



Celestial celebration: Bonfires and fire dancing will be just two of the attractions at the Kahu Youth group's Matariki celebrations on the Lake Wanaka foreshore on Saturday. The event, to welcome the Maori New Year, is expected to attract about 500 people. *PHOTO: SUPPLIED*

Outdoor feast to celebrate Matariki

By **CRIS JOHNSTON**

WANAKA-BASED Kahu Youth group believes it could be hosting the alfresco dinner party of the year on Saturday, with about 500 people expected to gather on the Wanaka lakefront to welcome Matariki (Maori New Year).

Now in its third year, the event has grown in popularity since it was first held in 2010 and organisers had planned accordingly, youth worker Angie Griffith said.

"We are holding the event slightly earlier ... last year we had an estimated 300 to 400 people, but it got dark and quite cold very quickly and the crowd dwindled.

"We will also have two bonfires and the community hangi is going to be huge.

"We ran out of food last year and are determined that's not

MATARIKI

MATARIKI is the Maori name for a group of stars, also known as the Pleiades star cluster or The Seven Sisters, whose appearance in late May, early June and the sighting of the new moon marks the Maori New Year.

going to happen again," Ms Griffith said.

For the first time, celebrations would culminate with a "massive" fireworks display executed by a "secret and philanthropic pyromaniac".

There would also be a range of workshops, including flax weaving, bubble making, poi dancing and hula hooping.

Scores of people from the community, including Mt Aspiring College pupils, had been working behind the scenes for the past few weeks to help organise the event, which was funded by Te Puni Kokiri (the Ministry of Maori Development), Ms Griffith said.

"This is a real community event and the sheer volume of young and older members of the community pulling together to make this happen has yet again taken our breath away."

Donations for the hangi, which would be laid on land behind the Upper Clutha Rugby Club grounds, would be welcome, Ms Griffith said.

☐ Matariki celebrations will be held at the Dinosaur Park on Saturday from 3pm-7pm, with fireworks set to start at 6.45pm.