

He Raumaharatanga

Our history

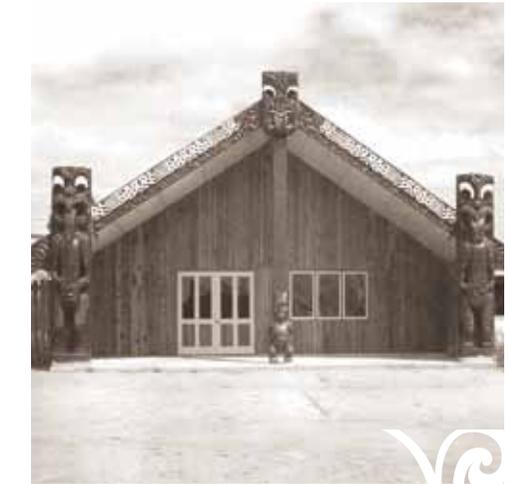
Te Wānanga o Aotearoa was founded to provide training and education for those who were being failed by the mainstream education system. The genesis of what would become Te Wānanga o Aotearoa emerged in 1983 as the brainchild of Te Awamutu College board of governors' member Rongo Wetere and Māori Studies teacher Iwi Kohuru (Boy) Mangu. The two men wanted to provide a 'marae of learning' as an educational alternative for the large number of predominantly Māori students being expelled from Te Awamutu College.

Their solution was to lead a group of these students to create a whareniui on the college's grounds. The resulting structure, O-Tāwhao Marae, was opened on 26th April 1985 and is still used to introduce students to te ao Māori (the world of Māori). Although the project encountered resistance at the time, O-Tāwhao is now recognised as an invaluable resource for the college and Te Awamutu community.

In 1984, Mr Wetere led a project to create the Waipā Kōkiri Arts Centre. The centre would

provide further educational opportunities for those involved in the O-Tāwhao Marae project and engage others in the community who had no qualifications. The aim was to provide these people with a future beyond the dole queues and the prison bars that beckoned. Although some government funding was available, further fundraising and, in some cases, personal loans from founders were needed to complete the centre.

On completion, new government funding became available to finance operations at



the Waipā Kōkiri Arts Centre. This enabled the centre to expand its programmes from whakairo (carving), raranga (weaving) and te reo Māori to include office administration, computer technology studies and trades training programmes in building and plumbing. The centre also got involved in community projects, including renovating marae throughout the country and producing carving and weaving to adorn these buildings.

During the 1980s, the kaupapa of the Waipā Kōkiri Arts Centre increased Māori participation in tertiary training by taking education to the people, particularly those without qualifications. With travel a major barrier for many, the founders began opening campuses in other areas, including Te Kūiti, Hamilton and Manukau. In 1989, Waipā Kōkiri Arts Centre changed its name to Aotearoa Institute and, shortly afterwards, became the first registered private training establishment (under NZQA) in the country.

In 1987, Dr Buck Nin (a leading New Zealand educationalist and artist) and Mr Wetere

advanced the concept of creating a tertiary education institute, or wānanga. Dr Nin believed that, by gaining tertiary status, Aotearoa Institute would earn recognition for its qualifications throughout New Zealand and the world. In 1988, the pair submitted an application to the Ministry of Education and the following year the government changed the Education Act to open the way for recognition of wānanga as tertiary education institutions.

Aotearoa Institute lobbied government for a further six years before being granted tertiary status in 1993. This gave the organisation statutory recognition as a wānanga and placed it alongside universities, polytechnics and teachers' training colleges. In 1994, Aotearoa Institute changed its name to Te Wānanga o Aotearoa to reflect this change in status.

Te Wānanga o Aotearoa experienced phenomenal growth during the early 2000s (from 3,127 students in 2000 to 66,756 students in 2004) and quickly become the

largest tertiary education institution in the country; however, there was a price to pay for this rapid expansion. The organisation was groaning under the weight of its own popularity; it was struggling to keep pace with the insatiable desire for learning amongst those who had previously been sidelined by an exclusive education system. In 2005, the government appointed a group of Crown managers to help consolidate the organisation and put in place systems and processes more befitting a nationwide institution of this magnitude. This work was completed in 2008.

Te Wānanga o Aotearoa is now in a transformative phase focused on exploring what it means to be a 21st Century, values-driven, Māori organisation operating within predominantly non-Māori systems. We do not seek change for its own sake; we seek to revisit traditional ways of being and doing in search of effective strategies that more genuinely reflect the heart of this organisation and its stated commitment to Māori and to all New Zealanders.