

Media Release

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Healthy eating key to kapa haka preparation

Thirty seven years after it began, Te Matatini National Kapa Haka Festival will be hosted by Tauranga for the first time this week. The February 19-22 event is expected to attract more than 40,000 visitors to Baypark Stadium.

Members of the area's only competing group are preparing to compete as well as host the event.

"The pressure is certainly on. This is one of the biggest profile events our Iwi has been involved in," said Te Kapa Haka o Ngati Ranginui committee member and performer Charlie Rahiri. "We are the second group on stage and one of our waiata-a-ringā (action songs) welcomes visitors to Tauranga. Following our performance we are all then expected to rush off and support behind the scenes."

The event began in 1972 as the Aotearoa Traditional Maori Performing Arts Festival in Rotorua and is held every two years. Teams are judged on six disciplines within their 25 minute performance; whakaeke (entrance or march on), moteatea (traditional chant), poi and waiata-a-ringā (action song), haka and whakawatea (exit). As well as the main performance prizes, teams compete for Manukura Wahine and Manukura Tane (best female and male leaders), kakahu (best costumes) and use of te reo.

Te Kapa Haka o Ngati Ranginui is made up of 40 performers aged between 14 and 55 and they know that the competition will be fierce. They are up against 34 teams from across New Zealand and two teams from Australia. For Ngati Ranginui, the festival is particularly significant.

“Ngati Ranginui Iwi for a time became embraced under the mana of one Iwi. It’s only in the last 30-40 years that there has been a reaffirmation of Ngati Ranginui Iwi’s existence,” says committee member Sylvia Willison. “The design on our costumes tells the story of the Iwi and the hapu subtribes. Each member of the group is responsible for completing their own costumes, which involves tapestry work. This is part of our mental preparation and even the men find it very therapeutic.”

The group has been preparing for the event since they got through the regional competition in March 2008.

“It’s a big commitment for all the members,” says Sylvia. “We practise every Monday evening and since November there has been a noho every weekend, which is where we all stay at the marae.”

As part of the noho, the group has enlisted the help of Bay of Plenty District Health Board community educator Stephen Cameron. Stephen delivers health education programmes focusing on nutrition and physical activity.

“As a society we are becoming more aware that wellbeing is largely driven by what we eat and how active we are,” says Stephen.

“Kapa Haka is extremely physical,” says Charlie who has been a member of the group for the last two years. “Performing is mentally and physically draining so you need to be fit to be able to compete. Nutrition is key to fitness so it’s been great having Stephen on board to help us – hopefully it will give us an advantage!”

Sylvia says that throughout the festival the national committee in collaboration with Baypark stadium staff, will reinforce healthy lifestyle messages and have ensured that healthy food and drink options are available for visitors and performers.

“We have managed to minimise the number of fast food outlets and ensure that lots of water is available. There will be traditional Maori food sold from various stalls which will be stationed in the large car park area of the stadium,” says Sylvia.



Kapa haka team member Wiparata is shocked to see what eating fatty foods can do to your arteries. Wiparata is looking at a model which community educator Stephen Cameron uses to demonstrate how food high in saturated fat and cholesterol blocks arteries and can lead to heart attacks and strokes.

ENDS

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