

**Poua ki runga
Poua ki raro
Poua iho ra
Ki te maunga titohea**

**E kore e pau te ika unahi nui
Haumia ee Hui ee taiki ee!**

**Ko Miaana Walden tōku ingoa
Ka tū au hei mangai mo Te Hunga Rōia Māori ki Te Tai Hauāuru**

Mihi kau ana ki te mana o tēnei Kooti Matua, tēnā koe

Ki ngā kaiwhakawā e noho ana, e Justice Cooper, tēnā koe

E ngā Kaiwhakawā o te pae, tēnā koutou

Arā, tahuri atu ki te mana o tēnei whenua, Te Atiawa, tēnā koutou.

E te tuakana Ms Hughes QC tena koe.

Ki aku hoa e noho ana ki tōku nei taha, tēnā koutou.

Ki ngā manuhiri nei, tēnā koutou, tena tātou katoa.

A, ka huri.

E te koti /May it please the Court

It is my honour and privilege to address this Honourable Court on behalf of Te Hunga Rōia Māori o Aotearoa - the Māori Law Society, and to offer our best wishes to the New Zealand Law Society at this special sitting to commemorate its 150th anniversary.

It is not lost on me that 150 years ago, as a Māori female lawyer, I would simply not have been able to stand and address this Court, nor would it have been possible for me to open in Te Reo Māori or even wear this korowai that I am wearing today. The law, at that time was, and arguably still is, a tool of the privileged.

THRMOA has only just celebrated its 31st anniversary, a mere blip when compared to the 150 years achieved by the NZLS. The Māori lawyers of today have been **paid for** – paid for by those who went before us, those who had it much tougher than we do today, paid for by our champions of change and our beacons of hope.

Paid for by the likes of:

- **Sir Apirana Ngata** who became the first Maori lawyer in 1897;
- **Dame Georgina Te Heuheu** who became the first Māori female lawyer in 1972;
- **Our founding members of THRMOA** which was formed in 1988 to give a voice to Māori members of the legal profession and whom set our vision for the future: *Ma te ture, mō te tangata (By the Law, for the People)*;
- **Your Honour Mr Justice Cooper**, by becoming the first Maori lawyer appointed as a permanent Judge of the COA;
- **Mr Justice Williams** who became the first Māori Supreme Court Judge earlier this year;
- **Our New Chief** District Court Judge Taumaunu who recently became the first Māori lawyer to hold this position;
- At a regional level, our very own Judge Raumati who is the only Maori male Judge in Aotearoa with an active Family Court warrant, noting also Judge Hikaka holds a Family warrant.
- And of course Tiana Epati, the first Pasifika President of the New Zealand Law Society who has achieved so much change in the short time she has had in her role and who so aptly reminded us in her recent address:

That we have all been paid for, and now it is time for us to pay it forward.

So, how do we move forward together from where we are? We need transformative change – **now, and not later**. We owe it to those whom the legal system has let down, ignored or forgotten. To change what we know to be true, that in our current system if you are Māori, you are:

- a. **3 times more likely to be arrested;**
- b. **3-4 times more likely to be charged;**
- c. **11 times more likely to be remanded in custody;**
- d. **4 times more likely to be convicted; and**
- e. **7 times more likely to be imprisoned.**

The Taranaki District Law Society was founded in 1879, yet it took up until 2018 (some 139 years later) for the first person to be admitted to the Taranaki bar in a ceremony conducted in Te Reo Maori. Tēnā koe, Te Weehi Wright.

What does transformative and sustained change look like?

Transformative change means doing things completely differently and these changes require all our efforts. First, we must acknowledge the poor history of the law in terms of its relationship with Māori over the past 150 years. Then, we must be prepared to listen, to learn and then show real commitment to change.

The process of cultural change has started but everyone in the legal profession has a responsibility to drive this change through their own behaviour and what they are prepared to tolerate from others. Change takes courage. Change takes energy. Change can be uncomfortable. Change demands that we be proactive rather reactive. We have to be ambitious for a just society.

At the absolute minimum, our legal profession **must** have knowledge and understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and tikanga Māori in the law. If the legal profession is to truly reflect the communities we serve, then having a basic understanding of Māori history is a necessity because this is the only place in the world where we have tikanga Māori (the first law of Aotearoa) and where we speak te reo Māori – Aotearoa.

So, while there are challenges there is also great opportunity for change and for us all to play our part in that.

E ai ki te whakatauki o Ta James Henare:

“Kua tawhiti kē te haerenga mai, kia kore e haere tonu. He nui rawa te mahi, kia kore e mahi tonu.”

As Sir James Henare said: "We have come too far not to go further, we have done too much not to do more".

So, for the next 150 years, as a profession let us embrace change together, let us learn and collaborate, let us be bold, do more and do **better**.

No reira, tena tatou, tena tatou, tena tatou katoa.

AS THE COURT PLEASES

