

Waka rorohiko

Robert Sullivan

A poem by Robert Sullivan, first published in *Star Waka*, Auckland University Press, 1999.

I heard it at Awataha Marae
 in te reo-waka rorohiko-
 'computer waka', about a database
 containing whakapapa. Some tapu
 information, not for publication.
 A dilemma for the library culture
 of access for all, no matter who, how,
 why. A big Western principle stressing
 egalitarianism. My respects.
 However, Māori knowledge brings many
 together to share their passed down wisdom
 in person to verify their inheritance;
 without this unity our collective knowledge
 dissipates into cults of personality.

Robert Sullivan has published five books of poetry and two books for children. He is coediting "Best New Zealand Poems 2006" with Anne Kennedy. An Assistant Professor of English at the University of Hawaii, Manoa, he specializes in Polynesian and Māori literature, and creative writing. His latest book of poetry is "Voice Carried My Family" (Auckland University Press, 2005). He has won several NZ awards for his writing and contributed to AENJ 1.2.