

they're seen and judged by their work. We don't treat them as if they're at school, but say, this is how it goes down at work."

Obviously job opportunities in Turangi are limited and apart from NZ Forest Service work and some tourism work with the Tourist Hotel Corporation, most of the students have to look outside of Turangi and the district. Kararaina says the young women are encouraged to talk with their families about this so that its implications are understood.

Six years on, the Communication and Human Relationships course is still serving the district and Kararaina is now looking to once again take on the bureaucratic dragon and find more on campus accommodation. At present she works out of a converted storeroom and three prefabs. She says she's learnt a lot about the system and her ability to cope with it. Coming from such an individual, her vision for the future is sure to mean headaches for some bureaucrats along with blessings for the community.

The Aroha Huirua Teepa is the first Maori woman to sit on a prison parole board. She took up her appointment last October on the Turangi District Prison Board along with another Maori man, Keina Tao Takarangi.

Aroha, who proudly gives her credentials as a mother of three children, thinks it was her Maori language skills that tipped the appointment her way. She confesses to not being at all familiar with the justice system of sentencing and parole and says she had never been to court before. With that sort of background, she says she really had her eyes opened to what goes on in prison and how both sides of the prison fence view each other.

In her capacity as a listening ear on the parole board, she's made aware of the bitterness and anger of inmates. Some of this is directed at former associates and some at prison officers.

Sometimes she says she doesn't know what to believe. This bitterness shows

itself in 'staunchness', not communicating with the 'screws', or other inmates. This is continued when inmates come up before the parole board. It's meant to be a time when the inmate gets a chance to talk with the board about getting out.

Aroha says the Turangi board meets monthly and only deals with people having sentences of seven years or less. The priority is that inmates have a stable whanau to be looked after by and that there is the chance of a job. However she says some of the people coming up for parole don't want to talk to us as they see us as their 'jailers'. And if nothing is said, they usually go back inside.

She asks for the family name and lets the person know if she knows some of their whanaunga. By non-threatening exchanges she lets them know she is interested in them. By this time she may be able to pick if they can respond in Maori. Usually she says, they're overjoyed to hear their own language and start rattling off to her. Sometimes she says that rattling takes the form of abuse to people who may be in the room, but are blissfully unaware of what's being said.

It's in these exchanges that the anger and hurt surfaces, over injustices both real and sometimes not so real. At times the inmates question what she is doing on the side of the jailers, but most times she is seen as a help. She lets the other four board members know what's been said, and they can then ask their own questions of the person.

Most times Aroha says the decision to grant parole doesn't take that long and it's usually done with the inmate present. In some cases the inmate is asked to wait outside, and in some of those cases, says Aroha, the inmate

gets hoha and declines to come back into the room.

Aroha is very conscious of the Maori presence in prison with the two in the Turangi district, Rangipo and Hautu, contributing their fair share. Since she came on board, in keeping with the recent thrust to place inmates back sooner in the community, over a hundred people have been given parole. But Aroha says it's usually not the state funded Maatua Whangai scheme that can take the credit but small operations usually with ex-prisoners involved.

Aroha has also come into contact with the Maoritanga nurtured by the prison system, a Maoritanga that is different from that of the outside world. First of all she's noticed that a lot of the Maori inmates come from broken homes with a lot also having been brought up by grandparents. With some, the return to their birth parents was traumatic as they didn't get the attention they used to get from the old ones. This in turn caused a misplaced view of authority, and antisocial behaviour. For some inmates that's the Maoritanga they take into prison.

Others, whilst inside, take up any club activity which gives them some freedom and Maori club falls into this category along with crafts. It's an opportunity to distract the mind from the prison system. For some it becomes meaningful as they regain pride in something they can do themselves, but others may just see it as a staunch thing to do.

Aroha has found that as a group, gang members don't take to this Maoritanga. But she sees that older gang members are more open to change than younger ones who see serving time as a way of proving themselves, the ultimate in staunchness.

The search for whakapapa too takes on a sense of urgency for some inmates, but in some cases it too is a way of keeping something intact from the 'screws', a part of oneself that society cannot take away like freedom. And then after leaving prison this Maoritanga is discarded says Aroha because it has served its purpose, a sort of temporary identity not needed anymore.

The high incidence of incest is also a concern of Aroha, who says it's an unspoken disgrace in many Maori families, especially the ones she sees inside. She says although the stories she hears at times from inmates are frightening, she intends giving her best in her three year term on the board. She says she's no more than a listening ear for her people. Although at times her taringa burn with the kohimuhimu she picks up, she's staunch in keeping her ear to this particular keyhole of the Justice door.

Carolyn Porika and Aroha Teepa in lively discussion at the weekly flax-weaving session of Binnie Karena in Turangi.

