

# Mihi

## Haare Williams

WAKA ORANGA KAUMATUA, AUCKLAND

### Ko Mua Ko Muri — Balance

Whare holds all that is precious to us with a heritage that mirrors life. Heritage is important because it records difficulties and uncertainties, outcomes and journeys made, and struggles resolved. My first house stands for my journey.

WHARE  
PERFECT BALANCE WITH  
WHENUA MOANA NGAHERE  
SWAMPS AND STREAMS  
TUPUNA

Our whare raupō at Karaka (Ohiwa) stands as my prodigious life journey. And like all journeys, there are tensions, history and baggage, but that is also true of any meaningful journey — like our collective and separate hikoī with the New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists. The culture tension in history is part of the baggage, and true with what is taking place at the core of the Aotearoa New Zealand bicultural journey.

Rimaha, my grandfather, was a builder of many things but especially homes for people. He held an intrinsic belief in being connected to a place in the ecosystem, to a patch no matter how small or marginal; for him, it's here on this planet with its unique environment that you should sculpt your dwellings and your life out of every bit of earth we live on, according to the sanctions and constraints of nature. He made earth homes out of manuka stakes, collected raupō (bulrushes) from the swamp, wīwī (tussock) from the seashore, and straw from the fields for in-situ abodes with clay-splattered exterior walls. No, he wouldn't get NZIA Awards or Resene Research Fellow for earth-built houses nor a life-membership citation presented by the Queen. But, ahem, we lived in luxury — but isn't that the task of a skilled homemaker.

GOOD THING  
THAT'S THE GOOD THING  
BOUT HOUSES  
IT'S THERE FOR EVERYONE  
READY TO SPROUT  
NEW MEMORIES

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WHEN YOU WANT TO COME HOME  
HOWEVER THE WINDS  
TAKE YOU

And Christchurch. Recently we watched a vortex of horror unfold before our eyes and wondered how to reverse a waterfall of terror and extreme violence. Then we watched a city go through a spiritual, architectural and human drive that showed us and the world about reconstruction — a city and a people (and a nation) that exemplified raw courage, resilience and hope that stared down disaster. Twice. How long will it take to restore the organic and the human side to that ravaged city?

We have a Prime Minister who is strong and ambitious and spoke her mind without sacrificing honesty or empathy. That takes guts and discipline, surely a portrait of amazing grace. “Tātau” (we, us), she uttered words of hope and leadership against violence and guns. Made us believe in goodness. The feeling was, and still is, so thick you feel like you could reach out and grab it to keep forever. Jacinda Ardern makes anyone older feel young again and anyone young feel they can do anything. It’s so rare and so special. If there is one thing I want to achieve in life, it’s that.

I was the blessed grandson growing up under the fallout of Tuhoe land loss. A cherished mokopuna fed on a diet of narratives, ponderous hours, of persecution but forgiveness too, stories that became a part of what and who I am. I heard about the forced seizure of Tuhoe lands across Te Urewera and their fight in the courts for the remnants of their lands, bush and water. My grans turned poverty and adversity into a strength that later became my richness. They triumphed over hardship. True also of Christchurch.

So we have travelled together on a singular compass since 1984. I will always cherish the fellowship on our hiko together, balancing the walk.

WHENUA

“It’s whenua”, he’d say  
“It’ll do everything you need  
If you let it.  
BELIEVE.”

And yes, we have witnessed small but important changes, maybe not quantum leaps forward but incremental steps that indicate the inclusion of tikanga, Te Tiriti and te reo in our conversations, decision-making and practices. That’s partnership to be celebrated. I applaud many of you now using te reo and Māori phrases meaningfully in your practices.

Within Big Organisation, Waka Oranga is a name that has come to mean “gifts and guts”, of those who picked up the struggle which I endured 30-40 years ago. There are, of course people in NZAP (Māori and other) with whom I have had the pleasure to travel, all eminently suited and gifted to continue the struggle for a culturally inclusive, safe and equal society that is tailored for our unique and emerging brand of democracy.

When we met at Waitangi for Conference, a local kuia beckoned us to come closer, “Here you can never be alone. Haere mai, come and get a big hug from me and my tūpuna”. In those words and in the powhiri the delight was immediate for many who had not experienced

noho marae before and were quickly won over for good.

Within our own patch, we have gained a clearer view of who we are and what we are. Together we accepted an historic hikoī to Waitangi, then onto the Orākei Marae, both watershed moments for an organisation seeking spiritual meaning.

And so, we learned to grow, mistakes and all, bad experiences tempered by some very good ones. We stuff up along the way but isn't that the way we all learn. No one is infallible. That's not the end, but just the beginning of a return to Waitangi. E hoa ma, hand in hand as whānau. Āe.

There are many things we learned on the longer road round. There's a lot of reliance on words but there are also other things that we need to hear and see and do. And feel within the non-verbal.

Before we crossed the bridge at Waitangi, we were reminded, "It's the water and land that is connected by a bridge". Bridges are built as a short cut, so it is that we sometimes have to go the long way around to get to our destination. In so doing, we see, hear and learn so much more.

You showed a responsiveness to the importance of oratory on the marae. We don't always appreciate the sounds of language; we sometimes switch off and therefore miss a truckload of things in nuance. We don't realise the importance of metaphor in speeches or the way it makes us feel, the presence of Nature in our cosmology that in the pre-dawn karakia, forms a pattern of right relationships with God and all Creation with ourselves and others.

The new dawn broke over Waitangi that morning where I had the rare distinction to intone a bilingual-bicultural karakia with Rev. Evan Sherrard on the spot where the treaty was signed. A moment of reverence and a moment never to be forgotten. It was a New Dawn and for many that left lasting inspiration, leadership and humility.

STILL

Still

The house

Patiently waits

Ready to become

Someone's Home

Haven and

Castle

And so, people came and loved being in our whare raupō because it wasn't just a house of manuka sticks, reeds and clay; it belonged to the architectural history of my grandfather, fashioned from the very earth where he now rests. Are we able to tap into the rhythms of stories now retold in a suburban landscape? The house brought us together with its Ringatū teachings that embraced the land as a manifestation of God's goodness. Each day, Rimaha and Wairemana saw God's face in whenua, moana and ngahere and in their seasonal yields. So, should we all live in raupō houses? Of course not. Is it silly for me to grieve over a memory house? My first home travels with me, it had much of me invested in it. It was for the grans their final home. It was a home that allowed me to be and live in the way I was genetically predisposed to be. I now live in a 1920s bungalow with the simple accoutrements of home. But

we can learn from lessons of the past, especially in the current housing crisis.

My aspiration, and that of Waka Oranga, is we become one whānau unified in spirit, responsive and responsible to each other that we can recognise and delight in each other because we are different. I know too that stories and how they're told are emancipatory.

We are a country first in so many things; first to split the atom, to reach the peak of Everest, to give women the vote and first nation to give an Indigenous people the vote, we stopped nuclear anything coming here, with streams that brim with Fonterra milk and manuka honey, yet we cannot fix a broken system in our prisons nor feed hungry kids. Yes, Aotearoa New Zealand has gained a unique place in global politics as a small nation prepared to take on a nuclear-free stance in the face of great power pressures. We are a peace-giving nation, we are an intuitive, spiritual nation but we can also take this further and exercise a strong influence for world peace.

I look to rangatahi, Māori and Pākehā fluent in our two founding cultures, to shape (as architects, designers, planners, artists and poets must do) a vision drawn from the furrows tilled by those before that will do more than just acknowledge Māori in a bicultural conversation around the treaty — kaitiakitanga, a generosity of spirit and trust. We can all reward someone by listening. Listening is the new language of peace.

Teachers teach. Good teachers lead. Leaders take us into the wildernesses of our consciousness to find endless uncertainties and endless solutions. And make a difference.

Margaret, Wiremu, Cherry, Alayne, Grant and Susan, Jonathan, Roy ... the world is thirsting for the gift of Te Ao Māori, thirsting to sip its richness, and like art, literature, music, architecture and the eternal circle, you possess the inner language of Matariki — aroha, manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga and mau mahara. Thank you all for your amazing grace.

Kei muri ko mua

Kei mua ko muri

From the present we move into the future by facing the past



**Dr (h.c.) Haare Mahanga Te Wehinga Williams** was born in Te Karaka in the rural heart of Te Aitanga-a-Mahaki. At two months he became a living gift to his Tuhoe grandparents. He was raised in a whare raupō at Karaka, located between Ohiwa and Opotiki, not speaking English until he began school at age eight. Immersed in the life and practices of another generation, Haare's grans gardened, fished and preserved food according to a Māori calendar. They exposed him to best practices for co-existing with the natural world while he absorbed a diversity of mātauranga (insights). Haare's grandparents' mode of gardening applied the knowledge of Māori, his physical nourishment was matched with the spiritual substance he received through Te Kooti's scriptural-based waiata such as the Songs of David and Solomon. Ringatū

## HAARE WILLIAMS

writings were inspirational texts which grew into his love of language, poetry and narrative. His formative years exposed him to the regularity in which Māori history was told, which explains a Māori view of New Zealand history according to the values, constraints and changes he has seen. As a writer, his current project, *Puakina: Songs of the Living Word*, comes from ideas that have engaged his imagination since childhood. In his art he paints, he writes, and he narrates a personal experience of faith that is both forward-looking and reflective. His visual language gives new significance to values from his upbringing, his spiritual beliefs and personal experiences. Contact details: haare.williams@gmail.com.