

## Something for the whanau Locals with a vision that's close to their heart.

Wellington's own Maori trans couple don't need much introduction in their community. Both have busy lives around their full time jobs, are actively involved in some form of wider community work and always have some project on the burner. Karen (52yrs) and Peri (46yrs) are passionate about enjoying each day and surrounding themselves with positive, like minded people. 'When you find someone who loves you for you and nothing more, you just want to make up for all those lost years and get on with life and be happy' says Peri.

In 2007 they committed themselves to a year long study with Te Wananga o Aotearoa's certificate in small business management with the vision of one day setting up their dream, Tapatoru. While their study focussed on the business side of things, what became important to start Tapatoru was to get support from their Maori trans community.

Karen says, "while the wider trans community is extremely diverse, we felt more comfortable among our Maori whanau living throughout Aotearoa along with other trans who supported our work." Karen has been among the Maori trans community since the age of 14 years when she left home to start her life in Wellington. She was whangai'd to a Maori whanau in Otaki, (Ngati Raukawa), and recently attended her high school reunion which was a great experience for her. Peri is from Te Arawa, Tapuika and has been living in Wellington since 1986. They met in 1999 and together they have supported each other in many ventures.

What we need to make clear is that Tapatoru is not a support group like all those existing throughout Aotearoa. It is merely Karen and Peri doing what they have always done, and wanting to incorporate and



Photo by Kimi Kajiwara

actually share this with their trans whanau especially living close by in Wellington.

Karen says "we don't believe our whanau need a support group. They are survivors and believe in themselves. We just want to make sure that our whanau are included and aware of all the things that are happening in our city and in the trans world. We also have a vision to set up some assistance for our aging Maori trans who have no one to care for them and this includes both Peri and I."

Over the years, Karen and Peri have experienced sad times when Maori trans pass on and there is uncertainty with their wishes and the wishes of their whanau. The uncertainty is based around negative factors such as no communication, stigma around being trans and living away from home.

"If we can find more reasons (apart from tangi), to gather, and communicate both ways, then we can certainly start looking at the short and long term dreams we have, which is to provide a stronger and more active community for us and to provide a place for our aging Maori trans to go if they need

to."

Not all trans are estranged from their whanau or have no whanau support. It is important to know this as too many times our Maori feature highly in all the wrong places. It is not always the case. However, there are some aging trans whanau who are asking this question and wanting to know if there is any where that they can spend their senior years that is safe and respectful.

Unsure just how they will do this, Karen and Peri know that one day this may be a reality for them as well and therefore have a genuine interest in working on what may be the biggest project these two have encountered.

"All we know at this stage is 'small steps' that lead to something productive" says Peri. Life for these two has never been easy so they do not expect the launching of Tapatoru to be something extravagant. They are more focussed on the outcome.

Tapatoru launched on 25 February 2010 in Wellington and the website was uploaded on 5 April 2010. Their publication 'TATOU' (this is the first issue), will be their bi-monthly news/resource for their 'whanau' to keep in touch.

Me Karakia Tatou

E te Kaihanga  
Ka inoi ki a koe kia manaakitia  
mai matou i tenei ata

Kia manaakitia o matou whanau whanui  
kei nga kainga maha.  
Manaakitia era e mauui ana,  
e rawakore ana, e pani ana.

Uhia mai o tomairangi atawhai  
ki runga i a matou katoa i tenei ra  
Kororia ki to ingoa tapu  
Amine

### What's it all about: TAPATORU?

#### Focus on the present:

Tapatoru would like to share with its Maori trans and wider trans whanau the importance of making the most of the present! This is the time when people are too focussed on other aspects of their lives and that we forget about enjoying 'today':

- we believe we are a whanau/ family and we look after each other and get on;
- our uniqueness is what contributes to our vibrant and colourful community;
- keeping things simple is what is more effective than complex and full of jargon;
- we show our support in numbers and a unified voice with good intention toward our people;
- always it is about uplifting our wairua/spirit, and leading proudly by example;
- We have no boundaries to our successes!
- savvy in today's world means living in both worlds confidently

#### Our history:

Our Maori trans whanau are a part of our Maori trans history also and it is important that we remember those who have passed on and that we keep their memory alive.

Tapatoru invites contributions from whanau, friends, and companions, to share their story with us. We welcome any material on our brothers and sisters. Our email is: info@tapatoru.org.nz

#### What the future holds:

To have a place for our aging indigenous trans whanau in Wellington. To encourage a lifestyle that respects our trans people as they age and either require support to live comfortably or want to live in a facility that is supportive.

*"...to provide a stronger and more active community for us and to provide a place...."*

*'small steps' that lead to something productive....*

