Hinematioro taonga returned

by Maika Akroyd

APRIL 250 years, a Te Aitanga a Hauiti treasure gifted by Hauiti artist (chief) Hinekahua, Hinekahua, to Lieutenant James Cook, has returned home.

Yesterday a crowd of about 400 people gathered at Hauiti Marae to witness the return of the wooden carving. Te Aitanga a Hauiti school students welcomed manuhiri with a pōwhiri. Students from Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Mangatuna and Te Kura O Whangapara Primary were also in attendance.

Among the manuhiri was the German ambassador to New Zealand, Stefan Krawczik, who celebrated the pou’s return with roopu, Te Ahika, and other Hauiti people, as it brought tears to eyes and rested on the roof (front porch) of Hauiti Marae.

Mr Krawczik studied in Tübingen, Germany, 40 years ago, where the pou had been on display, and said he never expected to have “the honour and privilege to be posted to Aotearoa New Zealand, and to discover Maori culture and to have this encounter, with this pou.”

He also said 40 years ago he had no idea the pou was in the same university town as he was.

“She’s come home,” Viqtor Walker, Te Aitanga a Hauiti, said.

“This is an opportunity for us to celebrate the first gift ‘te koha tuititi’ by us as Hauiti and as Uawa to Cook and the crew on the Endeavour in 1789,” he said.

“She travelled from here and went to London.” Later, most probably via Sweden to the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. In 1827 the pou was given from that museum in Austria as a koha to the museum in Tübingen where it remained.

He said Hauiti had been involved with museums all over the world for the past 15 to 20 years.

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‘She’s come home’

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“Our children have been to Tuhinga,” he said.

Having approached anthropologist Dr Tania Schubert-McArthur a year ago, he described her role as an essential enabler in the return of the pou.

“It took a lot of determination, effort, emails and phone calls to Tuhinga to make this happen,” Dr Schubert-McArthur said.

“My role was to support Te Aitanga a Hauiti in their vision and desire to bring her home. Being able to speak German and having studied in Tuhinga certainly helped to build the connection and a bridge between the cultures.”

She said the “significant occasion” maid her feel honoured to be a part of Hinemataro’s homeroom.

“To experience the genuine feelings of the hau kai, the joy and excitement, but also the grief and sadness was very special indeed.”

She said she encouraged Mr Krawiecki to attend the event because she felt it important that he be there for the return of the pou.

Together they sang a German song as their whaia tautoko, after Mr Krawiecki’s kereore (in Maori and in English) from the paepae (the marae bench reserved for esteemed orators). The song was called, “Am Brunnen vor dem Tore” and was about being away from home and returning again, and it also had a connection to Tuhinga through one of the artists who worked on it.

“It’s also about finding peace once you return. It seemed appropriate for the occasion,” Dr Schubert-McArthur said.

Mr Walker’s daughter and organizer on the day, Hine Parata Walker, said yesterday was “a significant day” for Te Aitanga a Hauiti and the Uawa community.

“It was a huge honour for our people to have the pou returned home. It is significant for many reasons. This day is about Te Aitanga a Hauiti, our voice, our place. Others have their histories about the pou, but this day marks a new chapter in our story. This day is about Uawa/Hauiti telling our story”.

One of the eight who welcomed the pou with a kārae in the morning was Rokahaua Te Awhera.

“I was so touched that the pou was returned. They started us up a kārae too,” she said.

“It was powerful. I could feel the wariness of how awesome it is to finally have Hinemataro come home. I felt that connection.”

Mr Krawiecki said he felt very glad to have had the privilege to be in Uawa and discover a different area of the world.

“When growing up for me it was always through an Atlantic perspective, but here, in New Zealand, it’s a total change of perspective, with New Zealand and the Blue Pacific in the middle and the rest of the world around it.”

He said when the pou was in the museum in Tuhinga, it was an opportunity for Europeans to experience Maori culture.

“Many were able to learn awareness and to gain respect for Maori culture, but today, it comes home.”

Today was a great emotional moment. It’s an approach. I feel closer to New Zealand people. I now understand the big importance the link to the descendants is, and the important history and identity the pou holds.”

The pou will be installed at Taiohēti Museum as part of the Ta whainga exhibition until April next year, when it will return to Germany.

Victor Walker paid tribute to Ellesse Wallace, director of the museum. “She and her staff were responsible for managing the complex set of logistics required to bring Hinemataro home,” he said. Ms Wallace had shown “amazing dedication, expertise and commitment.”

LOOKING AHEAD

SPORTS

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• Gisborne Stags to compete in national under-19 football tournament.

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PLACE OF HONOUR: At almost one metre in length and 33 cm in width, the 250-year-old pou from the whare of Hinemataro lay wrapped in a korowai and surrounded by tūhangata (descendants) at Hauiti Marae yesterday.

TE REDO: German ambassador to New Zealand, Stefan Krawiecki, impressed onlookers at Hauiti Marae, speaking in both English and te reo Maori from the paepae. He said he was “honoured and privileged” to bring the Hauiti pou home from the Museum of Tuhinga.

Pictures by Paul Rickard

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