

Michele Wilson

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

Ko Hapuakohe te maunga

Ko Mangawara te awa

Ko Tainui te waka

Ko Ngāri Paoa te iwi

Ko Ngāti Makirangi te hapu

Ko Waiti te marae

Ko Hoe o Tainui te Kainga Tuturu

I was born and bred however in Manurewa, South Auckland. I grew up outside of my culture like Māori from Auckland of my age. After practicing Law for close to 10 years and having two tamariki kōtiro I began to crave a deeper meaning and purpose to my life. After the death of my nanny, I experienced a deep longing to reconnect with my Māori side the side that had been lost for almost 3 generations.

I quit my job as a lawyer and enrolled in te Wānanga o Aotearoa to study Rongoā Māori because of recurring dreams of being visited by my Tīpuna in the Ngāhere. I started a Rongoā based skincare company called Frankie Apothecary and after a few years my kōtiro grew, I became interested in the pre-colonial stories of how our ancestors managed and lived their lives during their ikura (period). This interest turned into some what of a passion, and I started AWWA ([AWWA Official Website | Redefining periods with absorbent underwear \(awwathelabel.com\)](https://www.awwathelabel.com)) a ikura underwear company. These are period proof underwear that I believed our tūpuna would wear if they were alive today. I doubt they would be wearing plastic tampons and pads that stay and pollute papa for thousands of years.

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

My mission is to save as much plastic waste from entering our earth as possible. I am proud to say AWWA is saving 6.7 million plastic single use pads and tampons from entering land fill a year and we have a goal to increase that to 7.5 million for this next year.

My other mission is to encourage wāhine to discover the power of their ikura through ceremony and taking time out- just as our tūpuna did.

**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?**

Because wāhine Māori have been influenced by Pākehā and colonial practices of shaming and dirtying our periods. The sacred practices surrounding our ikura had almost been lost before people like Dr. Ngahuia Murphy researched the truth about our ikura. As many wāhine Māori need to be in this space as possible so that we can undo the damage that colonisation has had on our ikura and our whare tangata and in turn on our whole wairua, tinana and hinengaro.

**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 dream of a time where every menstruator has access to whatever products suit them. I dream of paid period leave once a month for all menstruators. I dream of a time where all menstruators had an understanding of their cycle and how they personally relate to the maramataka and how they can plan their schedule and life around this better. I would love for all young menstruators to feel how tapu they are when they get their ikura, I want them to be celebrated and feel celebrated and I want all menstruators to take the autonomy over their bodies back and take time out for themselves during their ikura when they need it and for this to be openly encouraged by whānau, kura and workplaces.