

True colours

The thrust by Maori concerns into the media field is making some show their true colours.

At last year's Broadcasting Tribunal hearings for the third television channel warrant, one of the contenders, United Telecast Corporation said it would establish a Maori advisory committee to advise it on Maori programming and affairs. It proposed a partnership with another applicant, Southern Cross Television, whereby networking would see a regional broadcast to Waikato, Bay of Plenty and Taranaki.

The corporation had engaged research that showed 15 percent of the broadcast region was Maori, in contrast with 9 percent for the rest of the country. It also promised preference to Maori job applicants, all things being equal. What Tu Tangata would like to know is why the late Maori run by such contenders fronted by ex-Television

New Zealand staff? Where was all this commitment before? However United's proposal is in keeping with the other contenders who have rushed to include ethnic content in their applications.

And the Broadcasting Corporation had some explaining to do when it told Parliament's communications committee that it would not lose financially if it spent \$84 million backing Aotearoa Broadcasting Systems' bid for the third television channel. Chief executive Ian Cross said any of the other channel contenders would take away between \$30 and \$90 million in advertising revenue a year from existing media and ABS was the least commercially competitive. Mr Cross said also that ABS would complement the two existing channels with Maori programmes that Television New Zealand did not have the air time or resources for. Well it is nice to know where Maori programmes (programmes about, not necessarily for the

Maori), fit in with Government broadcasting.

Along with Radio New Zealand's sudden awareness of the emerging demand for Maori language programmes, the airwaves are hotting up with promises, but unfortunately, they're all in English.

That's why it's nice to hear support from the Jewish community for vastly increased Maori language programmes in the broadcasting media. The New Zealand Jewish Council told the Royal Commission into Broadcasting that Israel allocated 25 percent of its broadcasting time to Arab language programmes to accommodate 20 percent of its population. The council said that the Jewish people in New Zealand struggle and sacrifice so that their children should become familiar with Hebrew, and the indigenous people of this country should be able to call on the national broadcasting system to fulfil a similar need.

Knowing yourself will close the gap

Maori representation in the media has always been outnumbered by our counterparts. But with the second Maori journalism course being run in Rotorua this year, the gap is closing.

And there's more good news. Some parts of the media are starting to take their Maori news more seriously. In a ten year span, Maori news coverage has almost doubled in newspapers, radio and TV. That's why a Maori reporters hui was held at Owata Marae in Rotorua.

It's become less fashionable and more of a need to have a brown face in a newsroom. It's as if the media industry has just discovered there is another half to this country's population.

As is usual for a Maori media hui, outside help was called for. Chris Winitana directed the course for the three day duration. Jenny Kaa, with the Vocational Training Council, talked about the importance to set up a national network of Maori reporters.

She impressed on the 15 listeners, the importance of building a support base. While the numbers of Maori journalists have grown in 20 years, there are still too few Maori journalists. This fact alone lends weight to her concern for

Maori journalists to work together.

"The distance between reporters is no obstacle. If you need help, or even just a korero, there are people around to listen and laugh with," she said.

Regular contact with each other and whanaunga was one of the obvious methods to build this support base. Sharing story ideas and hang ups a journalist is facing with this support base could possibly help ones work performance and lessen the stress.

Derek Fox, of Te Karere fame, supported Jenny's take. When he first started in the industry 20 years ago, he could count the number of Maori reporters on less than one hand.

One of his concerns was not the Maori news that is being covered but all the news the media doesn't deem to be important.

Like the ones about the kuia living down the road, who hasn't won an MBE or anything famous. And the real reasons why Hawaiiiki Nui didn't land at Auckland on the first go. In fact, he says, the media didn't do justice to the Hawaiiiki Nui voyage. Or the rastafarian case in Ruatoria.

The media coverage on both of these tidings barely skimmed the surface. No media deemed it important that Hawaiiiki Nui covered the course 700 years after our tupuna without the lux-

uries of the Whitbread contenders, including a compass.

Or, in the Ruatoria case, Pakeha interviews only included the police and armed offenders squad that was there. None of them thought to consult the local people, or maybe they couldn't approach them like Derek did.

Instead, heaps of money is being spent on making documentaries that don't even directly affect New Zealanders.

"Everybody knows about a guy named Harold who lost his eye at Hastings. But hardly anyone knows about the canoes that landed in Aotearoa nearly 700 years ago. Or how tribes were set up in Aotearoa. Or that Maori people have occupied Aotearoa for over a thousand years."

Tom Winitana discussed the importance of Maori perception when reporting. Identifying with ones spiritual, physical, psychological and mental state. Becoming familiar with ones surroundings. Getting back to the earth and appreciating the trees, sea or marae for their solace. Getting back with the essence of being Maori.

These were only a few topics he touched on. The general message was that if you don't know where you are with yourself, there's no way you can help anyone else.