

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

Kōrero a ngā Kairangi, Tā Pou Temara

Honorary Doctorate speech, Sir Pou Temara

6 December 2024

Tēnei ngā mihi nā māua ko taku tuahine, nā Te Urewera ki uta ki Te Urewera ki tai, ō māua hapū i roto i tō māua iwi e mihi nei ki a koutou i tēnei rangi mō tēnei whakawhiwhinga mutungamai o te whakahirahira mō māua tahi. E mihi ana ki a koutou katoa, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, mana whenua, members of the university council, members of the senior leadership team – Te Hiwa, ngā rangatira o ngā iwi Māori kua huihui mai nei, alumni, staff and current students of Te Herenga Waka, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

Te Kawa a Māui; E Pita, ko koe te kaumātua o Te Kawa a Māui – He kupu whakanui tērā e Pita, kaua e aro atu ki te iwi e kata nei. E mihi ana ki a koutou Te Kawa a Māui, nō koutou te whakaaro nui, te whakaaro rangatira kia whakawhiwhia māua ko taku tuahine ko Te Ripowai ki ēnei tohu o tō tātou whare wānanga, e mihi ana ki a koutou Te Kawa a Māui.

My tuahine, Te Ripowai and I, grew up in the heart of Te Urewera. Our first language was te reo Māori and our world was synonymous with our environment, the forest, the rivers, and the fauna. Our engagement with our hapū and our iwi only reinforced our identity as Tūhoe. We knew no other world. I was in Ruatāhuna and she was down the river in Ruātoki. We were both raised by our grandparents, who were stalwarts of tikanga Māori and their respective Hāhi (religious beliefs) and we were surrounded by some of the most esteemed knowledge keepers of our tribe. We grew up in communities where our identity as Māori, and more specifically Tūhoe was unquestionable.

Although our upbringing was predicated on a deep knowledge of language and culture, our pākeke (elders) always had aspirations for us to be well educated and to explore the world beyond Te Urewera. Consequently, we were both sent away to boarding school. I went to Wesley College in Auckland and Te Ripowai went to Hukarere Girls College in Napier.

We both ended up in Wellington after school and despite our respective career trajectories, we continued to stay connected due to our strong sense of place and our love for our tribal homelands in Te Urewera. Tūhoe ki Pōneke became the thread that connected us, our children and grandchildren to our world. As Tūhoe diaspora, we were living on the land of other iwi and never built a physical space for us to call our 'marae', unlike our kin in Auckland who built Te Tirahou. Don't get me wrong, we talked about it, I

even composed a haka about it for the Tūhoe festival, to challenge our iwi to take into consideration a space for us to be built here in Wellington, particularly as we had 5 generations of Tūhoe who had lived away from our tribal homelands, and Wellington was this new generation's home. Tūhoe ki Pōneke had become akin to their hapū, and their only true connection back to Te Urewera, beyond their whakapapa, had been Te Hui Ahurei a Tūhoe. We never built a physical space, but rather we would gather in other people's spaces, including Te Herenga Waka. Consequently, not having a physical space to call our own, meant that we have forged long connections, alliances and whakapapa relationships with others as a result, including more notably Te Ātiawa ki Waiwhetu that date back many generations. Nō reira, e Kura koutou ko tō iwi e manaaki tonu nei i ngā iwi o te motu ka noho ki ō koutou nā whenua. E kore nga hononga i waenga i a tātau e tangatanga e te rā.

The 1970s and 1980s are considered the hey day of the Māori renaissance, where significant national grass roots Māori organisations came together to protest for the language, for land rights and Te Tiriti o Waitangi rights. Of particular note is the Te Reo Māori society from this University who, alongside Ngā Tamatoa from Auckland University, drove the Māori Language Petition to the steps of Parliament and became the catalyst to many of the institutions we take for granted today. I featured in a number of te reo Māori television programmes and creative arts projects and my tuahine was an initial kaiako for Te Ataarangi during this time period.

Our combined passion for our language continued to be at the core of our careers, and this was recognised by the koroua, Tā Hirini Moko Mead who encouraged us to be part of this University's faculty and more specifically this marae. The foresight of the koroua to build this marae and establish this space on this day in 1986 is truly remarkable.

This was the first marae to be built at a University and something that no other university can claim. There are some people here today who were part of the initial opening ceremony of Te Tumu Herenga Waka, including Tā Hirini of course, but also Sir Joe Williams and Professor Peter Addis. I am sure they will concur with me that today is momentous to see the completion of the marae complex that we used to talk about and imagine, and today it has been realised 38 years later.

As has been referred to today, this marae became a safe haven for many Māori students and staff to have a place at this University: learn te reo and tikanga Māori and to feel confident and successful as Māori. It became apparent to Te Ripowai and I while we were here that many of the Māori students and staff had not been afforded the experiences we had had. We saw the impact of successive generations of educational policy that had rendered our students monolingual, largely monocultural and barely holding on to their sense of Māoritanga, their Māori identity by knowing that they had whakapapa Māori. This gave impetus to us supporting the vision of Tā Hirini Moko Mead to centre mātauranga Māori and te reo Māori, to provide students with a place to apply

this knowledge and to prepare them to lead or work with their own people. This institution did not just award degrees, it provided a profound, highly emotive and transformative experience that either reconnected students to their identity or consolidated pride in those who were already deeply connected to their iwi.

Te Ripowai and I have taught thousands of students collectively and we are always proud of all your achievements. The reopening of this marae allows for the new generations of students and staff to come to this marae, to feel connected to this place, to feel connected to each other and engage through the opportunities that Ngā Mokopuna brings as a living building and to experience what it really means to be connected to nature. Whereby issues of climate change, of sustainability and of caring for Rangī and Papa is not just theoretical, but is actually applied in real time.

The challenge for this University and for all higher education institutions today is that we have new generations of Māori students whose first language is te reo Māori, who are products of the initiatives and institutions that centred te reo and mātauranga Māori at the core of their upbringing. Like us, we grew up being proud of our identity and we are humbled at the confidence and tenacity we see these mokopuna have today. They are some of the products of their parents and grandparents who we had the privilege of teaching here at this marae and they represent and validate the knowledge, language and experiences that Te Ripowai and I learnt from our elders.

My tuahine and I are honoured to receive recognition from this institution, our alma mater, Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington. We congratulate the university in recognising the distinctiveness of this marae, not only in adopting its name for the University, but for what this place represents as a connector of people, of knowledge systems, of opportunities to imagine a better future. And although it has taken nearly 40 years for the realisation of Ngā Mokopuna - the building - to come to fruition, both of us look out across the marae ātea today and see all of you, Ngā Mokopuna - the people - whom we have helped shape directly and indirectly over these past four decades. That is what a living pā is, it is not just buildings, it is this community.



