



Centre to support culturally-based development

On 8th December 1985 the *Hokule'a*, a replica of an ancient Hawai'ian double-hulled canoe, arrived at Waitangi in the Bay of Islands after a 16 day journey from Rarotonga. For Hekenukumai Ngaiwi Puhipi Busby, his wife Ngahiraka (Hilda) Rangī Busby, and a small group around them this was the start of another journey. The rest, so they say, is history, except it is a history that is probably better known in far-flung islands around the Pacific than here in Aotearoa-New Zealand. It is the history of the building of the waka hourua *Te Aurere*, the voyage of reconnection to Rarotonga in 1992, and of 30,000 nautical miles of blue water sailing to Hawai'i, French Polynesia, the Cook Islands, New Caledonia, and Norfolk Island, as well as three circumnavigations of Te Ika a Maui (North Island).

In 1984 Hekenukumai told Nainoa Thompson, the navigator of *Hokule'a* when he was planning the voyage to Aotearoa-New Zealand *"In this land, we still have our canoe buried. In this land, we still have our language and we trace our genealogies back to the canoes our ancestors arrived on. But we have lost our pride and the dignity of our traditions. If you are going to bring Hokule'a here, that will help bring it back."*

Now another step to help bring it back is underway. This will both celebrate the revival of the traditional waka hourua and wayfinding and provide a much needed economic development initiative in Northland.

The Kupe Waka Centre at Aurere in Doubtless Bay will be an education and tourism attraction of international significance as well as a site for waka construction, and for training in waka sailing and celestial navigation. The project is being undertaken by Arawai Ltd, a limited liability company with charitable trust status. Arawai Ltd is wholly owned by two Trusts: Te Tai Tokerau Tarai Waka Inc and the Hekenukumai Ngaiwi Waka Trust. It was set up to provide a sustainable business base to support kaupapa waka.

Planning for the Kupe Waka Centre is now well advanced. The design is based on eco-design principles. This includes the construction of the main building underground to protect the coastal views.

Detailed financial analyses show that the Centre will be profitable - the key question is when it can start supporting the work of the trusts. Arawai Ltd is now seeking to minimise or eliminate borrowings to meet the capital cost of NZ\$4 million. This would enable the company to begin distributing surpluses to the trusts two years from the start of operations. After year three, income from the centre would be sufficient to enable significant support to be given to education, training, waka construction, voyaging, and Tarai Waka's work with disadvantaged youth.

While the immediate focus of the Kupe Waka Centre is on supporting kaupapa waka, the economic, social and cultural benefits will flow locally, regionally, and nationally. In particular, the building of an international tourism icon in the Far North will provide jobs and a strong stimulus to increase visitor numbers to an area of social deprivation. There will not only be jobs at the Centre but also in the production of the local arts, crafts and other merchandise for visitors wanting mementoes of their visit.

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TE AURERE - SAILING THE PACIFIC SINCE 1992