

Ella Henry

Kō Māmaru te waka

Ko Tikawe te maunga

Ko Waimahana te whenua, me te moana

Ko Māngatōwai te marae

Ko Ngātikahu ki Whangaroa te iwi

Ko Ngāti Aukiwa te hapū

Ko Ella Henry tōku ingoa

I whanau ahau kei Kaitiāia, engari, i haere mātau ki Tāmaki Makaurau, i te tau, kotahi mano, iwa rau, ono tekau, ā, he ‘urban Māori’ ahau inaianei. Tēna koutou katoa.



I was born in the Far North, Kaitiāia, and moved to Auckland with my whānau in 1960. We lived in the Western Suburbs, where I went to school until 1969. After that I spent the next fifteen years travelling, first around New Zealand, then overseas for ten years. I returned in 1984, and started university (UOA) in 1986, at the age of 31. I completed a BA in 1990, a MPhil in 1995, and a PhD in 2012. I have worked at AUT since 2008, first in Māori Development, and in 2019 moved to the Business School. Throughout my academic career I have focused on Māori development issues, in particular Māori women, leadership, careers, business, and entrepreneurship. My research informs my teaching, which I would like to think contributes to both Māori knowledge and Māori development.

The main Kaupapa I have adhered to throughout my academic career has been to learn as much as I can about our history, culture and society, and use that knowledge to contribute to better outcomes for our people, and more specifically, wāhine Māori. This was reinforced by my Masters research, entitled Rangatira Wāhine Māori: Māori women and leadership. This Kaupapa has carried me through not only my academic work, but my work in media, and with my Iwi, and other Māori organisations and communities that I have worked in and with over the last 35 years.

I learned from my Masters research that traditional Māori cosmology and society was predicated on the principle of gender complementarity. This is reflected in the duotheism of Ranginui rāua ko Papatūānuku, and the pivotal role that wāhine played alongside our tāne, from the pōwhiri rituals, to the balance of tapu and noa. I think this continues to be reflected in our businesses and industry. For example, for my PhD I focused on Māori entrepreneurship in the screen industry. I found that, unlike screen industries around the

world, our Māori screen industry also reflects that gender complementarity, with wāhine Māori represented across every craft area, and overall, an equal number of professionals, tāne and wāhine, in the industry. I also think it is critical in academia, where statistics show that wāhine are under-represented in senior and professorial roles, despite the high numbers of us entering and succeeding in the academic world. Therefore, addressing those imbalances and inequities is an enormously important Kaupapa that Māori need to continually argue and fight for.

In academia and the media, the two industries where I work predominantly, the future has to better acknowledge and reward the contributions of wāhine Māori, and that when those inequities are addressed, it will have a positive flow on effect for all women in Aotearoa. The way forward must be underpinned by meaningful and mutually beneficial partnerships, first between wāhine and tāne Māori, and between Māori and the Crown.