

The Education of Maori

Arapera Blank
 Tu mai ra,
 Nga kai-hautu, kai-tiaki.
 E ki ra!
 "He atua, he tangata"?
 He wahine, he tangata!
 Take your places,
 Leaders, guardians.
 Who says,
 "A god, a man"?
 A woman, a man!

When I look back on my childhood during the 1930s and 40s in an isolated Maori village, I am sharply reminded of what makes the Maori, of my generation in particular, different from the Pakeha. Aspirations were different. Schooling was different. Goals were different. Upbringing was different. Families were large in comparison with the Pakeha's. Incomes were too small. Everyone spoke Maori fluently. Each one of us knew who we were and was able to recite with ease our ancestral history, tribal affiliations, folklore and customs.

Every parent appreciated having

girls in the family. Like their mothers, they assumed housekeeping responsibilities as soon as they were able. They looked after little brothers, big brothers and little sisters, and also worked on the farm and in the garden. Their brothers worked on the farm. Grandparents also contributed their share, but often moved from one household to another because other sons and daughters needed assistance.

The education, then, for girls, began in the home. My grandmother, for instance, taught me how to make bread, and how to cook a meal for twelve people. The cooking was never inspiring, but it was, at least, substantial. By the time girls had reached the age of eleven most could cook, wash and iron clothes, ride a horse, milk cows, plant kumaras, grow potatoes, and look after babies. At least they had responsibility.

On the whole, parents' aspirations for girls didn't advance much beyond their completing primary school, and getting married to someone who would provide a decent home, and who would not treat his wife too harshly. To gain academic success a girl depended on the sympathy and understanding of an exceptional parent, a teacher and other relatives in the community.

Some children were often absent from school because of ill-health — they suffered from tuberculosis, ear and nose troubles and scabies. Sometimes they stayed at home because they had no presentable clothing, sometimes, because of the difficulty of coping with learning in the foreign language, English. I still remember some children who never uttered a word in class. Getting up in front of a class to give a morning talk must have been sheer agony. The same children would be most articulate in the playground or in the shelter shed on a Monday morning. Here they would give an animated summary in Maori of the Saturday night serial at the local cinema. Speaking Maori was forbidden at school so certain children were selected to watch out for teachers.

Success rate

I remember being reprimanded by a senior inspector for my observation that Maori children were more successful academically in boarding schools. He said to me, "Of course they would be! What is happening is that the cream of Maori potential is being siphoned off to these schools, and how can you expect the average teacher at a district high school to produce the same rate of success!" But this was only one of the reasons. If parents were struggling with getting a living, and ex-

We've got the Winner!



Starlet. The Giantkiller!

Starlet outperforms field in Motogard Group 2 (up to 1300cc class) and Toyotas filled 5 of the first 6 positions!

Put yourself behind the wheel today at:

You're so right
TOYOTA

Wrightcars
 285 Cashel St,
 Christchurch.
 Telephone 798530.

