

# Rangahaua: Architecture and Cultural Interface

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## **Abstract**

*In the late 1980s and early 1990s Wanganui Regional Community Polytechnic was a fledgling institution with fledgling programme's including Te Rangakura, the first New Zealand accredited Māori Language Teacher education programme. Te Rangakura was an initiative by Māori for Māori to meet a problem with loss of Māori language at Primary School age level and the associated urgent need for teachers of Māori language. The language programme had a satellite format to access fluent local native language and cultural expertise through elders and potential language teachers, many of whom were Marae based. The centralised staging point for the Te Rangakura programme was Rangahaua; a new Maori Education Facility designed with Architects Southcombe McClean and Co in Whanganui in late 1990. Rangahaua had a period of growth and flowering under Kaumātua Henry Bennett and Morvin Simon, before falling from grace as part of a Labour Government rationalisation of the Tertiary education sector that resulted in the closure of the host community based polytechnic. Rangahaua was the precursor for the well-known Māori education facility Pukenga at Unitec, and is also an important exemplar of a Marae based approach to Māori Architecture within a tertiary institution. The paper documents the contexts, process, design, construction and architectural outcomes of the project through archival research and interviews with key people involved in the project. It follows a chronological sequence recording the project's history and characteristics, and establishing Rangahaua's historic, architectural and cultural significance. The design approach of the architects as aligned other, Rangahaua Marae based foundation, design and operation, and the projects temporal nature, are reflected on.*

## **Introduction**

This paper is the result of an interactive discourse between the lead author and original architect of Rangahaua Mark Southcombe and contributors representing Whanganui Iwi and the former Wanganui Regional Community Polytechnic (WRCP). As we began our first

hui (meeting) June Rogan noted that “history depends on who is writing what at the time”.<sup>1</sup> The beginning point for the Rangahaua architectural project was a similar recognition of interests and the architect’s lack of cultural knowledge and authority. There was an acknowledgement of the need for an active collaboration between the Architects, Whanganui Iwi, and Wanganui Regional Community Polytechnic (WRCP) to facilitate educational, architectural, and cultural intentions. So Rangahaua and this paper were created through an interactive collaborative process. We are conscious that what is written in black and white is a version of history, ever fragmentary and incomplete. This is our contribution to the collective.

### **Context**

WRCP was established in 1984 as a result of a community driven initiative. It was the only tertiary institution in Whanganui, and the only one in New Zealand established from a community process. It was genuinely community focused, growing fast, and half constructed in 1990 when the government changed. At that point many courses were being taught in dilapidated houses scheduled for future redevelopment. WRCP was the first tertiary institution in NZ to appoint a Māori and Pacific liaison officer to bring a Māori perspective to its management and operation. The new Māori Studies department was established soon after with Morvin Simon’s expertise and community support. Kaumātua (Elder) Henry Bennett was soon invited to take on the WRCP Māori and Pacific liaison and Head of Department role forming a strong team with Morvin Simon who maintained academic and teaching responsibilities.

Henry Bennett was a great behind-the-scenes communicator with the full confidence and support of a wide range of people including leaders of the three Whanganui Iwi (tribes). He was also “known as Mr Kōhanga as he played a major part in renovating and building many local Kōhanga Reo language nests”<sup>2</sup> With support of the WRCP CEO John W Scott, and the polytechnic council Henry was instrumental in introducing Akoranga childcare centre, and Mangawhero Kōhanga Reo preschool education facilities to the campus. At that time Whanganui Iwi leaders were acutely aware that Te Reo (Māori language) speaking children were losing confidence and Māori language fluency within two months of beginning primary school, and that this was a major and urgent problem. By 1991 there were 623 Kōhanga Reo full immersion Māori language preschools in New Zealand including six in Whanganui, but there were only nine Kura Kaupapa Māori language immersion primary schools in the whole of the country<sup>3</sup>. So children fluent in Te Reo entered predominantly English language primary schools mostly poorly resourced to teach or even accommodate Māori language fluency.

WRCP Māori education initially occurred in S-House Learning Centre, an old bungalow on the periphery of the main campus in Liverpool Street. A diverse range of primarily short course and transitional programmes were taught. The department and building were named Rangahaua by Kaumātua from the supporting Iwi and staff involved in the programmes. “The word ‘Rangahaua’ is the imperative of ‘Rangahau’ meaning to seek, analyse, develop and expand upon”<sup>4</sup> This was also described as “the concept of going out to do your own research to enhance your own development and personal circumstance for yourself, your whānau, (family) and your iwi”<sup>5</sup>. The holistic approach to Māori Education involved education in both culture and language, through all ages, and integrated with a whānau and home marae (The marae is the central architectural composition in contemporary Māori life)<sup>6</sup>. There were many courses taught beginning with ‘the language and related studies’ course and including 16-week full time Te Reo language courses Akoranga and TeKōpae. There were a range of other programmes and regular activities such as Te Ataarangi language programme, Manaaki Tangata Marae catering and hospitality, Mahi Whakairo carving, Te Mahinga workforce re-entry, and Te Ranga Tū Kaha Health and fitness. S-House was also a neutral and welcoming base for a host of regular cultural activities by groups such as St Vincent’s Māori Club, Ngā Puna Waihangā NZ Māori Artists and Writers’ local branch, the National Māori Choir and a Pacific Island group. It also served as a temporary Kura (school) for the first Kura Kaupapa Māori (total immersion school) in Whanganui. It was a thriving cultural hub, with the domestic kitchen feeding huge numbers of people at times.

The Te Rangakura Bilingual Bicultural Māori teacher training programme emerged from this context to facilitate retention of Māori language and cultural fluency, and the provision of bicultural teachers for state primary schools and emerging Kura Kaupapa Māori. The state provision of teacher education for Māori through Colleges of Education were the only accredited means for educating Māori teachers and were regarded as not adequately addressing the language and cultural proficiency, or the extent of Māori teachers needed<sup>7</sup>. Fluent native speakers of Te Reo could potentially help, but their generation was aging, without teacher training, and dispersed through the region and country. To access local Māori cultural knowledge, and to reduce barriers to Māori teacher training a satellite language programme was introduced in August 1990.

The Te Rangakura bilingual teacher training programme was initiated through the efforts of Henry Bennett over a period of a week. He drew together full support and resources from Māori academics, the three Whanganui Iwi and the Whanganui River Māori Trust

Board, and WRCP management and Council. The new programme began the very next week with 16 students<sup>8</sup>. “Students were selected into the programme by hapū/iwi and were supported by whānau”<sup>9</sup> and this required a formal testimonial as a condition of entry to the programme. The programme was established through WRCP Rangahaua Māori Studies Department as a Māori driven initiative ahead of any educational approvals. “Te Rangakura wove together philosophies of the old with the new; and philosophies of the Marae and Kura (school)”<sup>10</sup>. The programme was designed collaboratively by Sonny Mikaere, Willie Robinson, Nihi Houia and Tony Scott with the supporters and contributors to the emergent Rangahaua programmes. Formal programme accreditation eventually came in 1992 as a NZQA approved Diploma in Teaching,<sup>11</sup> formalised by kaumātua Hohua Tutengaehe and programme moderator Whare Temoana in a significant event at Rangahaua<sup>12</sup>.

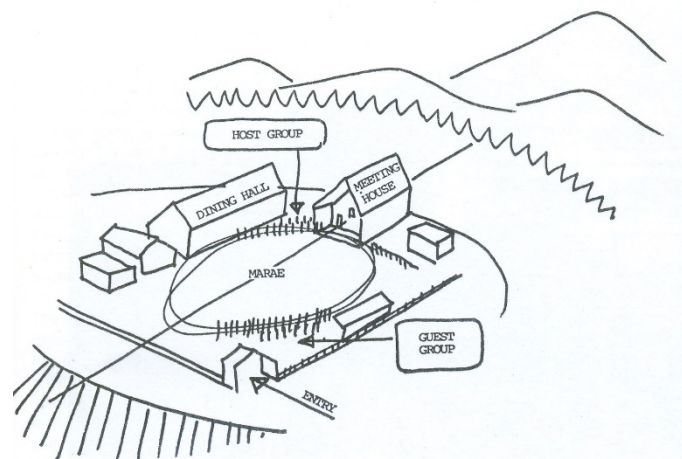
### **Cultural Negotiation**

Rangahaua the place was also designed and built quickly and ahead of necessary governmental approvals for funding and construction. The first meetings between the architects Southcombe McClean and Co (SMC) with Rangahaua whānau and polytech management had few stipulations. WRCP management noted that Rangahaua should be a contextual part of the low scale community of buildings’ successfully settled on campus derived from and relating to the colonial villas within the campus. It would adopt the established formal vocabulary of gables and verandas, and the established material palette of natural cedar, BS3033 Spanish white wall colour, aluminium windows, red-lead corrugated roof, and bullnose verandas. This colonial context was an architecturally and culturally challenging. The briefed accommodation was four classrooms and associated support spaces, with a minimal budget being the key deliverable. It was a genuinely important project for WRCP and so should be located in the heart of the campus to transparently reflect the department significance within WRCP. Rangahaua staff and students were less prescriptive but what they needed was more demanding. What happened in a typical week was extraordinarily diverse and different to what most Pākehā (European) New Zealanders would understand as happening in a typical educational institution. It was a living community operating at all hours of the night and day, and over every day of a week. Rangahaua was to be a place of openness and hospitality to be modelled on a typical marae in terms of structure and protocol. There was also a key intention to not compete with the mana (prestige) of existing marae of the three contributing Whanganui Iwi. Henry Bennett noted

“although the building will have an outside structure similar to a Wharepuni, it will not have meeting house carvings or tukutuku. We don’t want any

competition between us and our Marae...we may have a little bit of decoration in the office area, but the only decoration we'll have on the Maihi will be at the finger tips"<sup>13</sup>.

The design occurred through an interactive process as a mediation between two sets of client meetings. WRCP management team was represented by CEO John W Scott also a NZ artist, and by Michael Payne architect and WRCP chairman. Consultation with the Māori Studies Department occurred with Morvin Simon, Henry Bennett and the full Rangahaua team, students and wider whānau with iwi representatives including Julie Ranginui and George and Piki Waretini, and the administration 'engine room' of Marilyn Vreede and Janet Townsend. It was as important to model Marae, tikanga (protocol) as it was to provide educational and support spaces. It was to be neutral space, space of hospitality, space for people to stay, and space to expand and contract to accommodate everyone and everything that may be required. Rangahaua was also to be distinctly and recognisably Māori in terms of its architectural expression, and this would occur directly through reference to the 'traditional' Marae, seen by the client group as the primary, authoritative, and authentic source of Māori architectural culture. A Marae is typically a group of buildings around an open space of encounter and exchange, the Marae Ātea, focused on the principal building, a Whareniui or meeting house as illustrated in Dr Mike Austin's "A description of the Māori Marae"<sup>14</sup>.



**Figure 1.** Reprint from Figure 2, Austin M R, *A Description of the Māori Marae*, Study Paper No30 University of Auckland School of Architecture, 233.

### **A new day**

As the Rangahaua project design began architect and author of this paper Mark Southcombe had a theoretical understanding of Marae tikanga from studies at Auckland

University under Dr Mike Austin. This understanding was augmented for the project by reference to Austin's "A description of the Māori Marae"<sup>15</sup>, experience on Marae, discussion of local practices, and immersion in the day to day operation of Rangahaua. The building design needed to embody and integrate Māori knowledge in the manner of the Māori initiated Te Rangakura programme, weaving the old and new. Rangahaua operated across the overlap between cultures, both an integral and integrated part of the WRCP system and yet also on the edge of the system and separate from it.

"They could use the facilities for pretty much anything they liked as long as it did not bring the polytechnic into disrepute. Things just happened at Rangahaua, lots of them self-funded for example with kai or unpaid tutors outside the polytechnic system as the people found necessary to do what they saw was needed"<sup>16</sup>.

There was also no funding available for the new building. The new National Government Minister of Education Lockwood Smith visited WRCP to consider the institution capital funding needs.

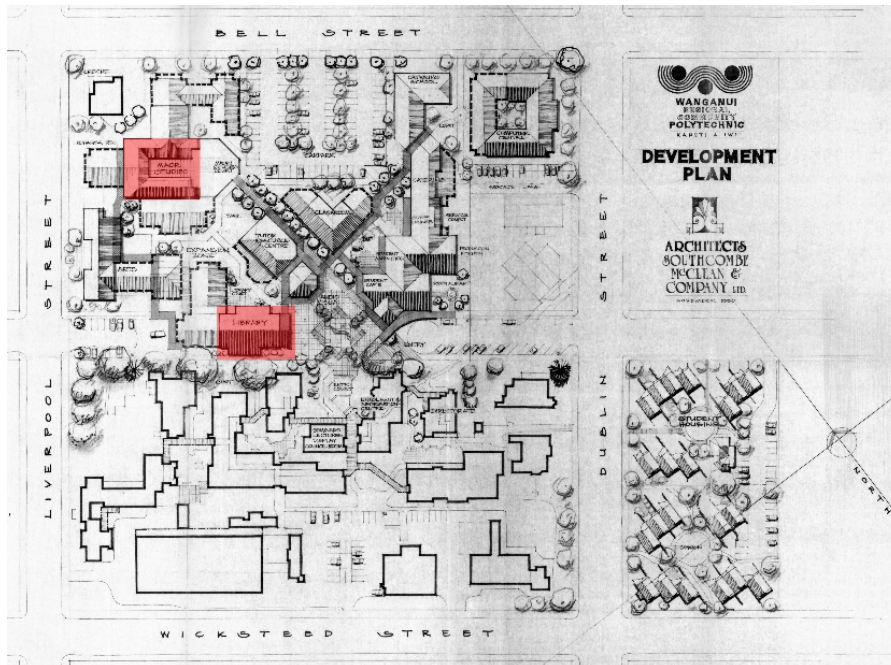
"Uncle Henry and others went out into the street and brought people in to indicate large numbers of students. Although Rangahaua was always full of people most of the time, he wanted it to look so full that the minister had no option but to grant a pūtea (grant) to build a new whare (house) to accommodate the staff and the students on the many courses"<sup>17</sup>.

The half-completed polytechnic was not awarded capital works funding for Rangahaua or any of its future capital projects such as a Library. WRCP responded to need and constructed the Rangahaua project anyway. This occurred through the support of local Wanganui Savings Bank, allowing the management of cash-flow so they could invest \$500,000 of working capital to self-fund Rangahaua.

## **Design**

Minor conflict between management and the department occurred as soon as the design process began. WRCP management's preferred location for Rangahaua at the centre of the campus would tend to isolate the facility from its associated activities and smother the existing multifaceted Māori community engagement. S-House facilities on the periphery of the campus were accommodating a diversity of use without disrupting the mainstream institution. An alternative siting over an existing laneway was proposed so the existing S-

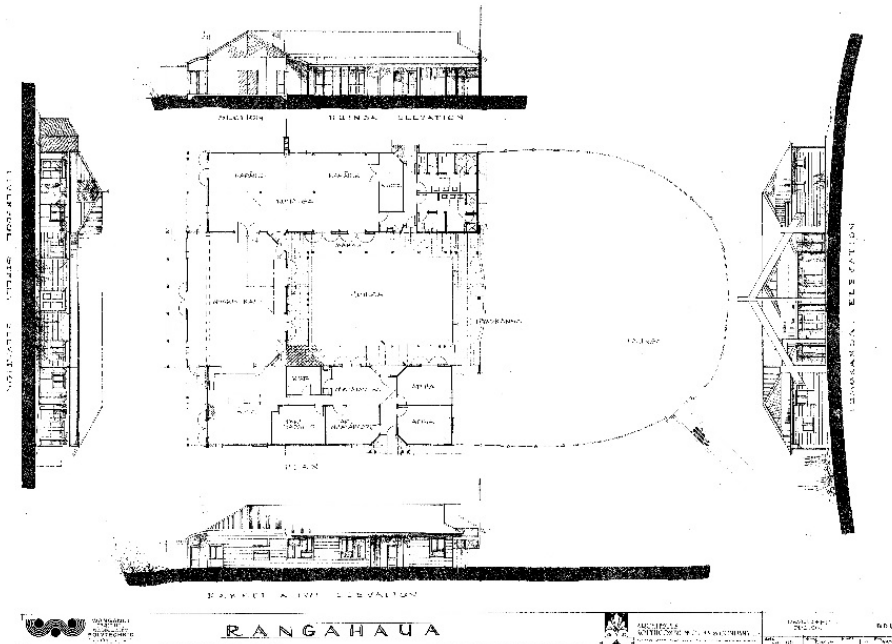
House building could remain. The siting mediated differences and would also help unify the wider polytechnic site that was at the time split in three parts by a road and laneway. The siting also supported potential future expansion.



**Figure 2.** Architects Southcombe McClean and Company, *Wanganui Regional Community Polytechnic Development Plan*, November 1990.

The Rangahaua architectural concept abstracted and integrated a traditional Marae structure as a single building, with carefully negotiated cultural innovation. This arose from the insistence and clarity of the Rangahaua user brief that the building must have a traditional gable and Meeting House form. This was difficult and resisted by a young architect, and tested through design sketches and discussions that teased out the formal implications. In the final design there are some significant shifts. The generously proportioned Marae Ātea (open space) is adjacent to a Huinga, a second smaller central open space courtyard in the focal position conventionally reserved for a Meeting House. This exterior gathering space is bounded on three sides by seating and Māhau verandahs. It was conceptualised as a second informal Ātea, an open discussion space to readily accommodate the many people coming, going and overlapping, inviting them to sit and pause. This virtual Whare open house space was seen as an ideal manifestation of a house that would not compete with the mana of existing houses. The virtual house was formalised with a porch, Amo and Maihi forming an entrance portal facing the main Marae Ātea space. Around the edges of this smaller Huinga courtyard are Tari (offices), a Kauta (kitchen) and Wharekai, (dining room) two classrooms that combine as a Wharenuī (meeting house),

Whata (storage), and Wharepaku (ablutions). Rangahaua was designed with the simplest geometry, domestic structure and materials. It's courtyard building form was also simple, exceptionally cost effective, and facilitated potential future outward expansion shown on the development plan figure 2.



**Figure 3.** Architects Southcombe McClean and Company, *Rangahaua Concept Design Table Plan*, Jan 1991.

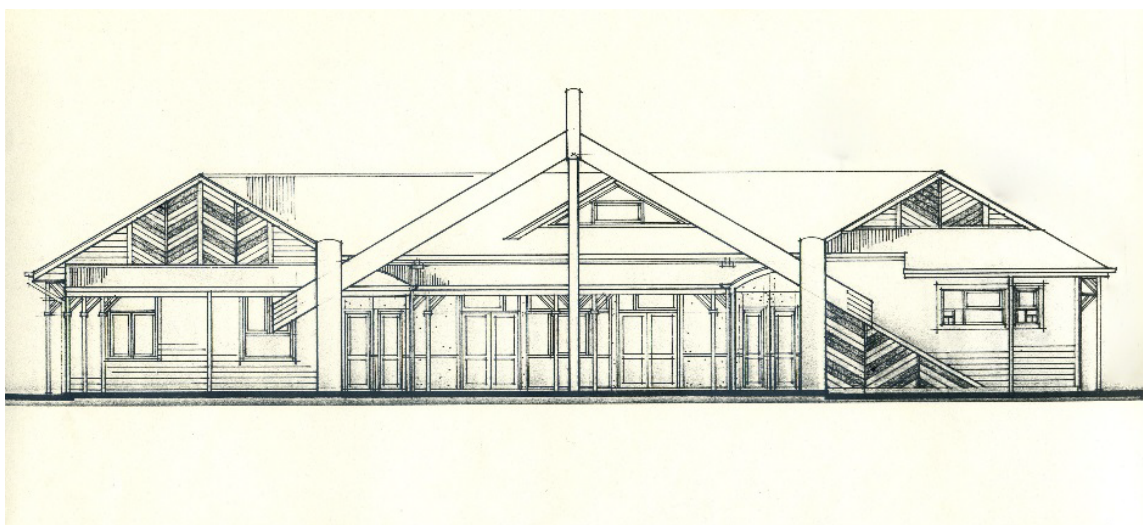
The planning reworked conventional Marae planning patterns in some ways considered contentious and significant by the communities it served. As an educational facility the reception area was important from an administration and orientation point of view, but this is not given priority. In early design generations a major stainless-steel artwork portal helped to shift the entrance focus towards reception. This was resisted by the client user group and deleted from the design, because the real focus on arrival after formal or informal entry, is hospitality. From the exterior Huinga 'open house' courtyard the most important part of the project is the kitchen with its big table within, and the Dining Room where larger groups are accommodated. Guests arrive, are appropriately welcomed and are given hospitality before business occurs. From a Pākehā perspective the kitchen with its four ways to enter it is the real reception area. You can slip into it from whatever direction you approach. This is where people will share food and drink together, and relationships would be rekindled or begin to develop. This is the real beating heart of the hub. Multiple overlapping potential uses were accommodated within the 430m<sup>2</sup> building by designing for double duty uses. The Dining Room was conceived as the volume of two big classrooms.



It is a robust space that could also accommodate weaving and performance teaching, and importantly, it could also cater for big events by opening up from both sides and flowing outside. “It was immediately too small catering for about a quarter of the people attending the opening event”<sup>18</sup>.

Another two of the four briefed classrooms were combined to create an abstracted Whare Rūnanga used as a meeting house, for language teaching, and accommodation. A big door half way through the space folds and stacks outside the room volume and can divide the house into two separate classrooms so it could be used by two groups at one time. Low windows at floor level expose the ground view to language students seated on the floor in the manner the language was taught there. Wharepaku ablutions and Whata store rooms are also included under the one single roof in a location near the Paepae (orators bench). This was much discussed and approved after mediation by Kaumātua, who favoured internal access to toilets at night time, and the inclusion of a side door so guests who had travelled a distance might have discrete access to refresh themselves before being formally welcomed onto the Marae. An administrative wing of reception and offices completed the major parts of the ensemble and was notable for the sharing of space and the lack of hierarchy intended within that part of the building.

The design plan document (Figure 3) is only annotated in the Māori Language. It is designed as a table plan, to be worked on as opposed to an artwork to be exhibited. Its exclusive use of Māori language occurred through collaboration with the Rangahaua teaching staff who saw it as a communication and teaching resource for the wider Whanganui community.



**Figure 4.** Architects Southcombe McClean and Company,  
*Developed Design Elevation*, Jan 1991.

Māori concepts and values underpinned the design and its development at every turn. The building expression was adorned in an abstracted manner using stained cedar with patterns introduced within fenestration, structure the interior joinery, and interior glazing. The external patterns and composition are specifically abstract and generic; not of any particular Marae origin. This apparent lack of direct connection to cultural history was challenging for the architects. The patterns used were eventually abstracted from reference to a pair of important artworks by Bob Jahnke that had been purchased by the polytechnic for the department. One of these Taonga (treasures) remains in the Rangahaua reception area, the other was gifted to the former chairman of the polytechnic Michael Payne. Māori Glass artist Greg Hall was engaged to create small glass artworks within key internal doors.

### **Construction and opening**

Māori concepts and values also underpinned the construction contract. A ceremonial ritual placing a Mauri stone (spiritual guardian) from the Whanganui River under the building foundations occurred towards the end of excavation, and traditional protocols excluding female visitors applied to the site during construction. This was immediately contentious. The protocol it was agreed was old local knowledge updated, and it would not apply to contractors or employees where there was no reasonable alternative for them. A female WRCP council member considered the protocol sexist and to have no place in a contemporary educational institution. She deliberately broke the protocol by entering the site causing immeasurable hurt to the Rangahaua whānau. It resulted in the Mauri stone being dug up and returned to the river. The Maihi and Amo that framed the central courtyard space and were so much a part of the building expression would now no longer be erected. From a place of cultural aspiration, Rangahaua, for a time, became just another building project for a polytechnic department. Cultural learning occurred, reconciliations were made, and the building construction continued and was eventually completed. Rangahaua was blessed in a dawn ceremony and occupied to significant acclaim. Guests came from throughout the wider Whanganui region and New Zealand including some from Unitec where the idea for a potential similar facility was taking shape. The huge numbers of guests were greatly in excess of the buildings ability to accommodate them, yet Rangahaua coped well. Both sides of its dining room were opened up and people were seated within the wider environment. The S House kitchen, hāngi (earth oven) and the new Rangahaua kitchen combined to provide generous hospitality.



**Figure 5.** Rangahaua as built without Amo and Maihi 1992, and Rangahaua with Amo and Maihi 1996, Photograph John W Scott.

### **The flush**

There were a great many daily and major events at Rangahaua from student welcomes to graduations and other major events, all accommodated by the openness, flexibility, and hardworking overlapping character of the design. The cultural teaching programmes accommodated at Rangahaua grew rapidly including Te Rangakura. The programme was taught on a satellite basis with students earning and working with the Māori language in specially selected satellite schools for the majority of time and completing short teaching and language theory residential block courses at Rangahaua, reversing the Teachers' College primarily theory-based education pattern. During the short courses students were accommodated at Rangahaua in the Whare Rūnanga at times up to 100 people<sup>19</sup>. After the programme received accreditation in 1992 iwi from around New Zealand sought to train teachers on their home marae as satellite programmes to Rangahaua and with agreements between iwi, the course grew exponentially

“within eight years to a student population of six hundred across 25 outposts throughout New Zealand. By 1998 it had become the largest Māori Teacher Training provider in the 150-year modern day history of Aotearoa”<sup>20</sup>.

Morvin Simon's memory of Rangahaua at the time noted

“With its own Te Kōhanga Reo run by national identities Piki and Te Oti Waretini we had a living marae, particularly as Te Rangakura satellites commenced sending their students to Rangahaua for training. It was an awesome buzz at the flush, cultural teams practising, choirs training, mahi hakinakina limbering up, tae chi students stretching, haka booming across the yard, Kura Kaupapa singing...Nga Puna Waihanga weaving, painting and carving, uncle Dave Teki running staff meetings, Judd Bailey mastering his craft in bone and stone, flat

guitars gasping for air, Janet learning her latest opera piece, Rangakura students being distracted by the pōwiri, Marilyn with a floor full of Te Ataarangi students, my wife Kura with her catering team preparing the daily cafe menu, 'karanga' girls expanding their lungs, Tipi and Mohi honing the art of oratory, Brendon Puketapu talking 'modems', Kohanga, Primary and Secondary buses coming and going...Incredible but true, it was absolutely 'tumeke'”<sup>21</sup>.



**Figure 6** Rangahua at blessing of Amo and Maihi 1996.  
Photograph John W Scott collection.

Two major events in the life of Rangahaua are particularly memorable. The first of these was the first formal graduation of students from the Te Rangakura programme in 1996. “The Mauri (life force) built up over time and had a physical feel, instilled by the people passing through”<sup>22</sup>. In preparation for the event the Maihi and Amo of the Whare were installed as originally designed, and the former head of WRCP John W Scott was invited to come and open the newly installed tomokanga (entrance). The graduation event that followed occurred over a number of days giving appropriate recognition of each student’s rohe (area) and journey. The second major event was the death and mourning of Kaumātua Henry Bennett in 1998 where the family had the honour of being invited to have Henry lay in state at Rangahaua for one night before being taken to Kai Iwi Marae. This was an opportunity for a great many to pay their respects and for Rangahaua and Henry to say goodbye.

### **The Sunset**

Rangahaua intention was “to take the college to the people”<sup>23</sup>. Its operation “utilised and applied Māori concepts in its structures and its applications”<sup>24</sup> partially within and alongside the polytechnic system and partially overlapping with it and outside it. Tino Rangitiratanga

(autonomous, self-determination) and the right to make decisions over issues affecting the people was also an important part of the underpinning philosophy. Whanganui Iwi also had a very visible presence on the national stage at the negotiation around Pakaitore (Moutua Gardens) in 1995. From this time there was increasing challenges to several of the WRCP programmes including those at Rangahaua from the established New Zealand educational and political communities who clearly saw their diversity, growth and strength as a challenge. Henry Bennett and the wider polytechnic management understood that there was a need to recognise and meet rigorous academic and educational standards balanced with traditional Māori knowledge delivered in a culturally significant manner. There were also quality management issues emerging with the growth and spread of the Te Rangakura programme that stretched those responsible for monitoring and maintaining the off-site course components. As more distant Iwi became involved and time passed, there was also less commitment to meeting WRCP requirements and the core activities occurring at Rangahaua. Eventually even graduations occurred remotely and much of the critical mass was dispersed. In response to ten years of underfunding and the associated financial deficits the half-completed polytechnic was disestablished in 2001. It was significantly rationalised and dismantled as an adjunct to UCOL Palmerston North against the clear preferences of the Whanganui community including those at Rangahaua. Whanganui Iwi leaders together approached Te Wānanga O Raukawa, a Māori tertiary education institution in Otaki who agreed to take on the Te Rangakura programme as long as appropriate. The programme continues to deliver Māori teacher training and has been successfully developed to incorporate Raukawa wānanga knowledge and ongoing national accreditation requirements to the point it now has degree status. WRCP main campus was abandoned and a new smaller campus built by UCOL in the manner of a palimpsest over the former Quay School of the Arts, Fine Arts campus in Taupo Quay. Few Māori studies courses occur there despite one of the buildings being named after Henry Bennett. The former WRCP campus now has a variety of predominantly iwi tenants such as the major Te Oranganui Iwi Health Authority, Awa FM the local iwi radio station, Te Wānanga o Aotearoa Weaving and Logging courses, and Pakohe Papers the makers of 100% New Zealand harakeke (flax) paper. Rangahaua still exists as a building and a concept operating as an important community complex for the Tupoho Whānau Trust, representing one of the three Whanganui Iwi. Recently the Maihi and Amo were removed from the building for maintenance.

### **Another day**

As a result of the Rangahaua project architects SMC were asked in 1992 to design a Māori Studies facility for Unitec in Auckland with Māori architect Rewi Thompson invited by us as

an equal partner. Rewi Thompson was design and client liaison lead. Through all project stages there was collaboration and exchange. Authorship of the project is mixed, although the SMC role in the project has been rarely acknowledged except by Rewi Thompson. Pukenga was constructed by Unitec carpentry students led by the project management of SMC architect John McClean. Pukenga was briefed to be 'not a Marae like Rangahaua', rather it was conceived as a Māori education workplace, exemplifying Māori knowledge as a teaching tool, through its architecture. It was created through a more traditional architectural process than occurred for Rangahaua. There was plenty of consultation and communication between architects and client, but the cultural expertise tipped the power balance towards the architects allowing different opportunities and synergies than occurred in the Rangahaua project. The architecture that resulted is an important taonga (treasure) of Māori and New Zealand architecture with well documented significance<sup>25</sup>. When it's critically considered today it may also be seen that the multiple narrative-based design cloaks a conventional education faculty layout that operated primarily and effectively as a Māori tertiary education workplace. Pukenga's design also had a gently rising open outdoor entrance space conceived as Ātea to accommodate cultural protocol, and despite intentions, for a time, the facility operated as a marae. "Pukenga, which opened in 1993, served as marae, wharekai, classroom space and administrative centre<sup>26</sup>". In 2009 Pukenga was joined by the outstanding 'Ngākau Māhaki', a Whare Whakairo (Carved Meeting House) with an axial large paved Marae Ātea, and in 2012, it was joined by a wharekai 'Manaaki' dining facility substantially built over the Pukenga entrance space Ātea.

## **Reflection**

Rangahaua was created by an architectural and management process that empowered Māori, the architect operating as 'aligned other'<sup>27</sup> and WRCP management operating in a genuine partnership mode. This modus operandi gave space for the deep diversity of activity and protocol necessary for a holistic Māori environment to occur, and for this to be seen as a core part of the educational service delivery. It also gave space for the architecture to be actively informed by the client group in a participatory model, and with the client group specialist cultural expertise dominating. The architect's role here is ambiguous, mediating and giving form and space to group intentions through discursive development. It results in a blended authorship with the client group, and Māori architecture through Māori community without access to a Māori architect.

"Rangahaua was by Māori not for Māori and that is different. Te Rangakura was not just about a brown teaching training programme. It was fundamentally different. Rangahaua is about the people. It just is. There is no question when

you are here, everybody knows it. It's Māori space. People have a tremendous pride in being a part of it"<sup>28</sup>.

So, could Rangahaua be Māori space? And if so what's different about it? What are its characteristics? There is the doubling of the Ātea space, the generous open Ātea opening onto the abstracted virtual open space courtyard house. There is little narrative structure or representation attached to this Huinga space, but it exists as common space and is material to Rangahaua as place. This informal open space is permeably connected to the rest of the facility. Rangahaua as built, has seventeen exterior doors and multiple ways you can move around and through it should one path not be available due to different uses. This permeable open non-hierarchical design is easy to slip into, though, and out of, and not well suited to control in a typical educational institutional mode. It is also incredibly flexible, adaptable, and extendable, often with associated Marquees within and around the central courtyard and main Ātea as readily occurs on other marae. Rangahaua prioritises hospitality, with a kitchen as main entry point, and reception and offices as a service wing. It has an abstracted but strong Māori expression adapting domestic and Marae forms to create a clearly Māori built identity. Rangahaua is intentionally not a narrative architecture, without applied stories or histories informing it or being carved or woven into it, but it is an architecture of narrative telling its own story through time. And the stories of the people associated with the place emerge and are significant and have created a particular Mauri of this Marae. Kaumātua who have passed on adorn a wall of the Whare Rūnanga. This is resonant with Bill McKay and Antonia Walmsley's description "Buildings are not to be perceived in any one moment as buildings in the round, rather they are to be seen as a series of paepae - steps, portals or gateways on the way through the world"<sup>29</sup>

"Rangahaua was an active living Marae that coexisted with a tertiary educational institution. It is like a Marae and served as a Marae. It references architectural history, yet it is contemporary and has a practical education function. It has beautiful design lines and a sensitive relation to its landscape. It's not tucked away in a corner of a campus. It has a large Ātea space in front giving an appropriate prominence"<sup>30</sup>.

It was a building of its time that was created by Māori as part of the response to urgent Māori educational need of that time via multiple Iwi with WRCP active support. Morvin Simon in one of many speeches at the opening of Rangahaua described it as "a new waka,

a new vehicle to take us on a journey from where we are to where we are going". That is exactly what happened and that is its key significance. It is an exemplar bicultural Marae operating temporally between and across different world views. Dr Deidre Brown notes

"The centrality of the marae, as a cultural symbol and ritual space, remains an important concept to this day as demonstrated with Pukenga being recently joined, fifteen years after its opening, by Lyonel Grant's Te Noho Kotahitanga Meeting House"<sup>31</sup>.

Maybe Māori space is as much about a type of communal, accessible occupation and ownership as it is about architectural expression? The historical context that models this Māori space we can identify as being associated with Māori settlement in the form of Marae. Rangahaua demonstrates that Marae on tertiary institutions might also operate as active marae in the traditional sense, with diversity of programme and age groups and occupation as might occur on an occupied local marae. The perceived disruptions to teaching that are definitely associated with this may also inform and deepen cultural learning delivery through the integrity of a holistic world view applied to an educational context. This is potentially a vision of the future as much as the past.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Rogan June, *Hui held at Pakohe Papers*, Whanganui, 19<sup>th</sup> Dec 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Te Awa Tupuna *Celebrating Rangahaua*, 2016, 5

<sup>3</sup> Irwin Kathie, 'Maori Education in 1991: A Review and Discussion', *New Zealand Annual Review of Education*, 1, (1992) 79.

<sup>4</sup> Simon Morvin T *Taku Whare E : My Home My Heart: He Mauri Tu the Spirit Dwells Still*, 2 vols (Moku Whanau Trust 1986), 64.

<sup>5</sup> Te Awa Tupuna *Celebrating Rangahaua*, 2016, 9.

<sup>6</sup> Austin M R, Austin M R, *A Description of the Māori Marae*, Study paper No30 University of Auckland School of Architecture, 230.

<sup>7</sup> Irwin Kathie, 'Maori Education in 1991: A Review and Discussion', 77-112.

<sup>8</sup> Robinson, Willie, *Specific History of Te Rangakura*, Te Wananga O Raukawa resource, 2018, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Robinson, Willie, *Specific History of Te Rangakura*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Te Awa Tupuna *Celebrating Rangahaua*, 13.

<sup>11</sup> Robinson, Willie, *Specific History of Te Rangakura*, 1.

<sup>12</sup> Simon Morvin T, *Taku Whare E : My Home My Heart*, 65.

<sup>13</sup> Bennett Henry, *New Building for Polytechnic*, Wanganui Chronicle, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1991, p3

<sup>14</sup> Austin M R, *A Description of the Māori Marae*, 235.

<sup>15</sup> Austin M R, *A Description of the Māori Marae*, 229-240.

<sup>16</sup> Scott John W, Interview in Christchurch, 17 Jan 2018.

<sup>17</sup> Scott John W, Interview in Christchurch, 17 Jan 2018.

<sup>18</sup> Vreede Marilyn, *Hui at Rangahaua*, 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2018.

<sup>19</sup> Townsend Janet, *Hui at Pakhoe Papers*, 19<sup>th</sup> Dec 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Robinson, Willie, *Specific History of Te Rangakura*, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Simon Morvin T, *Taku Whare E : My Home My Heart*, 66.

<sup>22</sup> Vreede Marilyn, *Hui at Rangahaua*, 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2018.

<sup>23</sup> Te Awa Tupuna *Celebrating Rangahaua*, 10.



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<sup>24</sup> Te Awa Tupuna *Celebrating Rangahaua*, 17.

<sup>25</sup> Brown Deidre, *Māori Architecture; from fale to whareniui and beyond*, Penguin Books Ltd, London, 2009, 148-151, and Jenner Ross, *Antipodies, Lotus International*, 105, 1999, 115-117.

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.unitec.ac.nz/marae/>

<sup>27</sup> Denton Nicholas, March(prof) Thesis *A Place to Navigate With / In Negotiation of Architecture and Urban Environments in Aotearoa New Zealand*. VUW School of Architecture, 2016, 262.

<sup>28</sup> Bennett Mary, *Hui at Rangahaua*, 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2018.

<sup>29</sup> McKay, Bill, and Antonia Walmsley. 'Maori Time: Notions of Space, Time and Building Form in the South Pacific.' *Progress: Proceedings of the 20th Annual SAHANZ Conference* (2003): 203

<sup>30</sup> Scott John W, Interview in Christchurch, 17 Jan 2018.

<sup>31</sup> Brown Deidre, *Māori Architecture*, 149