

*Hikina te rākau o te ture!*  
**Te Rākau Ture – Unapologetically Māori at Law School**

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*Tēnei Te Rākau Ture*

*E toro atu nei*

*Kia noho ruru*

*Whakapiri mai*

*Ona pu i ahu mai*

*I a Papatuanuku*

*Torotika te hanga*

*Tu teitei e*

*Ngā ringaringa peka atu rā*

*Anei rā ngā hua e tohu nei*

*Te manu kai miro nona te ngahere*

*Te manu kai mātauranga nona te ao<sup>1</sup>*

## ***I Introduction***

Nōku te maringanui ki te tuku mihi ki a koutou, te whānau whānui o Te Rākau Ture.

He mihi ki a rātou kua whakawhetūtia. Ka tangi atu ki a Nin Tomas kōrua ko Judge Karina Williams, ki ngā kuru pounamu o tō tātou whānau. Ko koutou ngā taonga, ko tātou ngā mahuetanga e noho pōuri ana.

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\* BA, LLB(Hons) student, University of Auckland. Tumuaki Wāhine, Te Rākau Ture, 2020.

1 It is fitting to begin with a reference to an old Te Rākau Ture waiata, which affirms our inherent power as taurua Māori. This waiata was written for Te Rākau Ture by Shane Heremaia, Andrea Tunks and Pierre Tohe, and first performed by Te Rākau Ture in 1998.

He mihi maioha hoki ki ngā tauira-ō-mua o Te Rākau Ture. Nā koutou i whakatū tēnei rōpū hei awahi i ngā tauira Māori ki te wahanga ture o Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau. Nō konei, e tītipi ana tō tātou waka hourua ahakoa ngā ngaru o te wā.

Te Rākau Ture has been a whānau for tauira Māori studying law at the University of Auckland since 1990. As our Association's 30th Anniversary year draws to a close, it is a fitting opportunity for me, as the outgoing Tumuaki Wāhine, to reflect on the rōpū's lasting legacy.<sup>2</sup>

All tauira that pass through Te Rākau Ture are kaitiaki of this rōpū. It is important then, to ensure our history and stories are preserved and passed on to the following generations. It is by understanding the many obstacles already overcome by Te Rākau Ture, that we, as current members, are heartened and empowered to cope with challenges ahead.

This account briefly discusses the past and present of Te Rākau Ture as an Association, provides a summary of our recent 30th Anniversary celebration, and envisions the future of this rōpū.

## ***II Te Hītori o Te Rākau Ture***

*E tipu e rea mō ngā rā o to ao, tō ringa ki ngā rākau o te Pākehā<sup>3</sup>*

The history of Te Rākau Ture over the last thirty years largely exists as a collective memory, as much oral history does. At this significant milestone, we are now increasingly realising the importance of documenting these stories.

What follows is a brief attempt to piece together various alumni accounts of how Te Rākau Ture was established. Hopefully, this is merely the beginning of a larger effort by Te Rākau Ture to more comprehensively compile the significant history and accomplishments of this rōpū and its members.

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2 I was honoured to lead Te Rākau Ture alongside Bradley Arona-Waqanivalagi, an extremely talented and dedicated Tumuaki Tāne.

3 A famous whakatauhākī by Tā Apirana Ngata. See AE Brougham and AW Reed *Book of Māori Proverbs* (5th ed, Penguin Books, Auckland, 2012) at 90.

Te Rākau Ture was first formed in 1990 as a way to mobilise and affirm taura Māori at the Law School, who were, at the time, enduring discrimination and intolerance.<sup>4</sup> Our name Te Rākau Ture, stems from the famous whakataukāki by Tā Apirana Ngata, partly quoted above, which espouses the importance of not only being grounded in Te Ao Māori, but being able to utilise the tools of Pākehā in order to uplift Ngāi Māori.<sup>5</sup> Our name is an enduring reminder that we must use the considerable legal skills we develop at Law School to enable and encourage our whānau, hapū and iwi to thrive.

In the early 1990s, the Law School was situated at the top floors of the General Library building. It was during the Law School's shift to its current site at Eden Crescent that Te Rākau Ture first received its own common room. This was the result of lobbying by Māori staff and students for a dedicated space for taura Māori at the Law School. The room was gifted the name Te Ako-o-te-Tui after the stream that used to run through Albert Park.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the very real risk of mistakenly omitting names, it is important to acknowledge those who were particularly instrumental to Te Rākau Ture's creation and subsequent development. The highest acknowledgements to Ani Mikaere, Nin Tomas, Guy Royal, Whina Everitt, Judge Layne Harvey, Te Kani Williams, Judge Mina Wharepouri, Pierre Tohe, Andrea Tunks, Shane Heremaia, Khylee Quince, Sharon Heta, Kristin Kohere, Judge Karena Williams, Judge Stephen Clark, Justice Christian Whata, David Clark, Laverne King, Willie Te Aho, Kelvin McDonald, Kathleen Wilson, Tania Tomoana, Marama Henare, Linda Papa-Te Aho, Harete Hipango, Peter Rice, Makere Edwards and Spencer Webster.

This is a mere fraction of our past and present members. This indicates the considerable number of taura Māori who progress through the Law School, as well as the impressive calibre of our alumni. In Te Rākau Ture's thirty year history, countless others have

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4 This account largely stems from discussions with Andrea Tunks in preparation for the 30th Anniversary, and the written accounts of Pierre Tohe and Guy Royal in the Te Rākau Ture 10th Anniversary Programme.

5 Pierre Tohe "The Tale of Te Rākau Ture" (speech at Te Rākau Ture End of Year Dinner, 1998). The name was adopted after consultation with Dr Pat Hohepa.

6 Tohe, above n 5. According to accounts, Albert Park was the historical location of Te Horotiu Pā.

dedicated their aroha, time and energy. From the many Tumuaki and Executives, to the many more individual members, there has never been a shortage of motivated and dedicated tauira Māori who have experienced the benefit and value of Te Rākau Ture.

### *III Te Rākau Ture i Tēnei Rā*

In Te Rākau Ture today, we strive to reflect the original intentions of our founders. Fittingly, our most important events are those that celebrate being Māori at Law School. Part II Camp promotes whakawhanaungatanga between the tuākana of Te Rākau Ture, and new tauira Māori, establishing new networks of support and connection. Te Rā o te Ahurea Māori is an annual celebration of our Māori culture and gives us an opportunity to share and educate those within the Law School.

Perhaps most treasured though is our annual Haerenga event, in which members of Te Rākau Ture travel to high schools in various rohe, encouraging tauira Māori to consider pursuing further education after completing secondary school, for example a certificate or degree at university. It is one way to provide outreach to rangatahi Māori and give back to our hapori Māori.

The role of this rōpū has also continued to adapt. Many tauira Māori entering the Law School have had limited connection with te Ahurea Māori me ōna tikanga. Te Rākau Ture is able to act as a welcoming space where tauira can reclaim mātauranga Māori, understand and appreciate the importance of our whakapapa links, and support each other in learning te reo Rangatira.

Te Ako-o-te-Tui, or TA as it is colloquially known, remains the centre of Te Rākau Ture, our metaphorical and literal tūrangawaewae. We are also deeply grateful to have the sustained passionate support of our Pouāwhina Grace Abbott, Kaiarahi Jeremy Hema, and Te Tai Haruru staff members.

#### *IV Te Hui Whakanui o Te Toru Tekau Tau o Te Rākau Ture*

The 30th Anniversary celebration, it follows, needed to recognise the considerable effect and influence that our rōpū has had throughout its existence. Months of planning resulted in an extremely successful event that was held on Saturday 5 December 2020.<sup>7</sup> The purpose of the event was to reflect on the past thirty years, reconnect with our alumni and share our history.

The celebration extended over two separate events. First, the symposium was held at Waipapa Marae, the University of Auckland's marae. This event began with a formal pōwhiri, followed by an alumni panel consisting of many of our alumni and founding members, including Judge Layne Harvey, Andrea Tunks, Guy Royal, Sharon Shea, Justice Christian Whata, Morris Pita, Tavake Afeaki, Valmaine Toki, Findlay Jacob Sauer and Peter Rice. The discussion was enlightening and insightful, and was a great opportunity to hear about the many paths on which law can take you. The panellists discussed the importance of Te Rākau Ture in shaping their experiences, and how it allowed members to become part of a larger support network. The ties made while a part of Te Rākau Ture, and at university more generally, have helped to sustain many members throughout their careers. We were very lucky to host such an amazing rōpū of alumni members.

We also recognised the significant achievement of our current taura through an awards presentation. Most notably, the Judge Karina Williams Scholarship, awarded to a recent Māori law graduate to commemorate the life of Judge Karina Williams, was awarded to Natanahira Herewini. The Williams whānau were present on the day to bestow this special recognition.<sup>8</sup>

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7 A special thanks to our sub-committee, consisted of Wiremu Te Hiko, Jorja Heta, Natalia Schollum, Kayleigh Penrose, Teresa Brown, Grace Abbott and Jeremy Hema, which, along with Bradley and I, was instrumental in planning and running the 30th Anniversary Event.

8 We were honoured to have Tawhirimatea and Kaa Williams in attendance to present this award.

The symposium concluded with the much-anticipated Nin Tomas Memorial Lecture for 2020, which was given by Annette Sykes and entitled “the myth of Tikanga in the Pākehā law”.<sup>9</sup>

The second event was a gala dinner the same night, at which festivities continued. Notable alumni members Khylee Quince and Tavake Afeaki shared stories and memories of their times involved with Te Rākau Ture. Perhaps the highlight of the night was the unveiling of the taonga commissioned to commemorate the occasion. It was skilfully carved by kaiwhakairo O’dell Toi and will be displayed in Te Ako-o-te-Tui. The evening concluded with the Te Rākau Ture official handover, and the announcement and introduction of our new Rōpū Whakahaere (Executive) for 2021.

Throughout the events, two prominent themes emerged, and are useful reflection points. First, Te Rākau Ture has thrived and prevailed because of the unity, strength and mana of the Māori staff and students. Both within the university, and throughout our careers, we are stronger when we support each other. Secondly, we have a responsibility to use our skills and privileges as Māori law students at the University of Auckland to aid and support Ngāi Māori. We must strive to bring change and transformation, not only in the legal sphere, but in all the spaces we inhabit.

Te Rākau Ture’s 30th Anniversary affirmed that our members are capable, motivated, successful and inspiring. Our strong values, which prioritise whanaungatanga and manaakitanga, ensure that we stand out within the legal profession. Our alumni have demonstrated just how successful we can be — with many going on to graduate from top international universities, and many becoming judges, esteemed university lecturers, partners in law firms, outstanding lawyers and high-achieving professionals in a multitude of non-legal roles, all while remaining humble and grounded in tikanga Māori. We are immensely proud.

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9 Annette Sykes “The myth of Tikanga in the Pākehā Law” (Nin Tomas Memorial Lecture 2020, 5 December 2020). See “Nin Tomas Memorial Lecture: Annette Sykes” University of Auckland <[www.auckland.ac.nz](http://www.auckland.ac.nz)>.

## *V Te Apōpō o Te Rākau Ture*

At the 10th Anniversary celebration of Te Rākau Ture, one of the first Tumuaki, Guy Royal, wrote that he looked forward to attending the 15th, or perhaps 20th, Anniversary of Te Rākau Ture.<sup>10</sup> This rōpū, now thirty years old, has become an established stalwart of the University of Auckland's Law School, with an impressive legacy.

Over the next thirty years, I hope that Te Rākau Ture remains an integral part of the Law School, and continues to develop and expand a cohesive network between alumni and students, and across cohorts and generations. Above all, I hope that all those who pass through Te Rākau Ture have the courage, humility and passion to transform the political and legal landscape of Aotearoa, as alumni have before us.

As my time as Tumuaki draws to a close, it is such an honour to pass this title to the incoming Tumuaki for 2021, and to all who follow.

Nō reira, ki a koutou katoa, tēnā koutou, tēna koutou, tēna koutou katoa.

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10 Guy Royal "Inaugural President Reflection" in *Te Rākau Ture 10th Anniversary* (programme, 2002).