



Kaiako Waipa Whaanga (at right) with her charges.

## Nga ringa e rua, nga reo e rua

**B**i-cultural education is being taken seriously by the community of Omaha in Hawke's Bay. That becomes clear after talking to the people who run the kohanga reo and the primary and intermediate school which sit next to each other down the road from the marae.

Waipa Whaanga is the kaiako at the kohanga which originally started out run from the meeting house some four years ago.

She is assisted by kuia and koroua and young women training under the national kohanga reo trust scheme.

About thirty tamariki are cared for with a waiting list for further children. Tamehana Nuku is the administrator who returned from farm administration work a few years ago to give a hand. He operates out of the kohanga.

He said a Commodore 2000 series computer was needed to keep tabs on the thirteen kohanga in Heretaunga under the umbrella of Te Rau Awhina Trust Training Branch which employs 72 kohanga trainees.

The computer collates wages and also monitors the training modules of the national kohanga reo trust.

The national trust has instigated a computer training programme for kohanga throughout the country and Tamehana said a young woman from Waipukurau represented the Takitimu district.

He said it was hoped to use her later as her proficiency increased, to input in-

formation from the Takitimu district to a central data storage base in Wellington. Other information would then also be available to other kohanga around the country.

The linkup between these computerised aids and the Maori world is very evident at Omaha kohanga, in the free flow of the Maori language and the children between it and the school next door.

It was hard to distinguish between kohanga and school children especially with the school roll of around 164 being 99% Maori.

A pre-school class, run by Janice Edwards, has existed for a long time. It stemmed from the time before the kohanga when it was necessary to have some familiarisation step between home and school life.

Principal, Tony Clark said there were no play centres or kindergarten in the area and the pre-school was very necessary.

Apart from the principal, all other seven teachers including the remedial reading teacher, Miriama Hutana, are Maori.

The deputy principal is Hawea To-

moana with Ngaio Gillies, Karen Taylor, John Turi, June Underhill, Arthur Savage and Janice Edwards making up the team.

Omaha has had bi-lingual status for around five years which means while it has had extra Department of Education help, it has also been under scrutiny more by educationalists and teachers curious to find what makes it tick. Principal Tony Clark said most seemed to want to hear Maori language being spoken to the children in the classroom, and then go away secure that they have seen it all.

At the present time the school is also trialing the new Maori curriculum for selected primary schools throughout the country.

In a discussion with the assembled teachers during an extended morning break, punctuated by one false alarm that saw teachers and children racing to their classes, several thoughts emerged.

One was that these teachers found it much more freeing being able to teach with all of their minds and skills in a Maori community. Previous schools they said, no matter how committed to 'taha Maori', put limits on Maori things, and worried that subjects like English and reading were being neglected.

At Omaha they said they felt free in being Maori as a way of teaching. With tamariki from the adjacent kohanga reo they were encouraged to extend themselves in Maori and develop awareness