



Marae Graduation Ceremony, Victoria University, Wellington, 1998. Photography by Woolf.

## Who Are Māori?

Māori are a tribal people indigenous to Aotearoa New Zealand and make up approximately 16% of the total population.

Māori societal structure is composed of basically three levels: the individual *whānau* or family, which is connected to the *hapū* or sub-tribe, which in turn is connected to the *iwi* or main tribe and then back to the ancestral *waka* or canoe.

Hapū and iwi connection is important to Māori as it:

- is a source of Māori identity
- confirms family relationships
- connects Māori with the land
- is the traditional base of decision-making
- is the heart of Māori culture.

