

Royal Powhiri at Poho-o-Rawiri, Gisborne



A Royal precedent was set at the powhiri to Prince Charles and Princess Diana in that the three taiaha men were brothers, Barney, Nick and Prince Tupara of Gisborne.

Barney carried out the wero to Prince Charles and placed the rakau wero in his path onto Poho-o-Rawiri marae, Gisborne. His brothers, Nick and Prince were safeguarding his every movement on either side of the marae.

For them all it was a proud moment, as Barney said "It is an honour to do the wero and represent the people, this marae."

Barney was taught the wero by Moni Tamanau while attending Gisborne High and passed the experience on to his younger brother Nick. Barney says he learnt the basic principles such as not hitting the ground with the taiaha or exposing the armpits. From there on he says it is a personal interpretation.

He was chosen with his brothers for the wero last Christmas, and it presented some problems because he works as a solicitor in Auckland. However he was able to get in touch with someone else with taiaha experience also in Auckland, Bub Wehi. The two discussed the training and approach but it was not until a couple of weeks before the official welcome party that Barney got to try out on Poho-o-Rawiri. Another taiaha man, Huri Callaghan checked our Barney's interpretation and gave some advice.

"I was very nervous a week before but it came right at the dress rehearsal". To prepare himself spiritually for the wero Barney abstained from alcohol for some weeks before. He said he also had to attune himself to the wairua of the occasion to uphold the mana of the people.

Barney sees his role at the powhiri and his work as a solicitor in Auckland, linking up. He says Maori youth he sees in the courts haven't got the backup he's got and don't experience the emotional security he has.

"To them such a traditional welcome appears meaningless because they're struggling to stay whole."

But Barney sees hope in the work being done in Auckland to pick up and awhina youth. He says in the Henderson area particularly he's sharing in the benefits of the hard work that's gone into building a strong Maori community.

He whakaahua na Philip Whaanga