

Tihei Mauri Ora!

Knowing who you are

He tina ki runga, he tāmōre ki raro

Contentment above, firmly rooted below

(Those with a good family foundation and proper grounding in their own culture and heritage will find satisfaction and contentment in life)



At a recent MANU AO Seminar, the Hon Dr Pita Sharples, Minister of Māori Affairs, referred to Te Arawa academic, Makereti Papakura, as a classic example of Māori development. “She understood the importance of attaining economic self-sufficiency, improving social conditions, and preserving one’s culture and values”. Makereti had been educated - in the old ways by her elders - about hunting with bird-snares, harvesting berries and fruit, and being tutored in genealogy and women’s arts of weaving, dancing, song, and story. Her whānau played an integral and ongoing role in shaping the young, enquiring mind.

After being formally educated in the ways of her English father, Makereti became a tourist guide, formed a choir, and a concert party and in 1910 moved to London taking with her a carved house from Whakarewarewa, along with artefacts and ornaments. She attended Oxford University in the late 1920s but died just months before her thesis examination – later published as ‘The old-time Māori’ – the first extensive published ethnographic work by a Māori scholar.

She learnt that the pursuit of satisfaction and contentment in life was about making connections through whakapapa and asserting one’s identity and traditions. In her view: “Every Māori especially if he came of a good family knew his or her genealogy and exact relationship to every relative. This was most important to a Māori.” **“A people, is a great and living people, only so long as it is mindful of its heritage.”** The secret of Makereti Papakura’s own greatness lay in knowing who she was. *Kia pai tō wiki!*



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