

# Justice takes a wider role in Kawakawa

Wigged judges and learned counsel are rarely seen in the Kawakawa courthouse, that is unless they want to learn how to carve bone or weave flax. Because you see the Kawakawa courthouse is now the Community house.

Co-ordinator, Lori Dodds says the changearound was due to a community survey carried out by volunteers to establish community needs. From this survey the need for a community centre was evident and with the practical, financial and moral support of the Justice Department, the Kawakawa courthouse assumed a new role.

"We aim to provide people with mental, social and physical support and the climate to learn new skills as well," says Lori Dodds.

Local writer Ani Hona-Bosch compiled this report for Tu Tangata.

The activities offered by the House are proudly posted on the notice board, and every day is accounted for. I was interested in two of the classes — the Bone Carving on Mondays and the Flax Weaving on open day, Thursday.

Lori went on to say, "To establish a need for the community, we did a survey of fifty families from two country areas to establish problem areas. We had an 100% return, using six local interviewers. The sample were aged from 14 to 80 plus. Of these 50% were pakeha 40% were Maori and 10% classified themselves as Others, being part Maori. Their occupations ranged from students to professional. The full range.

Three problem areas emerged. Stress and how to cope with it; Family budgeting and Marriage enhancement and by this they mean; How to make their marriages as a whole better and more satisfying. Perhaps this was the main area as it involved stress, family money and life.

This House is for the people. It belongs to them not to the Justice department or the Health department. It is a place where they can drop in for a chat a cuppa or a rest. It is also a place where they can have a go at the activities offered. We are offering a Marae type situation and there is a lot that goes on here that can and do involve people.

We have a nursery or play room and other facilities. Although we are involved with redecorating at the moment, the House is still being used. We've had good publicity from our local papers, yet there are still those that don't know we exist."

I returned for the Monday class of bone carving and met the people for whom the house was named. To the sound of bone being sawn and filed, I became aware of what Lori meant when she said, "people need to be involved. To work together and side by side." I met the weaving tutor learning to carve bone from a young man. People encouraged each other and praised each others work. The House hummed with the sound of people.

I remembered Lori's words of the interview.

"We suspected that there were homes around that had a lot of stress in

it as part of their life style. There had to be. With the economic climate of today, children not knowing where they were going or what they were going to do job-wise, there had to be. We didn't think the survey would show this up so strongly. To provide some answers to these questions, we hope to run support groups with speakers and caring people to advise those who need help!"

Lori sees her role as that of a co-ordinator. "I am merely a shadowy figure in the background. I make sure that the House is used and used fully and that my voluntary workers are happy. If they are happy then those that come here will be too. We have a steering committee who meet regularly. We have a co-ordinator who looks after the play room an activities co-ordinator and I look after all the others. We involve the local college students and we have local people who spend a lot of time working around here.

We have been open since May 1982. In that time I have often wondered if we are heading in the right direction — in terms of our fulfilling a need. I think it is happening, but it's happening slowly.

The most satisfying thing that I personally did was when last year, I taught



**Mrs Lori Dodds, Community House co-ordinator.**

a Maori lady how to do taniko weaving. She came to the House to find someone to teach her and I was here. A Pakeha woman teaching a Maori woman. She has since made three taniko belts.

I believe that if the voluntary workers were paid workers, they would give better service, work harder and feel their worth."

Lori is well respected and loved. She was described by many I spoke to as 'sincere, caring and a very good person.'

This is a Community effort for a community need. Their house belongs to them. The programmes will only stand as strong as the people make it. Yet, it stands. Kia kaha, kia u, kia manawanui.

## Community House, Kawakawa.

