

Te Whakanui i te marae o Te Herenga Waka, ōna whare, ōna tāngata

Opening address, Sir Hirini Moko Mead¹

6 December 2024

Ko Putauaki te maunga, ko Te Moana a Toi te moana, ko Te Whare Wananga o Awanuiarangi te whare wananga, i mua ko Tupapakurau, ko Ngati Awa te iwi, ko Te Pahipoto te hapu tena koutou, tena koutou, tena tatau katoa.

E nga Rangatira o Te Herenga Waka, te whare wananga me te marae, tena koutou, tena koutou. Na koutou te tono kia huihui mai tatau ki te whakanui i tenei Kaupapa, kia tae mai ki te whare i tangia nei tona kawa i te ata nei. Kua rite tena wahanga o te kaupapa o te ra. Kua tangihia o tatau mate i nga marae o te motu; kua ringihia nga roimata o nga whanau mo nga mate o te wa huri noa te motu. Waiho ratau kia moe i te moenga roa i Paerau. He kaupapa tenei na te hunga ora. Ka huri atu ki a koutou te iwi o tenei rohe, aku whanaunga o Te Ati Awa, tena koutou, tena koutou. Ka mihi ake ki a koutou nga iwi i tae mai ki te tautoko i nga kaupapa o tenei ra; nui atu nga mihi ki a koutou katoa. Ka huri ake aku mihi ki a koe Rawinia, tamahine a Hineteiwaiwa, nou te reo karanga o te ra kia hui mai tatau ki te ta i te kawa o tenei whare hou miharo, ataahua, ki te whakaoti i nga mahi i whakaritea mo tenei ra. He maitai katoa enei mahi.

Na Rawinia, i tono mai koe me tae mai ahau ki tenei kaupapa ahakoa kua tino koroheke ahau, kua pa mai te wareware e hine, ahakoa kua he haere taku tinana, kua kore e tino rongu i nga korero, kua kore e tino kite, kua uaua te hikoi ka tohe tonu koe me tae mai ahau. Waimaria kai te ahua pai tonu taku hinengaro, ahua pai nei. Ko te mea nui pea kai te reka tonu te kai! Iwa tekau ma whitu aku tau e kare ma. A te Hanuere ka iwa tekau ma waru. Matakū ana! Kua tae mai Rawinia, kua tae mai ahau me aku mahara: e tika ana i etahi wa, e he ana i etahi. E ai ki ahau, kai te tika aku korero ki a koutou. Ki te he, aroha mai. Waiho enei korero i konei ka huri ahau ki tera o nga reo ki te panui i aku mahara.

The new Professor of Māori

My whānau and I were in Canada when the advertisement for a professor of Māori at Victoria University came out. I was teaching in the Anthropology Department at McMaster University, in Hamilton, Ontario. My colleague Professor Whatarangi Winiata taught at the University of British Columbia. He and his whānau had come back to

¹ Nā Tā Hirini i hōmai tēnei kōrero ki a mātou, ā, kāre mātou i ētita, i raweke kia ū ki tāna i tuhi ai.

Aotearoa before us and he had launched his Whakatupuranga Ruamano programme with his people. That was the beginning of other initiatives that he developed. I accepted the job of being professor of Māori at Victoria University and like Whatarangi I had a few ideas in my head. On arrival here, I walked into a bit of raruraru. Some people were happy to see me and a few others were very annoyed and causing some trouble. These were people who either wanted the job or thought some one else should have been appointed: I was the last person they wanted to see. But I had arrived, had a job to do and I was ready to start.

Reflections from the late 1970s

- I was appointed the first Professor of Māori at Victoria University, and this was a first for the country.
- When I took up my appointment, Māori Studies was within the Anthropology Department at Victoria University.
- At that time, there was no Māori Studies Department at any of the universities: Māori Studies was attached to some other department. I needed to find a way of breaking away from Anthropology and persuade the Vice Chancellor to allow me to establish our own space on campus. I went to see the Vice Chancellor. I spoke to him about the difficulties of doing what was expected of me given I was appointed to lead Māori Studies at the university. He agreed to the establishment of the very first Department of Māori Studies in Aotearoa. I opened the door and others followed soon after.
- After that it was a matter of creating teaching programmes; an introductory course called a Diploma in Māoritanga followed by a degree in Māori Studies which led to a Masters in Māori Studies, and we were on the way.
- At that time, courses in Māori Studies tended to be taught as classical studies of “The Māori as He Was”(Title of the book by Elsdon Best)and language courses were studies of texts of Māori writing. It became interesting when linguistic analysis was included.
- I changed the focus of Māori Studies away from the era of “The Noble Savage” to the realities of living Māori communities who were struggling with their identity and were trying to recover from the effects of colonisation. We were the first in the country to offer courses in the customary concepts of Māori such as the rāhui, karakia tuturu and tikanga Māori. We set aside “The Māori as He Was” and focussed on Māori as he and she actually are and want to be.
- Teaching of the language focused on the urgent matter of teaching our people to kōrero Māori and speak the reo. The demise of te reo was an issue.

- My other goal was to establish Māori Studies as a legitimate university discipline. Many students flocked to Victoria University when those changes were introduced. I would be pleased to meet the morehu or the ones still standing today.

The Idea of a Marae

Some of the students who joined our classes were speakers of te reo and had come from their tribal homelands into the cities. Some were raised in the cities and were largely disconnected from their hapū and iwi. The odd one did not know who their hapū and iwi were and there was the odd one struggling with their identity as Māori. I needed to provide a safe cultural space for them on campus because as many of them found that the new knowledge they were learning was both exciting and personally challenging; sometimes upsetting. The university experience was also challenging.

An opportunity arose when the house and space of the Anglican padre became vacant. I asked for it and it was given to us as a very humble way of establishing the idea of a marae on campus. The students supported the idea and later they and us the teachers began to talk about something better such as a proper fully decorated wharenuī with a proper kitchen. In our humble place we one day provided a memorable breakfast for a hundred people that included many of leaders of the university. It was agreed by the University to establishing a proper marae on campus. It so happened that in our humble space I was able to establish a carving school for a small group of young people under a carver (Dr Takirangi Smith) who had signed up as a student for the Bachelor in Māori Studies programme. This group produced carved poupou (posts) that changed the face of the old house we were in. That was step one. Step two was to get a wharekai that could help us provide services for the students. We achieved that goal in a fortuitous manner.

Moving whare

One day we were told that we had to vacate the house and the space we were using in a matter of just a few days. I asked the Vice Chancellor where we were moving to and he gave me a key. At the early hours of the morning, we decommissioned the house we were in following tikanga Māori. We moved the carved panels from the old house and put them up in our new space. So following tikanga Māori, we were already in occupation of a much larger house.

When the sun rose, and people turned up to work, unsurprisingly I was confronted by one very angry professor who demanded to know first how did we get into his building and secondly who gave me the authority to do so. We were given the ground floor and he still had the offices at the top floor. His departing words were: I suppose you want to occupy the whole bloody building? I said to him: yes, we would like to do that. To this

day I do feel sorry for him because he was not told or warned about this move. That day I learnt to appreciate the power of holding the key in your hand. That happened in 1980.

Te Tumu Herenga Waka

Te Ati Awa at Waiwhetū supported my wish to build the whareniui, Te Tumu Herenga Waka, and establish a marae specifically for the Māori students who came to the university and also for other students who wanted to be associated with the house and the marae. I consulted with the late Kara Puketapu. Many Māori students helped with some of the tasks needed to complete the cultural aspects of the whareniui we were building. Several departments helped do the tukutuku panels. The building we occupied served as the whare kai and we had a marae on campus: a safe cultural space for the students. My intention was that this marae was established for the students who came to the Victoria University, and they would help in making it work for them. It was also a space that was culturally safe for them; it was a learning and training space and a place that provided the relevance for the subjects they enrolled in. Here they could be Māori, enjoy being Māori and build their cultural capacity and all of this should help them eventually connect with their hapū or iwi marae back home at the tribal land base. The meeting house, Te Tumu Herenga Waka, was a place of reflection, a place of calmness, place of reaffirmation of the positive aspects of being Māori. The marae was a Māori space in a dominant Pakeha environment.

Eventually, the marae became a focal part of the university and served many needs. I really was surprised when the leaders of Victoria University adopted the name of the whare and the marae, Te Herenga Waka, as its new name. That is a remarkable event. The whare Te Tumu Herenga Waka was opened in accordance with tikanga Māori on 6th December 1986. That was a huge occasion when Te Ati Awa of Wellington and Taranaki joined with my iwi Ngāti Awa of the Bay of Plenty and representatives from supporting iwi performed the rituals of opening a whare like this.

We were the first to build a fully decorated whare and establish a marae at a university. Again, we were the first to assert this was a marae for the students: it was there to support them, but it was also a learning and training ground for them.

A Tohunga for Māori Studies

I appointed the very first tohunga onto the staff of the Department of Māori Studies. That was Ruka Broughton who was a remarkable person well versed in mātauranga Māori and tikanga Māori. He had years of experience both as Minister of the Anglican Church which he later gave up and also as a tohunga carrying out the rituals that the people needed such as opening new buildings and attending to their needs. The students warmed to him because he knew so much about the Māori world. Many of them followed him to various marae around the country and in the process developed their spoken command of te reo Māori and raised their confidence as Māori. After he died, I

appointed Sir Pou Temara and he added his contribution both as a teacher, tohunga and advisor. Today the university is honouring him and I congratulate him. I have known Ta Pou Temara for many years from when he was a student and a teacher here up to now working together at Awanuiarangi. We are both still trying to look as though we are intelligent beings especially in a place like this.

Samoan Studies and Cook Island Māori Studies

As Professor of Māori, I assisted the communities of Samoa and the Cook Islands to establish their presence on campus. There was a Department of Samoan Studies, and the Cook Islands community began Cook Island Studies, and I am told that venture faded. Samoan Studies remained. Māori Studies continued to be strong and with this new magnificent building that was opened today its facilities look very prosperous and it looks as though Māori Studies is here to stay. The building signals optimism

What is a ringa wera?

Once the marae was in place I needed some staff to support it so we could provide tea and coffee and perhaps lunch for the students, many of whom were flattening and not eating regularly. So at the next professional meeting I asked for a tea lady and was told; We don't provide tea ladies here Professor Mead.

Obviously, I had used the wrong label so had to rethink. At the next meeting I asked for a ringa wera, hot hands. I explained that ringa wera were needed at every marae and we certainly needed one at Te Herenga Waka.

It was approved and that was an important door to open: eventually more ringa wera (hot hands) were needed to run the marae and its kitchen. Then we needed a Taurima, the person in charge and later the Taurima became the Ruahine of the marae. Te Ripowai served in all of those important roles. Today she is being honoured by the university and I can shed a tear for how far this university has come in accepting mātauranga and tikanga Māori in its practices. I offer my congratulations to Te Ripowai Higgins as an outstanding Ringa wera and Taurima and Ruahine who has served Te Herenga Waka marae and Te Herenga Waka university, with distinction.

Establishing Māori Studies

In bringing about the many changes that I introduced while leading Māori Studies, I was helped along by many of the professors of the university. They too wanted to see Māori Studies given the freedom to develop in its own right and not as an adhering child attached to some other department. My role was to grasp the opportunity that arose and take the development of Māori Studies as far as I could. I believe I did create a strong department, strong culturally and strong academically: and that was why I was invited by Professor Rawinia Higgins to come here today and witness this momentous

occasion. I am envious of Māori Studies here at this university with having a resource like this. Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangī would like one too but we have to wait awhile for a moment like this to occur. I am sure a moment will come but the building might be different. Congratulations to you all for having the vision and the resolve to make this happen especially in this year when so much negativity hangs like a dark cloud above us.

Waiata

I have asked the Wellington based kapahaka of Ngāti Awa ki Te Whanganui a Tara, to perform a very special and very popular action song called *Tomo Mai*. Your group was performing *Tu mai e te Whare nei*, requesting the house to be always available. This song aimed at our whare called Mataatua invites you to come inside it.

I composed the words for the action songs, *Tu mai e te Whare nei* and *Tomo Mai*, and I had a hand in building Te Herenga Waka here and Mataatua Whare at Whakatane. In the case of Mataatua Whare with some help I led the campaign to rescue it from a museum and rebuild it to its intended dimensions. Here today are some of our leaders and supporters who have come from Whakatane and others who live and work in Wellington to support this event.

Concluding remarks

Tu mai e te whare nei mo nga ra kai mua i a koe. Ahakoa puhia koe e te hau, tu tonu mai koe hai whakaruruhau mo nga kaiako, nga tauria, nga ringa wera, te taurima, te ruahine me nga manuhiri tuarangi ka haere mai ki a koe.

No reira e te iwi, tena koutou, tena koutou, nga mihi aroha ki a tatau katoa, kia ora huihui tatau katoa.

Ta Hirini Moko Mead/ Sir Sidney Moko Mead.

6 December 2024



