

'Speak up' message to Onerahi teens

'We shouldn't assume young people in Onerahi want a youth centre' is the message from the sub-committee set up by the OCA to look into the pros and cons of a youth centre for the Seaside Suburb.

Flyers, a Facebook page, a survey and visits to schools are being considered as ways to connect with local teenagers to find out if a youth centre – or something else – is what they would like to see happening.

Natasha Leigh Hall, a 19-year-old arts student at NorthTec, has been elected convener of the group, and the other members are 17-year-old Briya Poa, Paul Doherty, Duncan Anderson and Bob Smith.

They are due to have their second meeting on August 30th, and have been encouraged by the number of people –teenagers and older people – who have expressed support for the idea and who want to be involved.

This letter, from 18-year-old student Karori Absolum, led to his being invited to join the group :-

Hi i read the article about the youth centre and would like to share my opinion. I am a 17 Maori Student and i have gotten to know a few youths in Onerahi, some are bad, some are good but the main problem with these kids is a lack of discipline and respect. As a maori i know that people perceive us as we were 10-20 years ago and this has an effect on maori kids. I think that the youth centre would be great. A youth centre sounds like a library to kids, you have to add creativity like group activity games etc. It should be fun and helpful, it can help kids develop quicker into mature teens. It could be like an after school program where kids could have fun instead of being at home or doing things they shouldn't. They could cook which most youths havn't and others do dishes. Simple things that aren't being taught and these could help make there lives better instead of following in family footsteps, I want the youth to be leaders and not followers. It could help kids make new friends and show people that kids are also people and a little respect for elders and kids can go a long way. I was at the shops a while ago and a shopkeeper was yelling at kids to get off there skateboards and away from their shop but they didn't listen and it escalated into anger. I told them to move down the road a bit out of the way from the shops without yelling and they listened because they respect me. I want the youth in Onerahi to help elders walk across the street or carry their shopping, I want the youth to explore there minds so they know they can achieve things they put there mind to. I know that they won't all fall in line but if we change a few youths lives I think its worth it. Onerahi could lead Whangarei and Northland into finally helping youths, we could be a well-respected town and this could prove well. If we get the whole community to help like bringing in old paint, wood, shoes, food or even donate \$1 to make it happen, it could help youths build this centre and it may not get tagged because its a respected building. I would love to help if this goes ahead and i hope it happens sooner rather then later, every day that's wasted is a lost opportunity.

Yours Sincerly Karori