

rested for protesting at Bastion Point." "Ka whawhai tonu."

It's not that Roma, likes to jump on the 'band-wagon', she just wants to give a helping hand to those who need it. "Sometimes this isn't easy, when there are children to look after, and the work you're doing gets you down. Its hard trying to manage everything, but its better than not doing anything, and moaning about what might have been.

She sometimes feels the pressure of peoples' expectations of her. They come to her for answers, which she doesn't always have, because she too is still learning.

As we sat talking, women at the centre kept interrupting. "Roma where are the T-towels? Where's the coffee? What time's tea?" She gave me a knowing shrug, and answered the questions.

She says, she gets annoyed with herself for not having all the answers, and tries to be better prepared the next time.

She is her own worst critic, "I seem to have spent all my life just bumming out", she says.

Her criticism isn't only reserved for herself, she is also critical of what she sees happening in Rotorua.

"Flashy motels are going up all over the place, while Rotorua people live in sub-standard houses", she said.

That's not to say, that Rotorua is a poor city, but it has "a disproportionate distribution of wealth, with Maori people being the main victims", she said.

"There is a lot of 'deep-rooted' racism in Rotorua, but its such a sensitive issue that it's played down. It's safer to ignore it, than to do anything about it."

Roma says, Rotorua has an equal number of Maori and Pakeha, but 'we don't even get half a page in the local newspaper'.

"Our culture is ripped off us and commercialised, because Maori have little control over tourism, which is the main area where our culture is bastardised", she said.

She realises these problems aren't unique, but says Rotorua, as one of the major tourist centres, is fast becoming known as 'plastic tiki and haka boogy land'.

Rotorua has a lot to offer, native bush, diversity of scenery, unique ways of life at Whakarewarewa and Ohinemutu, and a wealth of Maori culture, says Roma.

And this is why she is sad. She can see it all being lost because of the emphasis on the 'quick buck'.

When asked, "where do you go from here?", she replied, "where do WE go from here?, and threw it open to the other women at the centre.

"Well at the moment we are all blowing up balloons. One of our women is getting married on Saturday, and we are helping-out with preparations, she said taking a breather.

Supervisor teaches women's crafts

By May Parakoti-Lewis



Emily Schuster is a person proud to be able to pass on Maori crafts and has the perfect job for it.

She is the Women's Cultural Supervisor at the Maori Arts and Crafts Institute in Rotorua.

Emily began working there in 1969 where a position was open for someone to teach Maori womens' handcrafts.

"It was something I could give of myself to the people," she said.

Emily organises courses in craftwork and supervises the guides as well as the women who demonstrate the crafts.

The Institute also runs two week school holiday weaving courses for young girls and regular courses for anybody willing to learn.

The Institute also runs an 'outreach programme'. The aim is to teach women all over the country about Maori crafts, working with flax, taniko or tukutuku.

Emily Schuster was born in 1927 and has lived in Rotorua all her life. She was brought up by her grand-parents and although she didn't go to high school she learnt every aspect of Maori crafts.

"I had my knuckles rapped at school for speaking Maori and was pulled by the ear at home for speaking English."

Emily feels that Maori people in Rotorua are fortunate. "We have gone from a pa to a village to a town. Yet we still have a village life around us."

She says Rotorua is one place where an overseas visitor can meet a Maori for longer than just a performance in a concert party.

"They have the chance of a better understanding of the people, because the people here live the culture."

"My role is to preserve the crafts, I think it is good if I can teach a person to make a kete. If they sell that kete, they are bringing in money for the family and retaining the craft at the same time."

The children are able to know both the Maori and the Pakeha worlds.

"Our kids go out to play space invaders and learn about computers. When they come home they can learn to weave flax."

Emily thinks the Maori people have done well for themselves in the past 100 years, because they have done as Sir Apirana Ngata advised.

... "Ko to ringa ki nga rakau, a te Pakeha Hei ora mo to tinana.

Ko to ngakau ki nga taonga, a o tipuna, hei tikitiki mo to mahunga"...