

# Wordsmiths in Wanaka

Laura Williamson

Wanaka Sun

A new annual festival is set to “unleash the magic of words” in Wanaka, according to organisers. The Outspoken Festival of Words & Storytelling will run over six weeks this summer, starting from January 12, and is bringing a variety of nationally-renowned poets and spoken word artists to Wanaka. Performers will include QSM recipient Sam Hunt, award-winning poet and author Sue Wootton, the South Auckland Poets’ Collective (member Dietrich Soakai pictured) and rapper Tourettes.

While the first year of the non-profit initiative is being supported by local businessman Luc Bohyn, who was inspired by spoken word dinner performances he saw in Europe, the Outspoken team is seeking further funding to cement the future of the series, which will include an outreach programme in local schools and libraries. “We really need community support to make it a yearly event. In addition to bringing acts from around New Zealand, we are running workshops and performances in



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the library and schools and look forward to inspiring the wider community,” artist liaison Liz Breslin, who is also a featured performer at the festival, said.

Liz said she was particularly excited about the inclusion of the South Auckland Poets’ Collective. The group was formed in 2008 as

a platform for Pacific and Maori poets in South Auckland, and would bring an eclectic array of voices, stories and experiences to their show. As well, she was looking forward to the Wanaka Showcase evening. “I’ve had the pleasure of working with a lot of talent here, and it will be great to

see some of our local performers take the stage,” Liz said.

She added that one of the goals of Outspoken was to offer something for everyone, bookworms or not. “Even if you’ve never read a book, you will be spellbound,” she said.

