

Annette Morehu



Ko wai koe? A brief history on you! How you got started on your mahi, what are you working on?

My name is Annette Huia Morehu, I am a wāhine Māori, māmā, and a writer.

I was born in Whangārei and raised in the Hokianga (my parents were sharemilkers throughout my teenage years so we moved around the North following their job). Although I was born and raised in the rohe of Ngāpuhi, I don't claim whakapapa there. I whakapapa to Te Aupōuri and Te Rarawa through my mother's father, who was Tahitahi from Te Kao, and Tūhoe and Te Arawa through my mother's mother, who was a Rangitoheriri from my father who is a fourth generation Ngāti Pākehā on his mothers side (Finnemores, mostly Irish by way of Australia), and on his father's side though dad's Ancestry.com results show no English whakapapa, my

grandfather and his parents immigrated to Aotearoa from London in the 50's on a ship called the Captain Cook.

For my mahi, I am a writer and I write in multiple forms; I am a poet, short story writer feature writer, playwright, and a screenwriter. I am currently working as a scriptwriter and script editor on the television show, Ahikāroa; a bilingual Māori drama aimed at rangatahi, designed to seamlessly integrate te reo Māori into a television show that rangatahi will actually want to watch.

He aha te whāinga matua mō tō mahi? What is the main goal for you work?

I became a professional writer after spending most of my adult life raising my four children (although there were a few years there when I thought I wanted to be a singer and spent many weekends singing in a dirty old pub band at every RSA in West and South Auckland).

When I was thirty years old and pregnant with my fourth child and only daughter, Rihanna famously, albeit briefly got back together with her ex-boyfriend Chris Brown- even though he had very publicly assaulted her a few years earlier (and he already had another girlfriend (Karrueche)). The media were in a frenzy talking about how Rihanna was a bad role model and so, being pregnant with a daughter, the idea of role models for black and brown girls and women became something I spent a lot of time thinking about. I didn't think Rihanna was a bad role model at all- When I thought about it, she was the best kind for me. I was a

young brown woman who had made a series of questionable life and relationship decisions up until that point in my life, and I knew how the world judged me for that. By most standards of society- because of the family I was born into, and the effects my childhood and subsequent relationship with my parents had on my adult decision-making, what the media's narrative was telling me that I was somehow broken, and that women and girls like me should be ashamed of ourselves. Girls like me were not allowed to have heroines to look up to. What Rihanna showed me was that you can be an imperfect brown girl born into less favourable circumstances, go on to learn your love and life lessons the hard way, and still unapologetically reach the heights of success.

So I started looking for role models closer to home; wāhine Māori like me who had been through some stuff and still taken control of their own narrative. But when I looked around me, I couldn't find them. I knew it wasn't because they didn't exist, they just weren't the ones telling the stories, or if they were, their voices were so few and far between that they still couldn't really be heard. And this is why I write- because I can, and so I must. For the young- me who never saw herself reflected in the stories and therefore felt like there was something wrong with her, and for all the imperfect brown girls in the world. To represent us authentically in the stories, to speak loud enough that they can't pretend not to hear us, and to be an imperfect role model of a wāhine Māori who never gave up.

**Hei aha o whakaaro ai e pā ana ki te whakamahia e ngā wāhine i tō kaupapa mahi rānei?
Why do you think it's important to have wāhine Māori in your particular industry/business?**

The person who is telling the story controls the narrative- this has historically been white men. The views and beliefs we hold are largely shaped by the things we consume; the stories we are told and the things we read in books and watch on film and television. With more wāhine Māori telling the stories I believe the world will be better, more balanced place.

**Ka huri koe, te whakakitenga ki mua he aha ngā wawata mō te āpōpōtanga o Aotearoa?
Looking at the future, what are your hopes/aspirations for your industry and Aotearoa?**

I would like to see more wāhine Māori led stories, written by wāhine Māori, so that we are more authentically represented in the stories and therefore the collective consciousness.