



# Marae hosts Hawaiian scholar's lu'au

ELTON SMALLMAN Last updated 05:00 19/04/2012

PETER DRURY/ WAIKATO TIMES

NZ HONOUR: Hawaiian scholar and Waikato University student Keao NeSmith has returned to Hamilton for a lu'au in a city marae to celebrate his graduation.

A Hamilton city marae is hosting a lu'au or Hawaiian feast to celebrate the graduation of a Waikato University PhD student.

The lu'au at Kirikiriroa Marae is for Keao NeSmith, a native of Kauai, who is back in Hamilton to receive a doctorate for his work on the revitalisation of the Hawaiian language.

Mr NeSmith teaches the Hawaiian language at the University of Hawai'i and has taken time off to come back for his graduation. "It's the middle of our semester so had to get substitutes to cover for me while I'm here graduating and partying."

Ten members of Mr NeSmith's family have also come to New Zealand for the celebration, including his mother, aunt, sister and cousins.

"It's such an honour to have them with me because it's been just me experiencing this journey and now I get to show off a bit of my life here."

His family are helping with the preparations and, as lu'au in Hawaii can feed up to 1000 people, this one is easy by comparison. "We're expecting 100 to 150 people so it's scaled down from a typical lu'au in Hawaii."

Guests can expect to see pork on the menu with kumara, coconut pudding, chicken long rice and other Hawaiian foods. "The main event is the huge pig which goes into the imu, which is like a hangi, and other Hawaiian foods that we serve," he said.

It's a whirlwind trip for his family but on top of kitchen duties, they have managed to drive to Kaitaia and plan to visit Rotorua and Taupo."

"My family is absolutely blown away by New Zealand. It's just awesome."

Mr NeSmith and his family will be entertained by the university kapa haka group, local Hawaiian performers, musicians and a reggae band.

"We've invited everyone from the school [of Maori and Pacific Development] and I've made so many friends over the last three years so we're going to have a good time."

Mr NeSmith will return to Hawaii on Saturday with his family and continue his drive to increase the number of Hawaiian language speakers. There are around 500 native Hawaiian speakers left, he said.

Studying at Waikato University let him research new ways of teaching that could help save the Hawaiian language from extinction.

- Elton Smallman is a Wintec journalism student.



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