

## 2013 Faculty Study Abroad Grant Report

# Integration of Maori Culture and Knowledge in a University Environment



## Visit to New Zealand

April 2013

Throughout my visit to the North Island of New Zealand I met with over 20 individuals at Unitec in Auckland and the University of Waikato in Hamilton. I met with deans, directors, faculty, staff and students at multiple campuses.

Both Universities had comparable numbers of overall students and the overall number of Maori students versus Aboriginal students here at VIU.

## Relationships in Education

The Maori people in New Zealand signed the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840. It is the premise of this treaty that supports the integration of Maori culture and language into Unitec. Te Noho Kotahitanga is a partnership document created in 2001 to express Unitec's commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi. Unitec has made Maori knowledge and culture a priority. Every incoming faculty, staff, and student experiences a Powhiri (formal Maori welcome) in the Marae. There is a cost to the Karakia (eating) portion of the Powhiri. Every department in the institution is allotted funds within their individual cost centre's to make sure that their students, faculty and staff can experience a Powhiri.

The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), a branch of the New Zealand Government partially funds post secondary institutions in New Zealand and also monitors how Universities are doing and provides suggestions for improvement and equity funding to NZ universities for minority groups. Each University receives approximately four times the funding for every Maori Student enrolled and approximately three times the funding for every Pacific student enrolled. These funds are allocated throughout the university and this is how the Maia Centres are funded as well as the Pacific Centre.

Hare Paniora is the PaeArahi - Pae - Horizon Arahi - to guide or bridge between cultures. This position has existed for 30 years. Unitec had some poor performance reports so the TEC recommended the creation of PaeArahi. This role is a bridge for the CEO and Leadership team as well as writing Maori speeches for the CEO. He works at all 3 campuses and official duties are representing all Maori interests. He does work around suicides, and deaths; and he does blessings of buildings where students are experiencing distress.



Kahurangi - Precious Gift is a Maori Recognition Ceremony hosted once a year.

I was fortunate enough to be at Unitec to attend the Kahurangi and it was beautiful. It starts with a Powhiri (Traditional Maori Welcome) All students are recognized and their names are read out even if they do not attend. Students invite their family and friends to come witness the ceremony and share their achievements with a meal. The CEO signs the recognition certificates and Senior Leadership attend the ceremony. Appropriate Deans hand out the Recognition Certificates to students and a power point is shown including the faculty they attended, the students name and Iwi (Tribe).



### **Unitec's Maori Success Strategy**

In May 2011 Unitec released Unitec's Maori Success Strategy. This is a framework to give effect to Te Noho Kotahitanga. The principles of Te Noho Kotahitanga have guided not only the way this strategy has been developed but also the ambitions that guide it and the actions contained within it. Unitec strives to be a bicultural Institute of Technology operating in a multicultural environment by all working together for the success of Maori students. There are five Objectives which include Community has influence, Leadership model change, Tangible applications of Maturanga (Knowledge) Maori, building staff capability to engage with te ao Maori and Institutes of Technology & Polytechnics of choice for Maori. In order to facilitate a portion of objective 2 and objectives 3 and 4 Unitec hired Josie Keelan, Dean Teaching and Learning - Maturanga (Knowledge) and she's been at Unitec just over 1 year.



Intercampus shuttles are offered every 30-45 minutes to another Unitec campus that is located 25 minutes away. Transportation is a barrier for Aboriginal students. I am interested in the viability of Inter-campus Shuttles between the Nanaimo and Cowichan campuses. This could potentially increase enrollment in courses or programs at Cowichan and certificates, diplomas and degrees offered at the Nanaimo.

Josie's position is to foster the immersion of Maori knowledge into all facets of Unitec. She has ensured that Maori Knowledge is included in all buildings, signage, and they are working towards having Maori knowledge incorporated in the curriculum of every program.

It starts in orientation (a broad spectrum of inclusion) with Powhiri's and encourages and support departments to hire a Maori staff member that is able to provide knowledge to their discipline. In some programs ;(i.e. Electrical Engineering) you can start a whanau group and this may be the immersion of Maori knowledge/culture.

Josie does Professional Development for all faculty, staff and support and teaches Maori awareness, ways of knowing and protocols, as well as policies and guidelines. At Unitec they are in the process of working towards just guidelines, not policies and guidelines.

### **Prior Learning Inclusive of Maori Knowledge**

Students can apply for Assessments of Prior Learning but it is not done well at Unitec. Maori knowledge is generally not given credits. The process is not good and one of the leadership team said that they should be ashamed of themselves. Even when Maori are fluent in their language the most they will receive credit for is to have the first semester Te Reo Maori (language) classes waived.



### **Reaching out to Students**

Maia Maori Services do a Maori information day (orientation) in the beginning of the year. Every Maori student is invited to attend a Powhiri (traditional Welcome in Marae), Karakia (meal), are introduced to Maori faculty and staff and are introduced to the Whai Ake I te Ara Tika Program (Maori Mentors).

New students are encouraged to sign up to be mentees. Each person gets a Maori Diary that has all upcoming events printed in the diary. This purpose of this orientation is to orient Maori students to the campus, faculty, staff, Maia centres and culturally welcome

### **Services for Maori Students**

Maia Maori Services has Centre's on all 3 campuses and each centre has 3 full time people and 2 part time people available to assist students. These positions are focused primarily on the Academic success of Maori students and has staff helping students with assignments. Each staff member is assigned specific faculties to work with. They work directly with instructors and the instructors maintain communication with them regarding Maori students progress in order to help Maori students succeed.

Any other issues students have, whether they are financial or emotional are addressed by Pou Ahoaha, Student Support. Pou Aroha members are also assigned to students by faculty area. They generally work one day a week in the office 4 days visiting their areas.



Unitec has a Maori Marketing and Communications Advisor. Her role is to work with Designers and web controllers to ensure Maori students are represented in all university materials and to promote Maia Maori Centres so that students know where to go for assistance.

### **Unitec Graduation**

Unitec had over 1400 Graduates of Certificates, Diplomas and Degrees cross the stage at the Auckland Town Hall over 2 days in 3 ceremonies. The ceremony is quite streamlined. I attended one that saw over 400 students graduate in an hour and a half. No matter where you were in the Town Hall you could see the graduates as there were two very large screens directly above the stage and cameras that focused on each student and followed them across the stage. I was intrigued that the entire ceremony was done in New Zealand Sign language for both the Maori and English portions. I later learned that New Zealand has 3 official languages: Maori, English and New Zealand Sign Language.

### **Technology**

Every Maia Maori Centre has a minimum of 10 computer work stations whether staff are present or not. iPhones and iPads are highly prevalent on campus and used as a main method of communicating with students. Texting is the main method of contacting students, whether it is a personal text to one student to check in on them or a mass web to text message sent to all Maori students. Web to texts include links to the website and contact phone numbers. Pou Aroha uses an app on their iPads to share and store confidential student information.



## **Whai Ake I te Ara Tika Program - Maori Mentoring Scholarship Programme**

Both Unitec and the University of Waikato have strong mentorship programs. Unitec has 14 scholarships available for Mentors and 20 scholarships for Mentee's. 1st year students are mentored by 2nd or 3rd year students and has students paired by personality or discipline. Mentors are there nurture their fellow students . This is Tika pono Aroha - right ,honesty, love and empathy. They go through a team building weekend where they stay at the Marae and learn about Maori culture and traditions. My son Cole and I were fortunate enough to be invited to attend and it was amazing.

Mentors get 15 credits towards their program \$250 per term (\$1,000 per year) Mentee's receive scholarships \$2, 000.00 per year. These Mentors assist students with financial, academic, pastoral (emotional) and cultural support and also act as a referral system to Student Central.

## **Whai Ake Weekend in the Marae**



## **What we can do at VIU**

### **Aboriginal Awareness**

We need more Aboriginal awareness institutionally. Mandatory Aboriginal awareness workshops that begin with a Traditional Snuneymuxw Welcome hosted for all incoming staff, faculty and administration could be a great start to enhancing the level of awareness on campus and develop a strong community. We could also start welcoming programs in the Gathering Place to increase awareness campus wide.

### **Reaching out to Students**

Services for Aboriginal Students has been looking for new innovative ideas for letting students know where we are and what we do. We can start by doing an Aboriginal Orientation that has Aboriginal students experience a Traditional Snuneymuxw Welcome, campus tours and introductions to Aboriginal Faculty, Staff and Elders. We would give out handbooks with dates of feasts and events for the upcoming year, have food, and encourage students or sign up as a mentee.

### **Enhancements to Mentorship Program**

Community Cousin's Mentorship program should be enhanced so that we can have more Mentors and encourage more Mentee's to sign up. Mentors should be compensated whether it is through University credit (possibly COOP) and monetarily. Mentees should receive an incentive so that we can foster positive learning environment that sees more Aboriginal students successfully completing their programs.

## **What we can do at**

### **VIU continued**

#### **Prior Learning Assessment**

##### **And Recognition**

I would like to see VIU strive to make significant changes in the Prior Learning process and to be more accepting of Aboriginal culture, experiences and languages.



#### **Shq'aphut Helping Students in Need**

A number of Aboriginal students are in financial distress each year. We could use small donations from individuals and groups to help out these students in need. Kora is Maori tradition that has every individual who uses the Marae at Unitec make a small donation. It can be just change or a bill but it makes a difference for running their building and helping their students. Shq'aphut is often used by a variety of internal departments and external organizations. If small donations were made each time it would allow us to help more students out each year.

#### **Aboriginal Representation in Communication**

I would like to see our Communications department have an Aboriginal Advisor that would review all university materials and ensure that there is Aboriginal representation throughout the VIU website and all other VIU publications.

#### **Technology**

Have VIU catch up with the times and have Student Services staff get institutional phones to aid with contacting students.

Improve access to computers for Aboriginal students by having Shq'aphut get computer works stations. This would allow students to stay in the Gathering Place.

#### **Intercampus Shuttles**

Intercampus Shuttles between Nanaimo and Cowichan could increase enrollment certificates and diploma's at Cowichan campus and could increase enrollment in Certificates, Diploma's and Degree's at the Nanaimo campus.

#### **Convocation**

Certificates, Diploma's and Degree's graduates should be recognized at Convocation. A Congratulations Graduates banner could be put in downtown core to display VIU's accomplishments and we could add more camera's to improve viewing in house and for people tuned in on the web. The ceremony could be stream lined as this day it is all about the student's and their families.

#### **Special Thanks**

In closing, this trip was very beneficial for me personally, professionally as well as for a variety of departments at VIU as I will share the information that I have gathered. I would like to thank the Executive Director of Student Affairs and International Education for their financial contributions that enabled me to go on this journey.