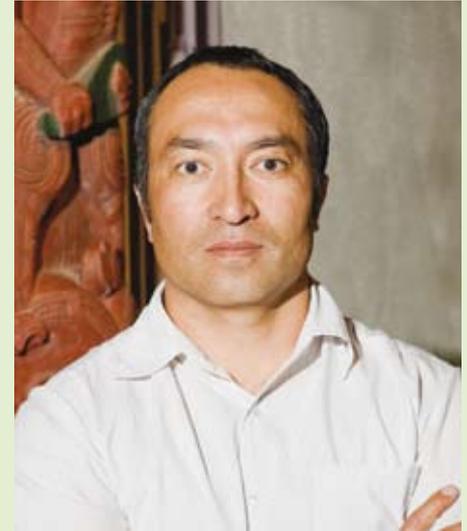
I started in the position of Research Manager / Kaitiaki Maori in late January 2005. Prior to this I had come from the Oil Tool industry in Taranaki. In October 2004, I decided to move home to Gisborne after having lived away for a number of years. I had also worked for Te Papa as their oral historian there and before that I was a reference librarian and advisor to the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington.

My job is more or less a 50/50 split between answering all the research enquiries for the museum and caring for and looking after the Taonga Maori collection.

I receive a range of research enquiries from people all over the world looking for things like information on their grandparents, the history of a particular building in town, or PhD students researching a particular carving style. The resources held by the Tairāwhiti Museum are rich and varied for such a small

## Staff Spotlight

by Jody Wyllie



organisation. Recently I have been busy overseeing the Taonga Maori audit, of which the first phase has just been completed. I have also been working on identifying taonga with a history to the Tairāwhiti held in other museums around New Zealand and a very unusual and interesting project of repatriating or reburial of a number of human remains held in the museum's collection.

There is never a dull moment in this job and I meet interesting people every day.



Judge Joe Williams and Arapata Hakiwai join Whāngara-mai-i-tāwhiti in a haka at the opening of He Whakaaraara: An Awakening.

EXHIBIT  
C A F E

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# EXHIBITIONS

07-12-07 - 20-01-08

*Whakawhiti - te - ra*

Toihoukura annual contemporary Maori art

14-12-07 - 31-03-08

*He Whakaaraara / An Awakening*

Taonga Maori museum collection

25-01-07 - 16-03-08

*Famous Faces II*

Profiles of the region's personalities



*Tekoteko o Manuruhi, Dave Cameron*

## Museums and communities

The following comments came from Arapata Hakiwai (acting Kaihautu at Te Papa Tongarewa) when he spoke at the opening of *He Whakaaraara: An Awakening*. In praising Tairawhiti Museum for auditing its collections he said:

- The new anthropology of museums actively involves its communities and people in everything it does, if indeed they want a future.
- They must reconnect with the peoples and communities whose treasures they hold; otherwise they are irrelevant and arguably have no future.
- Museums continue to audit their collections as part of good museum practice and as necessary elements for their accreditation and registration schemes.
- Given competing priorities for more visible outputs like exhibitions and visitation, the care of collections is often put on the back burner or relegated to something to do later.

We apologise for not stating who the writer of the Friends article in the last issue was. It was the president of the Friends Association - Richard Brooking.



*Arapata Hakiwai supported by national kapa haka champions - Whangara-mai-i-tawhiti*

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\$25 Single  
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