

limitations and restrictions of the prison knowing that in many cases the inmates have been committing crimes all their lives," he says.

To instill some sense of worth, Mr Winitana has returned to basics, encouraging maximum cultural involvement, whether it be language, philosophy or the haka team.

"The haka is a physical and psychological way of releasing pent up feelings and energies. Most of the guys are angry young men with no way of showing how they feel."

Already, in the six months he has been in the job, differences in attitudes have emerged.

"When you see these guys in the team (haka) they are totally different from when they are on the floor (cells). They are alive, have a lot of energy, and hold themselves up with pride."

Team and individual discipline is constantly emphasised.

Peer pressure also pushes each one to excel, further enhancing the feeling of self-worth.

Formal Maori language classes, using the new "rakau" system of teaching are also available. Students are taught the language through the use of different pieces of coloured wood.

Courses are also offered in carpentry, driving, joinery, decorating, welding, remedial reading, human relations and liberal studies.

Complementary work between teachers, division officers and officers sustain inmates in and out of classes.

A cultural centre, an exercise yard completely refurbished at a cost of about \$11,000, has also been established. Crafts such as carving, weaving and basketmaking are held there.

The carving classes take care of the artistic flair, often inherent in many of the inmates, but never expressed he says.

Express emotion

"Once they learn the basics of the art then the imagination begins to overtake. Again, they begin to develop themselves."

He says carving's importance lies in its use, in a positive manner, as a communicative skill which many inmates lack.

"Part of the problem with their self-image is that they have poor communication skills and are afraid to open up to anyone. Expressing these emotions, through whatever means, is very important."

To that end, the cultural and educational activities work hand in hand, each one reinforcing the other.

Senior education officer at the centre, Abraham De Veer, endorses Mr Winitana's beliefs, saying the low-

esteem problem must be faced on as many fronts as possible.

He maintains under achievement in language, a common element amongst all inmates, is one of the basics of their criminal behaviour.

"Their true feelings and emotions are suppressed because they can't talk with anyone about it. The peers are not able to offer support because they are in the same position.

"For these guys the caring society does not exist. They have been rejected all their lives and very few have taken the time to say I care."

He believes the main break-down in communication is within the education system where many "problem" children go through the ranks without being picked up.

"The New Zealand education system is good by world standards, but I think that our programmes, for 60 per cent of our children, are adequate. But what happens to the remainder."

He says at least 30 per cent of pupils know they will not be sitting senior level examinations, as soon as they reach the third form. Yet, they are forced to stay at school because of statutory requirements.

He asks why these students — the future drop-outs inevitably leading to unemployment — cannot be offered practical training courses similar to those undertaken within the youth institution.

"In this way he could hopefully contest with those who pass examinations."

Mr Winitana takes this angle further, believing his role within the prison is only corrective and not preventive as it should be.

To be preventive, the concept must be worked into the system "outside" he says.

"Things are working back to front. The (inmates) should have had these feelings such as dignity and pride instilled on the outside."

To do this would be easy in concept but hard in reality, he admits, although still ready to offer an answer but wondering who would kick-start it into action.

"The onus must fall back on Maori people themselves. The Marae is the simple answer and a move towards co-operative living as it was in the past, could be introduced."

He says it is ludicrous that \$200,000 can be spent on setting a marae up, when all some are ever used for is the tangi and weddings.

"We have been building memorials to ourselves, while our kids fall by the wayside."

He hits out hard at Maori organisations who have become more concerned



with "things" rather than people.

"The Maori must take care of his own. Who else is going to do it," he asks.

Maori organisations and marae play a vital role in the through-care programme currently being put together by the centre.

Vital link

"This is the vital link in the whole process. Without it, my work here cannot succeed."

The first to sixth week after release, is the most important time for inmates, as it tells whether the work in prison has been of any effect.

"The various organisations are asked to provide channels to ensure the released inmates have outlets for their energies."

A caring base as provided by solid support is the other important aspect he says.

One of the concerns after release, is the influence of the gangs in attracting inmates back, often leading to criminal activity.

Mr Winitana says the same influence can be felt within the institution and sometimes it can lead to problems.

"Many of the inmates have gang affiliations which are sometimes contrary to what we are trying to get across to them. However, rather than fight them, it's best that we work in with it in a supportive sort of way."

In assessing the success of the scheme so far, Mr Winitana refers to inmate reaction.

"The inmates react positively when they are treated like human beings. I am not concerned with the crimes they have committed, only with their future and identity. If they start smiling, holding their heads high and looking you straight in the eye, then that must mean some sort of success. The crunch will come when the incidence of reoffending is checked."

Waikeria superintendent Ron Meagher refers to the in-built difficulties in trying to foster positive attitudes within a penal institution in summing up.

"It has been said, how can you train a person to be on time without giving him the opportunities of being late? Similarly it is clearly a problem to train an inmate to fit into the normal society within the confines of the unnatural captive society.

"I see this new concept as a definite aid in our work. From this I'm hoping to build understanding by everyone, with everyone, in here and out there."