



Marae graduation for top Hawaiian scholar

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Hawaiian PhD student Keao NeSmith is graduating next week at the University of Waikato marae.

He will be joined by nearly a dozen members of his family, coming to New Zealand to share in Keao's success.

Doctorate research focused on Hawaiian language

Keao completed his doctorate in applied linguistics at the School of Maori and Pacific Development with his research focussing on how the Hawaiian language is being conveyed to a new generation of Hawaiian speakers.

He was a recipient of a top US Mellon-Hawai'i Fellowship worth \$56,000 which allowed him to travel to New Zealand and also provided for his chief supervisor Associate Professor Winifred Crombie to travel to Hawaii to see the kinds of research projects being undertaken there.

Thesis completed in record time

Dr Crombie says Keao completed his thesis in record time – in just under than two and a half years, and was totally dedicated.

“His other supervisors, Drs Diane Johnson and Hemi Whaanga, often received emails from him well before breakfast time.”

Keao very happy with Waikato choice

Keao says he chose New Zealand to study to further broaden his academic and professional experience and training and to gain a more international view of academic and research methodologies.

“It was a good decision. My supervisors were top – absolutely professional, dedicated and meticulous. I was well-supported in a fun environment with staff dedicated to cultural advancement.”



Keeping the language alive: Hawaiian PhD student Keao NeSmith, who will graduate next week at the University of Waikato marae, is focusing on revitalizing the Hawaiian language.

Language revitalisation in Keao's plans

Hawaiian is one of the world's most endangered languages and with only around 500 speakers. Keao NeSmith hopes to work with those struggling to revitalise the language by developing a professional teaching programme. He's currently teaching Hawaiian at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

“And as a result of my PhD research I've dramatically revamped my teaching approach, using communicative language teaching and integrating Hawaiian culture norms into the basis of my teaching. My students have noticed how effective the communicative approach can be.”

Family lū'au planned to celebrate graduation

Keao has family ties to Hamilton. He has an uncle who is Ngāpuhi with family living in the city, so his graduation is providing the perfect excuse for a family reunion.

“We'll have a lū'au – an Hawaiian style feast, with a pig roasted in the imu.”

Keao to maintain New Zealand connection

Keao hopes to continue his connection with Waikato and New Zealand, returning for presentations and to conduct research. Already he has had an article published in the Journal of Māori and Pacific Development, based on part of his thesis. He's writing another for an international journal and is currently working on three books.

(Image) Keeping the language alive: Hawaiian PhD student Keao NeSmith, who will graduate next week at the University of Waikato marae, is focussing on revitalising the Hawaiian language.