

Northland schools welcome merger

by Owen Hembray

The Northland schools of Moerewa are playing a game of musical chairs, but when the music stops everyone will have a chair and will be smiling.

Following a Ministry of Education review the 91-year-old Moerewa Primary School will merge with Otiria — barely one kilometre away in the same township — at the Otiria site on January 28.

The merger comes as part of the review which will see eight Northland primary schools close. Education Minister Trevor Mallard said the review would unlock \$3.6 million in extra resources for education in the region.

Fears that the Moerewa school site, whose previous pupils include former Prime Minister Mike Moore, would be lost to the community have been allayed with news that Te Kura Kaupapa Maori o Taumarere will take over the site once the two other schools merge.

The Maori language school will move from its current location on the original Otiria school site which was made vacant when Otiria School moved, taking over the Bay of Islands Intermediate

building next door.

Appointed by the Moerewa school board as operational change manager for the merger, Don Edmonds describes the amalgamation as a "win-win situation" for the schools, children and the community.

"It's a unique type of education [Te Kura Kaupapa Maori] where instruction is in Maori and everything reflects a Maori world view," he says.

He says the retention of the Moerewa site removed the need for additional buildings and gave both schools the space and facilities needed to further develop local education.

"The community saw it as an opportunity. Change is inevitable so let's turn it to our advantage."

Chairwoman of the board of trustees of Te Kura Kaupapa Maori o Taumarere, Francis Thompson, says the school is excited to become kaitiaki (guardians) of the Moerewa school site.

"We're absolutely enthusiastic about it. It opens up a whole lot of opportunities for us," she says.

Thompson says the announcement was a sign of support for the growing needs of the school, which now has about 50 pupils, and gives parents more choice.

Trees, seen as taonga and planted in honour of elders at the current site, will be taken with them when they move to Moerewa School.

Moerewa School principal Geoff Neville, who has been teaching at the school for 35 years, is optimistic about the

merger with Otiria, but sad to leave behind a site with a long history.

Three teachers at Moerewa school have more than 100 years of teaching experience between them, while some pupils are the fourth generation of their family to attend.

With about 140 pupils at Moerewa and 100 at Otiria, Neville says it is hard to justify two schools, but though inevitable, the merger could be positive.

"The community saw it as an opportunity. They thought, 'Change is inevitable so let's turn it to our advantage and drive it'. So they've got a vision of a community campus in the long term," says Neville.

Otiria School principal Ken Timperley says the merger is just the start of a vision for a campus, which includes pre-school, secondary, and tertiary education.

"It's dreamed of as a one-stop shop. If it works out really well it will be great for the community," he says.

Timperley says a close relationship between the schools has led to discussions about a merger before Education Minister Trevor Mallard made his announcement of a possible merger in May.

News that Moerewa school will continue as a place of learning under Te Kura Kaupapa Maori o Taumarere has been very welcome, Neville says.

"We're heartened by that because one of the things we were particularly worried about was the prospect of the site sitting empty and being subject to vandalism and general decay," he says.

The merged school will be called Moerewa, at least initially, and be run by the Moerewa school board. A new board will be elected after three months.



PHOTO: KATE PALMER

DROPPINGS: 1000 geese can dump 350 kg of waste a day.

Farmers fly into gaggle of geese

by Sudesh Kissun

If the Canada geese population takes off in Thames and Coromandel district it will have a serious impact on farms, says Mike Morrison of Federated Farmers.

Morrison says he supports the Federated Farmers call to remove Canada geese from the game bird list because the birds contaminate pastures and lakes.

The Wildlife Act currently places limits on how and when the birds can be culled.

Morrison says while Canada geese are not found in Thames and the Coromandel in big numbers, it is only a matter of time before they flock to the area.

"They are a real menace in the South Island and the last thing we want is to see Canada geese up here."

"They are already in the North Island in the Wairarapa and Hawkes Bay areas."

Morrison says local farmers are already reeling from damage caused by paradise ducks.

A recent poll of Federated Farmers members found about 90% of respondents support

removal of Canada geese from the list.

The federation claims two to three geese can eat the equivalent amount of food consumed by one sheep, and 1000 geese produce about 350 kg of droppings a day, polluting lakes and pasture.

However Fish and Game spokesman Jay Graybill says attempts to declare the geese a pest are "mischievous and lacked credibility".

Graybill says their latest trend count shows geese numbers have fallen in the central South Island region to 6000, the lowest count in 19 years.

He says in the North Island, geese populations are well contained by North Island Fish and Game Councils

"Federated Farmers would serve its members better if it demonstrated an environmental conscience and did something about the pollution caused by farming to natural water and environment rather than manufacturing issues," he says.

Conservation Minister Chris Carter is currently reviewing the relevant schedules of the Wildlife Act.



Education Minister Trevor Mallard

Feilding school tackles sex abuse claims

by Aroha Awarau

Past pupils of Hato Paora College, an all-boys school in Feilding, are taking a stance against sexual abuse after an ex-student recently alleged sexual abuse by a former staff member.

Earlier this year, police arrested and charged a former Catholic brother for the alleged abuse, which dates back to 1984, when he was working at the school.

"When you go to Hato Paora you share a common brotherhood," says Luke Crawford, president of the Hato Paora Old Boys Association. "When it comes to the safety of our people, it's not about the school, it's about the boys."

Detective Constable John Fagin, who is in charge of the case, says it is "really good" that the association is putting its people first, especially when the police have not ruled out the possibility of more victims.

"We encourage people to come forward if they have any background information about our

current investigation, or if they have been subject to abuse themselves," he says.

After hearing about the allegations, the Hato Paora Old Boys Association posted a message on its website offering full support to any ex-pupils who may have been abused while attending the school.

"We applaud the bravery of those pupils who have faced up to the past, and made the decision to pursue the right pathway and seek justice," the website says.

Lindsey Freer, spokesperson for the New Zealand Catholic Church, said the church had its own sexual abuse investigation committee. But she also encourages people to go directly to the police if they were abused.

Crawford urges any student of Hato Paora who was abused while at school, to contact the association, the church or the police.

"We will support you in any way we can and make people accountable for their actions," he says.

New style agency finds jobs for people who already have one

by Kim Reed

For as long as she can remember, Shareena Sandbrook has dreamed of being her own boss.

This year it became a reality for the 23-year-old who started a recruitment agency with a difference — finding jobs for trades people who are already employed.

Looking for a competitive edge, she soon found a niche market in the blue-collar industry.

Sandbrook has a number of people with a variety of skills on her books — ranging from cooks, cleaners, welders, fitters and turners to plumbers and builders.

"There are a lot of qualified people out there who want to make a change.

"They may want more money or to move to another company, but are working such long hours they have no time to look," says Sandbrook.

A business degree from Massey combined with experience in the human resource industry, gave her the courage to start up Pure

Recruitment, based in Te Rapa, near Hamilton.

"At first I thought, 'What have I got myself into?' It was pretty scary. I was on my own and there was no one to give me direction."

She found help though the Hamilton Business Development Centre enterprise training programme, which is funded by Hamilton City Council and government agencies.

Attending seminars, such as the "easy as business planning" course and "how to create a winning marketing strategy", gave her more confidence along with one-on-one coaching from programme facilitator Sandy Turner.

"Sandy was awesome. She gave me practical advice and put me back on track."

One of the obstacles Sandbrook had to overcome was to get companies to take her seriously and take a chance on her.

"Naturally they were nervous. I'm young and they had never heard of me."

She broke down the barriers by creating a one-off agency fee of

\$500 rather than a straight percentage based on annual salary that other agencies charge.

"It was like taking the \$2 dollar shop approach, without compromising on quality," says Sandbrook.

Through word of mouth, mail drops, pouring through the yellow pages, and a bit of advertising, she has developed a clientele of companies and workers who call when seeking permanent, part-time or temporary work.

Turner has enjoyed working with Sandbrook for the past few months.

"Shareena is a risk taker. She's stepping out of her comfort zone and creating something unique to her industry," says Turner.

"She is positive, proactive and determined to have a successful business."

So what's her next step? "To be a millionaire," laughs Sandbrook.

But for now, she'll settle on having an employee to help with all the paperwork by the end of this year.