

Heart of Maoridom

Ara Taumata

"Rotorua is the heart of Maoridom," says Rotorua senior probation officer, Dan Whata.

He says the people know the value of nga tikanga Maori and also that it's money that makes the world go round.

Dan says a lot of Maori use the tourist

industry to preserve their culture and at the same time make money.

He says the jobs from the industry have enabled the Maori people to stay in the Rotorua area rather than moving away as in other areas.

Rotorua has retained a rural and personal touch because of this says Dan.

"The area is steeped in tradition and is culturally rich."

He says previously most Maori in the area were in service roles catering for tourists but now they're getting more businesslike. He cites Maori incorporations and trusts and the newcomer in the business field, Maori International.

"We want to become decision makers."

In his own way, Dan Whata is doing his bit. He's part of a small group of professional Maori people getting together to pool their knowledge for the good of all.

Born in Rotorua, Dan spent most of his working life in the town. He was born Daniel Atarea Whata in Rotoiti and is of Ngati Pikiao.

He went to primary school at the Rotoiti and Whangamarino Native Schools. He attended Rotorua Boys' High School and Raukura High.

He remembers that getting to school was an ordeal. "We used to catch the workers' bus, get dropped off, then walk several miles to school. Being in the country we had to get up early, so we were leaving early for school and arriving back in total darkness."

When he left school he worked for a short time as a carpenter then joined Maori Affairs Department in Rotorua.

He left for the Probation Department in 1964 disillusioned over having to introduce the 'pepper-potting' policy. A government policy to spread Maori housing throughout the community.

Dan says that Maoris were 'heave ho'd' into cities from their rural homes without adequate preparation for the hurly-burly of city life.

As a Probation officer he said he's had the opportunity to help reform and rehabilitate young Maori people who were getting into trouble with the law.

Unfortunately, he says that the problem is never ending especially with the growing problems associated with unemployment and education.



**FACES OF
ROTORUA**