



Rongo H. Wetere

CONSULTING

Dr. Rongo H. Wetere, ONZM, FNZIM



RONGO WETERE IS OF NGATI MANIAPOTO TRIBE, A DESCENDENT OF HOTUROA Captain of the Tainui Canoe which made its historic landing in New Zealand around the 12th Century. He has long championed the cause of those disadvantaged by majority cultures that often discriminate against Aboriginal and minority groups, especially in the vitally important areas of Indigenous Education.

Dr. Wetere was the inspirational founder of Aotearoa Institute which was established in New Zealand in 1986. He led a team of committed individuals dedicated to providing second chance learning for many Maori and Non Maori who had not fared well in the education system of New Zealand.

In 1994, Dr. Wetere successfully gained government approval for the establishment of New Zealand's first Maori University known as Te Wananga o Aotearoa (translation: University of New Zealand) and became its founding President/CEO. From very modest beginnings, within 10 years Te Wananga o Aotearoa (TWOA) grew to be the largest tertiary provider in New Zealand with annual enrolments reaching 65,000 students. TWOA under his leadership effectively bridged the racial divide with 52% of its student rolls being Non Maori.

Dr. Wetere has had a long career in Community Service in New Zealand, receiving the Queens Commemorative Medal in 1990. He was also appointed Chair of the Maori Employment and Training Commission in 1998 by the Bolger National government. He served as Maniapoto Maori Trust Board Chair for 9 years and was on the Executive of NZ Maori Congress. He was a key driver in the establishment of WINHEC (World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium) in Calgary in 2002 where he was appointed Co-Chair, and now a Patron of WINHEC.

He has received the WINHEC highest Circle of Chiefs Award in 2006, and honorary Doctorates from Sinte Gleska University in South Dakota in 2001 and Auckland University of Technology in 2002.

Dr. Wetere was made a Fellow of the New Zealand Institute of Management in 2002 and was awarded the ONZM (Order of New Zealand Merit) in 2003.

In New Zealand, Dr. Wetere is known as the man who gets things done. He has offered opportunities for thousands of Adult learners, both Maori and Non-Maori, in New Zealand.

He successfully took a claim to the Waitangi Tribunal in 1998 over inequitable funding for Wananga (Maori University). The three Maori Wananga received \$150 ml capital funding from this action. Dr. Wetere also received a Government apology for their previous refusal to provide funding.

Wananga in 2001 received equal status as a mainstream university with all students on approved courses being funded. Dr. Wetere saw the opportunity to grow and invest in course curriculum and programs best suited for communities across New Zealand by maximizing the use of technology.

Both Maori and Non-Maori enrolments quickly grew to 40,000. The Government's own Institute of Economic Research was contracted to evaluate the value of TWOA to the national GDP. The survey was extensive. The findings were that TWOA's contribution was equal to the New Zealand forestry industry at \$3 billion dollars annually injected into the New Zealand economy.

When the following year enrolments jumped to 65,000, New Zealand Universities facing declining rolls sought Government action to restrict TWOA. A pending national election added fuel to the fire as political parties castigated the Government for allowing a Maori Institution to grow so big. This ultimately led Dr. Wetere to step down as CEO on condition his Deputy who he had carefully trained for this important role be appointed.

TWOA at its height under Dr. Wetere had an annual budget of \$250 ml with approximately 2000 staff and 65,000 students. TWOA, despite Labour Government cutbacks, still remains one of the largest Tertiary Institutions in New Zealand.

At the resignation of Dr. Wetere in December 2005 the former Minister of Education and then Chair of the Tertiary Funding Commission (TEC), the Honourable Russell Marshall stated, "Dr. Wetere had made an enormous contribution to education in New Zealand and was deserving of the highest accolades the country could bestow.

In 2009, the hometown of Te Awamutu bestowed its highest award declaring him as their 2009 National Hero in the Walk of Fame. Mayor Livingston said, "Dr. Wetere insistence that the Head Office of TWOA remain in Te Awamutu meant Wananga was the largest employer in the area, making a huge contribution to adult educational achievement across New Zealand".

He has 3 Adult children and nine Grandchildren living in New Zealand. He is married to Marcia B. Krawll and is currently living in Ottawa, Ontario, working on providing educational opportunities for second chance learners in Canada.

Work experience

- 1961 Purchased 170 acre Dairy Farm as a 21 year old. Active member of Young Farmers and Parent/Teachers Assoc.
- 1965-1990 18 years, Consultant for AMP Society
9 years, Chair Maniapoto Maori Trust Board
6 years, Executive for National Maori Congress
9 years, Arts Council
- 1984 Established and Director, Waipa Kokiri Training Institute for Youth
- 1986 Established Aotearoa Institute Charitable Trust (AI) to support adult education and training schemes for adults (16 years and over)
- 1993 Developed AKO Whakatere Maori Language Revitalization Program
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- 1994-2006 Founder and CEO (Tumanki), First Indigenous University, Te Wananga o Aotearoa (TWOA). IN 2004, TWOA became the largest university in NZ with 65,000 students.
- 1998 Chair for National Maori Employment Commission
- 2000 Launched AKO Whakatere Language Revitalization across NZ for Maori and non-Maori
- 2002 Co-founder World Indigenous Higher Education Consortium (WINHEC)
- 2006 Managing Director, ArrowMight Canada, Not-for-Profit organization for developing adult foundation education
- 2017 Consultant, Six Nations Polytechnic for full University status
- 2018 Consultant & Project Manager for Matawa First Nations Education Language Revitalization (Cree, Oji-Cree, Ojibway)

Volunteer Experience

- 1965-1990 NZ Lions Club
College (Secondary School) Board of Governors
Director of Arts Rose Festival, Te Awamutu
Major contributor 1990 Waitangi celebrations
- 2006-present Canada 150
Open Doors Ottawa
Grey Cup Ottawa
International Vintage Rugby Tournament Ottawa

Awards and Distinctions

- 1991 Received Queen's Commemorative Medal of Service to Maori
- 1992 City of Hamilton Education Medal
- 1994 Awarded Order New Zealand of Merit (ONZM)
- 1995 Awarded Fellow New Zealand Institute Management (FNZIM)
- 2003 Honourary Doctorate awarded Sinte Gleska University, South Dakota
- 2004 Honourary Doctorate awarded Auckland Institute of Technology (AUT)
- 2007 Awarded Circle of Chiefs (WINHEC International)
- 2009 Awarded Walk of Fame, Te Awamutu, NZ
- 2009 Honourary Chieftainship, Nuxalk Nation, Bella Coola, BC
- 2016 Received Canadian Citizenship
- 2017 Honourary Doctorate of Letters by WINU, WINHEC Conference, Toronto