



CONTENTS

Editorial	1
Naa te Chairman	2
Maori Women Roll Call	2
Wahine Purotu	4
Biographies	4
Tributes	
Kath Akihata-Brown	4
Hinewehi Mohi	6
Ella Henry	6
Briar Grace Smith	7
Chelsea Winstanley	8
Sharon Hawke	9
Hineani Melbourne	10
Melissa Wikaere	10



Photo courtesy John Millar

Editorial

This entire newsletter is dedicated to Merata Mita and to the many women who walk in her footsteps...

The Department of Conservation's newest statement of intent informs us that DOC will put more focus on economic gain and includes identifying mineral prospects on the Conservation estate. The SOI reads like this: Working with the Ministry of Economic Development to identify both mineral prospects and conservation values on public conservation lands, as input into a public consultation process to ensure that conservation values and mineral values on public conservation lands are balanced to give maximum possible benefit to New Zealanders.

The statement of intent was signed off by Minister Kate Wilkinson. Which part of the term conservation does the Minister and her team not understand? Surely it doesn't mean digging up large tracts of land supposedly under our guardianship to seek out a limited quantity of minerals. There is no such thing as keyhole mining so you can forget about a bunch of scientists sticking a thin pole into the ground and probing until they hit pay dirt. It doesn't work like that.

This panui arrived from Ani Pahuru-

Huriwai while I was writing this editorial. I'll leave it at that.

Kia hiwa ra! Kia hiwa ra! All whanau, hapu, iwi, communities, concerned citizens of Aotearoa, let us mobilise as a united voice against the Brazillian Company, Petrobas, and the deal struck with our Government "...to explore 12,333 square kilometers (4,760 square miles) of ocean in the Raukumara Basin north of East Cape. The permit, its first in New Zealand, is part of the Rio de Janeiro-based explorer's strategy to broaden potential sources of LNG, said Marcelo Vertis, manager of international mergers and acquisitions."

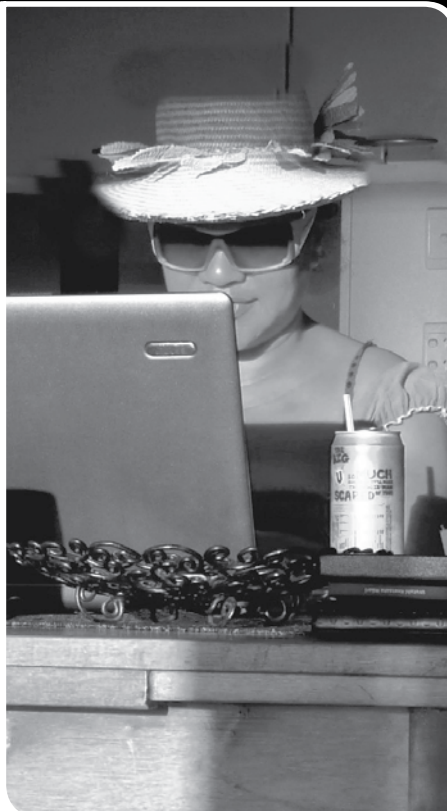
Have our leaders learnt nothing from the BP Disaster that continues to bleed the earth, destroying habitats, and decimating wildlife. This is a call to action from the hau kaingā of the East Cape to mobilise everyone who is concerned about the devastation the Petrobas deal could cause generations to come.

EVERYONE! PLEASE! Join the hapu of the Tairawhiti on the beaches of the East Cape, Sunday 27 June 2010, 12-1pm. Imagine thousands ▼

► of people from throughout the land converging for one hour on the East Cape, standing in solidarity on our beaches, with occupational fires burning on each beach – what a visual and powerful message this would send to our government, to the Brazillian government, to Petrobas. Every man, woman and child – be there, so we can say that we have made a stand.

“You must teach your children that the ground beneath their feet is the ashes of your grandfathers. So that they will respect the land, tell your children that the earth is rich with the lives of our kin. Teach your children what we have taught our children, that the earth is our mother. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. If men spit upon the ground, they spit upon themselves.”
Chief Seattle ■

Kath Akuhata-Brown



In the 50 years of television in this country and since the first films were made Māori women have never been acknowledged for their contribution. This newsletter pays tribute to Merata Mita and to all the other Māori women who work in the many craft areas of our industry. I might have forgotten some of you but that does not make you insignificant. Na reira wahine ma, e tu.

- Ainsley Gardiner
- Alecia Haua
- Anahera Higgins
- Annabelle Lee-Harris
- Annie Frear
- Aroha Hathaway
- Aroha Shelford
- Aunty Mabel
- Briar Grace Smith
- Carla Banks
- Carmen Parahi
- Caytion Wineera
- Chelsea Wynstanley
- Christina Ngāhua Asher
- Claudette Hauiti
- Coral Palmer
- Debbie Terei
- Debra Reweti
- Desray Armstrong
- Eliza Bidois
- Ella Henry
- Erana Keelan-Reedy
- Erina Tamepo
- Fran Davy
- Glynis Paraha
- Gwendolyn Arago-Kemp
- Hineani Melbourne
- Hinerangi Goodman
- Hinewehi Mohi
- Iulia Leilua
- Jaime Smith
- Jan Wharekawa
- Jane Flavell
- Jeanine Gunn
- Jenni Leigh-Walker
- Jillian White
- Jodhi Hoani
- Jodi Ihaka
- Joy Ngāropo-Hau
- Juanita Hood
- Karen Sidney
- Karen Waaka
- Kathryn Graham
- Katie Wolfe
- Kayte Ferguson
- Kelly Davis
- Keri Kaa
- Kim Muriwai
- Lara Northcroft
- Lavinia Kingi
- Libby Hakaraia
- Liebchen Tamahori
- Linda Papa ▼

Naa te Chairman

My deepest memories of Merata were not formed during 'the struggle' of the 70's and 80's. It's easy to feel slightly less because I wasn't there when the fuzz rocked up. In truth, I have only ever walked in the tungsten light of her 'change'. And in that sense, I am simply a 'beneficiary' of her struggle and her change. And for that I am truly thankful.

I do still have a few memories worth sharing – small and simple.

My wife and I went to Hawai'i and spent our honeymoon with Merata in Hawai'i. She cooked us breakfast one morning – waffles with Canadian maple syrup.

One night she took my wife and I and our son out for dinner to a restaurant with a Pacific Ocean view. The sun dived into the sea's edge and a flash of green splashed up from the horizon. Merata raised her eyebrows and said, "Hmmm".

I remember swimming with her and her two grandchildren in a lagoon when a

squall surgically dropped a bucket of rain upon us. We were too far from shore to do anything but hold each other tightly. Through the rain, Merata started to smile and the scene of desperate struggle became strangely exciting and cinematic. Her laughter became louder, the rain became softer and the swimming continued.

When the police officer wheeled her out body into the 'Whaanau Room' of the Auckland Hospital on a metal tray, wrapped only in a flimsy hospital sheet, the one thing that stopped the track of any tears, was her beauty.

Last night, Hepi and I watched his mother from the back of the NZFA theatre in Wellington as she paraded onscreen around a wharenuī in a red and orange jersey, threatened to punch Anzac Wallace through 'the other side of his face', told Jim Moriarty to 'harden up' and said to the chairman, 'do your bloody job or else' (*The Protestors* by Rawley Habib). She made us all laugh, because as Hepi said, "Drama is never as powerful as when it's a documentary." ▼

► E Merata, taku kaahui whetuu o te atapoo, Apoopoo, ka whiti mai te raa, heoi, e kore te mahana e paa mai. Apoopoo, ka rere te puna o whatu, aa, e kore te puna e mimiti, e memeha. Apoopoo, ka oho au, ka aatiutiu, ka tiihoihoi, ka tikapa. Ko te hinapouuri teenei. Ko te hinapouuri teenei.

Pita Turei has resigned from Ngā Aho Whakaari. His time as our Executive Officer spanned from the passing of Barry Barclay to the passing of Merata Mita. During that time, Pita has been instrumental in regionalizing our networks, linking our experienced heads with our emerging hands and laying a foundation of new thinking for our new world. We wish him well. He always has been and will be part of us.

We now have a new NAW office – 114 – 116 Ponsonby Rd, Level 1 – and are on the eve of delivering a new strategy to our members, funders and Māori communities. When ratified, this change will be exactly what she would have wanted as it is exactly what we all need. Details coming soon.

From this Matariki to the next, Ngā Aho Whakaari is also providing our members with a glimpse into her work and her weight – we started last night. When the time is right, Māori

Television and Chelsea Winstanley and Ngāai Tautoko will provide the world with Merata's ohaaki, 'Saving Grace'. Māori Television's understanding, in this case, of the needs of the artist outweighing the needs of the schedule is an appropriate demonstration of understanding. Ngāa mihi nui waahine maa. There is also a tono that a Pou Mahara be erected at Māori Television in her memory. Personally, this comes back to the wishes of her whaanau, who all need our love and support. But when they reach their decision, Ngā Aho Whakaari looks forward to seeing her whaanau unveil the POU.

It is easy to say we owe it to her to continue 'her work' and 'her struggle'. But she would say we actually owe it to each other and that struggle was 'ours' long ago. So that's us, Ngaati Mita, of which we are all beneficiaries – never more so evident than at her tangi. Nei te waa.

Aroha nui,

Tearepa Kahi

Chairperson Ngā Aho Whakaari

Me te mea, thanks to all the incredible women who contributed to this tribute newsletter – she did show me time and again, that in this world, the real world, women have a knack for doing it all better. ■



Lynette Crawford-Williams
Lynne Parr
Mahuta Amoamo
Makere Edwards
Manutai Schuster
Maria Kuiti
Marie Sheehan
Mechele Harron
Melanie Pulefale
Melissa Wikaire
Mere Black
Mere Boynton
Mere Johnson
Mere Waaka
Merilee Andrews
Miriama Kamo
Miriama Smith
Moana Aroha-Henry
Moana Maniapoto
Moko Templeton
Nancy Brunning
Natasha Guttenbiel
Nevak Rogers
Ngāhua Wade
Ngāwai Greenwood
Nicole Hoey
Orini Kaipara
Pauline Bowkett
Pirihira Hollings
Puhī Rangiaho
Rachel House
Rahia Timutimu
Ramai Hayward
Ramon Te Wake
Reikura Kahi
Reina Webster
Remana Whakamoe
Renee Maihi
Renee Mark
Rewa Harker
Rhonda Kite
Riwia Brown
Ruth Kaupua
Sandra Richmond
Sandy Hodge
Sandy Wakefield
Semi Holland
Sharmaine Moke
Sharon Hawke
Sonya Haggie
Stacey Garland
Stacey Morrison
Stephanie Huriana Martin
Summer Wharekawa
Tawini Rangihau
Te Haumihia Mason
Tini Molyneux
Tracey Carter
Vanessa Horan (nee Bidois)
Vanessa Rare
Vapi Kupengā
Vikki Rangi
Waimihi Hotere
Wena Harawira
Whetu Fala

Wahine Purotu

In the course of a working week various Māori women in the industry working at various industry organizations be they networks or funding bodies or production companies will make decisions that affect us all. Sometimes we all argue with each other, sometimes the organizations we represent will be at loggerheads, sometimes our politics and philosophies clash

but, in the week that Merata passed, we all stood together and sang her song. The following acknowledges the contribution these women make to our industry. I might have missed some of you out, but, as Sharon Hawke wrote in her eloquent tribute to Merata, no woman is invisible.



Photo courtesy John Millar

Merata – Kāth Akuhata-Brown

Mate atu he toa, ara mai ra he toa

Merata and I were fighting for the last three months. I was supposed to see her on the Monday after her screening at Māori Television and so I was preparing for a heated discussion. I spent two days prior figuring out my strategy. After many failed ideas I came up with this one. I was going to wrap my arms around her and tell her I missed her. I never got the chance. It mattered and it didn't.

In the 1970s Merata Mita went to war. Did the fighting ever stop for her? Probably not. The question we need to ask ourselves is how many of our leaders need to die before we get it, before our generation wakes up and acknowledges that we are living in someone else's reality? Watch TVNZ and you'll see what I mean. Because of the likes of Merata we have Māori Television but still it's as if we exist in a place somewhere outside of New Zealand. Merata could never get her head around why we were so unwilling to step outside of our comfort

zones and take the bull by the horns. She never asked us to do what she hadn't done herself.

She often talked about the Aboriginal Film making community. The Aboriginal people of Australia have got it right. In their humble and uncompromising way they've managed to declare their presence. Rachel Perkins' series on SBS, *The First Australians* is a testament to this. It's a seminal work told from, by and about the Aboriginal communities. Until recently Sally Riley in a very uncompromising manner drove Screen Australia's Aboriginal Film Unit. She was determined that Aboriginal films would get made and they did. Rachel, Sally and Editor Dena Kennedy came to Merata's tangi to farewell her.

Merata was a Mentor at Sundance and was particularly close to Bird Runningwater. They at Sundance saw what it took some of us a long time to understand, that our Merata was a matakite. At her tangi her elders came to see her as thus. This came

Jude Anaru

Producer, Marae, TVNZ



Jude is of Te Whanau a Apanui and Jewish descent. 2010 marks twenty one years since Jude began Producing, Executive Producing, Post Production and Compile Directing, Research and Production Managing. She began her career as a participant in the Kimihia film and television programme for Māori. This launched a life-long love for the industry with particular interest in format, structure, effective communication, and recognition of tailoring content to viewing audiences. She is a genius at creating new formula and structure for old programmes or conceiving new programme ideas.

Her credits include:

Producer of Eye to Eye with Willie Jackson, The World According to Willie and J.T, Are you my Tribe? Flipside, Today Live, ICE TV, Living Earth and Compile Director for those old favourites of ours, Ready to Roll, Saturday Live, Radio with Pictures and Telethon.

Kay Ellmers

Tūmanako Productions



Kay Ellmers is the Managing Director of Tūmanako Productions and has 20 years experience as a researcher, reporter, writer, director, producer and executive producer of a wide variety of television productions including award winning documentaries: "Whānau", "Her Daughter's Voice", "Trouble with Words" and "The Brown Factor".

Recently, Kay produced one of the first projects to be funded by NZ on Air's Platinum Fund – ▼

► after an impassioned farewell from Cliff Curtis. They were right. Merata saw more clearly and more deeply than anyone else I have ever met. She looked beyond this realm and saw the mauri lying beneath everything. If, like me, you were lucky enough to be one of those she blessed with this insight you would understand the spiritual transformation that takes place within. Bird Runningwater came to her tangi to say farewell and to acknowledge her mana as a wahine matakite.

Since her return to us only three years ago she was constantly fielding phone calls from the Hawaiians. They wanted her to resume her post as a Professor at Hawaii University. She was torn. There was work to do here and yet we moved too slowly for her. The Hawaiians moved at her pace which to all intents and purposes was as fast as a speeding bullet. They understood that in their midst walked a fierce advocate and for that reason they threw around her every resource she would need. Whereas some of our film makers would ring her up and demand she get in her car and drive across the country to them. One day I got hoha with this situation so without Merata knowing I rang these people up and told them to pull their heads in. Merata found out and berated me for upsetting them. The Hawaiians came to her tangi.

She loved and respected Alanis Obomsowin, whom Merata described as the greatest documentarian in the world. Of Abenaki descent, Alanis has been at the forefront of indigenous film. Her credits include

- 2007 Gene Boy Came Home
Director/Writer/Producer
- 2006 Waban-Aki: People from Where the Sun Rises
Director/Writer/Producer
- 2005 Sigwan *Director/Writer/Producer*
- 2003 Our Nationhood
Director/Writer/Producer
- 2003 For John
(dir. Dale Montour) Producer
- 2002 Is the Crown at war with us?-
Director/Writer/Producer
- 2000 Rocks at Whiskey Trench
Director/Writer/Producer
- 1997 Spudwrench – Kahnawake Man
Director/Writer/Producer
- 1995 My Name is Kahentiiosta
Director/Writer/Producer
- 1993 Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance
Director/Writer/Producer

Alanis turns 78 in August. A few weeks ago Ella Henry and Rachel Wolfram

applied for funding for an indigenous film symposium with Merata as the keynote. Upon Merata's passing Ella has decided to push ahead with the symposium as a tribute to her friend and mentor. It looks like Alanis will step into Merata's shoes. I think Merata would be happy with this decision.

Merata was proud of Taika Waititi and Cliff Curtis. At the premier of *Boy* in Waihu Bay, she sat proudly beside me as the film rolled down. She was proud because Taika didn't hide the truth, he stood in front of the community after the film played down and stood by his vision. She loved courage, she loved truth and she found both these qualities in Taika and Cliff.

Merata worried about the women in our industry. She worried about the lack of support for films in Te Reo. Rather than angst she went out and Produced a short film in Te Reo by a Tuhoe woman, Kararaina Rangihau. She began mentoring many young film makers some of whom are now concerned about where the support is going to come from for them. Sometimes I wonder if they paid any attention to her at all.

She was appalled at the rate of child abuse and child deaths in Māori communities. Again, rather than talk about it, she went out and made a documentary about it. It was a rough cut of this documentary she was showing at Māori Television on the day she died.

She, Barry Barclay, Tainui Stephens and others had a vision for a Māori organisation that would foster and develop a Māori Film Industry. Barry never lived to see it happen but for a short time Merata did. She ushered in a new era of Māori film making with the establishment of Te Paepae Ataata charged with the responsibility of funding the development of Māori feature films. For a brief period I had the honour of sitting across from Merata as a board member. On the day of her passing we were meeting and we were waiting for her.

Sometimes like many of us, I would drive the long drive to her house in the Coromandel. Once, she and I were in the same car, she was driving, like a lunatic I might add and talking about the transit of Venus. According to Merata, the Coromandel is the best place in the world to watch this particular event. She talked about how Kupe found his way there and how centuries later Cook did as well, to watch the stars. She loved the kiwi and the plant life surrounding her house. She had a soft spot for the young hunters ►

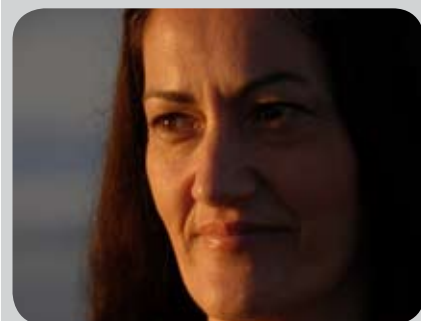
Kay Ellmers cont.

the feature length arts documentary "Canvassing the Treaty" which premiered Waitangi Day 2010. She is currently producing two new documentaries for Māori Television.

Kay has also created and developed the Māori language childrens' series "Miharo"-curriculum aligned programming designed to support the learning of tamariki in Māori language education settings.

Kay has served on the executive of Ngā Aho Whakaari, and is currently a member of the Te Māngāi Pāho Television Independent Advisory Group and a WIFT mentor.

Briar Grace Smith



Briar Grace Smith is of Ngāpuhi and Ngāti Wai descent. She writes for theatre, television and film and her short fiction has been included in various anthologies. Her plays have toured both New Zealand and internationally. She was an inaugural recipient of the NZ Arts Foundation Laureate Award in 2000 and held the Victoria University Writers Residency in 2003. Her screenplay *The Strength of Water* premiered at Rotterdam and Berlin film festivals in 2009 before being released in New Zealand.

Kathryn Graham



Kathryn Graham is Commissioner of Factual Entertainment, Māori & Pacific Programmes, and Children's programmes for TVNZ.

Kath descends from Ngāti Koroki Kahukura, Tainui descent and is the

► around the area who often stumbled up to her place with gifts, mostly freshly caught wild pigs or deer. That place of hers on the Coromandel was, other than the homes of her children, the safe zone for Merata. From there she could watch the stars and ponder the future. The next transit is in 2012, in case you were wondering.

On the day she passed she and I were supposed to meet and it was going to be a heated argument or more likely a frosty

meeting. I was going to hug her and tell her I missed her. I never got the chance. It mattered because it would have been some sort of closure for me. It didn't matter because words don't matter, what matters is action. Our dearest Merata left behind enough people around the world and Aotearoa to pick up the challenge. Mate atu he toa, ara mai ra he toa. When one warrior falls, five others rise to take her place. ■

Kath Akuhata-Brown

Merata – Hinewehi Mohi

There are many things Merata has left us as her legacy – her life's work on film and her profound skills of cinematic craftsmanship which she readily shared with us. In an industry so often territorial and ego driven Merata loved nurturing and supporting young Māori and other indigenous peoples to use this medium to tell our own stories.

But I will mostly remember Merata for her love and priority for whānau. When my daughter was born with such profound physical needs and an uncertain future, Merata made me feel that everything would be alright. She would simply take Hineraukatauri in her arms and the two of them would smile and giggle to each other like they had a secret... one that no one else will ever share.

When Hirini Melbourne first became ill and I told Merata the news, she asked me to accompany her to visit him. Hirini was of course looking very much alive and seemingly oblivious to everyone's concern. I can't begin to imagine what heavenly creative bliss the two of them must be enjoying now.

While we all mourn the premature death of our beloved matriarch of film, we must also pause and rejoice that we knew her, loved her and shared in a part of her journey.

Haere Merata, i te rā e whiti ana. Haere rā e te whakamarumarū o Uenuku e, kei ao ko te rā e, kia taratara atu e koe, taratara tū kei hau ai te moengā roa, kia pā i te ua i te rua e, kei tae kei hoki ake to kōiwi ora ki te ao nā. ■

Hinewehi Mohi

Merata – Ella Henry

Haere rā, wahine toa
Koutou kō o mātua.
Unuhia i te rito o te harakeke,
Ka tū i te aroākapa.
Aku nui aku wehi,
Waiho te iwi nāna i mae noa

*Farewell, our warrior woman
Depart to the ancestors.
You were plucked from us
As the flax-shoot is plucked from the bush
And held aloft before the vanguard.
You were great hope, great pride,
Now the people are left sad and desolate*

From the first time I met you, your smile and soft voice embraced me. You and the brood of gangly youth that came and went at West End Road, sometimes with, sometimes without Geoff in the back-yard, building stuff or working out better ways to blow stuff up!

I remember the faces, the intensity of the gatherings, Don, Barry, Tama, Dalvanus, Tungia, Judy, Hana, Zac, a legion of giants, now gone; you all sat around the table, planning, dreaming, plotting, occasionally

lamenting about what we had lost, and what we must rebuild for the future! It was heady stuff that changed the lives of so many of us who found ourselves sheltering under that maru.

When you all found out I was at 'varsity, and had an office, you all decided 'we' should organise a showcase for our Māori films, somewhere that Māori could come and watch and celebrate our stories. You all cast your eyes in my direction. I said, "Sure", and thus the Auckland University Māori Film ▼

Kathryn Graham cont.

daughter of renowned artist Fred Graham. She was also a Commissioning Editor for Māori Television in the first years working under Programmer Joanna Paul. She's worked as a director, researcher, producer and production manager in Television since 1987. Kath's a graduate of the Kimihia Course, a training programme established by Julian Mounter, Don Selwyn and Ripeka Evans to upskill young Māori broadcasters.

Sharon Aroha Hawke Ngāti Whātua, Ngāti Mahuta, Ngāti Hē



Born and bred in Tamaki Makaurau and has loved movies since her mother took her to see *Oliver* at the age of seven. Gave up on porridge after that. She has worked through the tight rope antics of the camera department for 18 years while running her own company and shooting doco's for television. The pinnacle or two of her career was being Director of Photography on the *Mataku* Drama series and producing *Native Affairs*. She found them to be a good mix of fun and seriousness. She thrives on team work and writes infrequently but will never deny the power of the pen. She will write more in memory of her Commander and Chief - Merata Mita.

Hineani Melbourne



Hineani Melbourne descends from Tuhoē and Tainui. At heart, she's a storyteller be it in the kitchen at the marae on radio, in a book or on film. ▼

► Festival was born. The next year, you were working with Annie Collins editing *Mana Waka* and said to me, “My dear, could you do me a favour and take Bastion Point to Vancouver? They’re having a film festival for indigenous women”. What do you think I said? I learned that when you asked me a favour, I would receive so much more than I gave.

You were a loyal friend, one of the first to visit me in hospital, or offer a quiet refuge in Hawaii when I did something that involved hurling shit at fans. This year, when you sipped tea in my garden, chuckling because I grow vegetables, rather than

flowers, I realized how seamlessly you had moved into your *kuiatangā*. You gave your time, *mātaurangā* and *wairua* effortlessly; it was only afterwards that the potency of the words, thoughts and images would strike and resonate. You were bold and beautiful, fierce, unremitting, visionary, a weaver of story-telling webs, a conjurer or lights, images and words, a mother, grandmother, mentor, inspiration, more famous outside than inside your homeland, and the world is smaller and sadder and colder with your passing. ■

Ella Henry

Hineani Melbourne cont.

She was a founding member of *Waka Huia* at TVNZ and was part of the team that opened the Doors at TV3. She was an Executive Producer at Maori Television.

Hineani is a producer, researcher, writer, director and her credits include *Moko Toa*. She lectures in media and produces a weekly Maori current events programme, *Te Au Kiwa* for the BBC World Service and has just completed producing the short film, *The Winter Boy*.

Manutai Schuster



Manutai Schuster is Head of Acquisitions and Commissioning at Māori Television. She had a varied and diverse employment background encompassing administration, tourism and education before becoming involved in television.

She embarked on her television career at TVNZ in 1988 developing a passion for all aspects of television production. She then went on to work in the independent television sector on a wide range of television programming from documentary to drama before establishing her own production company.

Ms Schuster held for 6 years the position of Television Manager at Te Mangāi Paho, the Māori Broadcasting Funding Agency, where she was responsible for the distribution of funding to the television industry for the production of high quality Māori and Māori language television programming.

In 2004, Ms Schuster joined Māori Television as Acquisitions and Contracts Manager which developed into Manager of External Programmes and in 2008 was promoted to Head of Acquisitions and Commissioning.

Merata – Briar Grace Smith

Merata was fearless. She kept her vision high so she could see over obstacles to the thing she wanted. She stood strong and kept walking. She cleared pathways so others could follow.

Merata was a friend and mentor to me. She inspired me, fired me up and compelled me to move forward. She was one of the advisers at the Aotearoa Writers Laboratory and in our script meeting, she worked from the inside out, looking first to the core of a story and talking about what made it unique and then about holding fast to that special thing. ‘Bring on the sumo wrestler’, she told me. I knew that she wasn’t just talking about a character in my script but also about me. I needed to find the sumo wrestler inside.

Sometimes our fears lead us to believe that we must wait to get approval from everyone else before moving on. This means we can spend days, months and years, wallowing around in the murky area of development. During this time we can lose courage, confidence and even the spirit of our script. Merata didn’t have the patience for this kind of carry on.

Like Don Selwyn, Barry Barclay and Wi Kuki Kaa, Merata was of the ‘just do it’ generation. Recently she’d been helping my husband, Himiona, get his script realised. It had been held up. He couldn’t see what was wrong with it and worse still, he couldn’t see what was right with it. Realising that at this point the best way to keep him on track was not another script analysis, Merata decided to give him a glimpse at what the story could be.

‘We’ll work together. It’ll be easy’, she said (she said this a lot about the hard stuff). Gathering together a team comprising of Pita Turei, Mike Jonathon, Dick Read and some great actors, they took off to the Domain in Auckland, shot some scenes and edited them back at the whare. That evening, as part of the Te Paepae Ataata hui, we had a screening. Directing the shoot and seeing the story on the screen not only gave Himiona a deeper insight into the process and a clear indication of what was needed in the script – it showed him what was already there. The beauty of the story made an appearance. I remember turning to Merata afterward and saying ‘it’s a *karakia*’. She smiled and said ‘that’s what he has to hold onto’. We’re having a reading of Himiona’s script this weekend. Merata was to be there. In her last letter to us she wrote ‘wild horses wouldn’t keep me away’.

In the short time she’d been back in Aotearoa, Merata had supported many emerging film makers. She was addressing the gaps and implementing new ways of developing Māori screenwriters and their stories. We were all looking forward to what lay ahead. What will we do now she’s gone? It’s a question many of us have asked. A mighty tree has fallen in the forest of Tāne, but loss doesn’t only bring sadness, Merata has left us with a challenge; to hold on to the legacy that has been left behind, finish off what has been left unfinished, keep our vision high and always, always, keep moving forward. ■

Briar Grace Smith

Merata – Chelsea Winstanley

What a privilege to have known such greatness.

I've been thinking a lot about what it means to not have her physically around anymore, the sadness is slowly dissipating and now my memories are rich with colour, a beautiful smile, a wisdom so rare, a laughter so pure, a heart so full of pride and the most humble unassuming woman I have ever met.

Unlike most of the tributes to date my working relationship with her only began a short time ago but a personal obsession started the day I saw *Bastion Point Day 507*. That film honestly made me want to be a filmmaker, I wondered in awe what kind of person has the guts and passion to do that. I finally met that person while working at Kiwa Media, I could hardly drum up a *kia ora* I couldn't believe who was standing in front of me.

Geoff was with her, draped in his long tanned leather coat, had I not known who he was I would of thought she had just saved a fulla off the street. To me she was the kind of person that saved others, in all sorts of ways. It was Merata I couldn't stop sneaking a glance at, truly here she was in this office and here's me fresh from university, cheers God! you really made my day.

I never thought I would have the opportunity to work with her but the day she was telling me about a documentary she wanted to make in response to child abuse, and that I should produce it with her, there was no question in my mind – clear the calendar and yes please!

It had been about 8 years since I had first met her that day at Kiwa and she said she wanted to have fun, she liked having a laugh and thought we would work well together.

This film like everything she did had a purpose. She said every time she came home from Hawaii there would be another baby killed on the front pages of the newspaper. She needed to, as an artist, do something. As she wrote in the documentary proposal this was going to possibly be the most important film of her career.

I guess I just want to share a few memories that are fresh in my mind and perhaps memories that speak to her recent days.

I loved the way she would walk in the office draped in lilac silk or lime green linen, colour was her thing she would glow with confidence, knowledge and wisdom. Almost everything she ever said felt like

it was loaded with a seed and she would watch and listen to the response... I can hear her now – did you get it?

She was funny! Her little giggle that would make her shoulders hunch up all cute and naughty was so infectious. I remember saying to her far out you know everything about everyone, which she replied 'geeze girl where have you been'? I guess I wasn't part of the cool club but sometimes I think she was just saying things to wind me up, I think she enjoyed the shocking look on my face, it made her giggle even more.

What I observed was a humble woman, she was never one to brag or let you know about her achievements. Her OBE letter sat on her dining room table as if it were the power bill. Behind that a pile of congratulatory letters from dignitaries and the like, but just like the OBE they didn't make the 10 most important things to do today list.

Her house was not adorned with acknowledgements from institutions or festivals. Her work spoke for itself. I did notice beautiful pictures of her mokopuna on the wall and one of Barry Barclay in her office, they were the only images hanging. Even her framed film posters and awards were just casually placed around the house, not on display not in anyway that would show off her career. A 'show off' she was not.

She liked nice food and spoke highly of Hawaii and how good that diet was for her. She often talked about the Japanese food she enjoyed and finding the 'real green tea' in Auckland wasn't a chore it was a little educational trip into the refined twig tea she was accustomed to. Along with pink rock salt that had medicinal properties it was obvious she missed her other 'home'.

The only thing I found out she was scared of was mice. How did I find that out? 'Hey are you scared of mice' she asked? 'No'. 'Choice can you go upstairs and check the traps then?'

Even if I was just trying to be tough and cool in front of her I wasn't gonna chicken out now. I think that is what she has left me with – Don't Chicken out Now!

I am grateful for the short time I got to be in her presence, she left me with a lot to go forward with and I will forever be thankful. She left a lot for all of us... Don't chicken out now! ■

Chelsea Winstanley



Merata – Sharon Aroha Hawke

Merata

She was a woman with raven like hair.

She made movies just like a woman.

She could out talk, out stare even

the cockiest of men and

She always had an eye for the budding

young Māori women filmmakers –

like you and me.

WELL HELL – we aren't so young anymore and the term 'budding' went out like a hiss and a roar back in the nineties – last time I wrote something like this was for Tuaiwa Eva Rickard and Tungia Baker so I best dedicate this to the children of Merata Mita – Rafer, Richard, Rhys, Awatea, Bob and Hepi.

ONE OF OUR JOURNEYS with YOUR MUM

Your mother took us to the DOLE plantation when we had attended the Hawaiian Film Festival — we were there for the World Premiere of Te Rua so of course Barry Barclay was there too. I don't remember which year in the nineties but it has become a year to remember.

Leonie Pihama and myself had been shopping at the famous flea market in Oahu when we happened upon Merata and Geoff. They offered to take us back to their place for tea and like any trip with Merata things began to unfold. We gathered our cluster of plastic bags filled with \$5US t-shirts for the whanau and hopped in the back of their utility truck with Geoff's son Miles and his girlfriend of the time. (Sorry I had forgotten her name) – but no woman is invisible so we will call her Debbie – that rings a BELL.

Merata wanted to show us something special. We had spent a bumpy 50mins of silence traveling through the DOLE pineapple plantation which was long, dusty and for miles ('cos we were in the US) – all you could see out the back window of Geoff's truck were pineapples growing out of the ground. All this time I thought they had grown on trees. And of course I wasn't the only one who had thought that.

Anyway, Geoff suddenly pulled off to the left and we clambered out of the back of the truck and dusted off our clothes. Merata had brought us to a small palmed off area of coconut trees which had massive rock formations, like they had been spat out of some volcano and stuck right in middle of a thousand acre pineapple plantation.

As far as the eye could see in a 360-degree span everything else was flat, brown and cultivated – 'plonked' in the middle of nowhere was this oasis of Hawaiian heritage – it was the birthing place for the Hawaiian ariki – the Kings and Queens of a thousand years before.

Merata had been given special clearance by the Hawaiian people, to show her friends this spot. I almost called her Guide Merata, but thought better of it. One should not spoil the mood with random cheekiness, especially when she had selected you for this special viewing. She did not suffer fools, no matter who you were.

There was a natural gateway of shrub and rock where we took our shoes off and we entered the red ochre soiled earth of this sacred place. The light was falling quickly and the dark full clouds seemed to assemble at the pit stop Merata had chosen to share with us. She told us that the local Hawaiians had protested vehemently to stop Mr. DOLE from bringing in his bulldozers to clear this sacred place to make way for the pineapples.

This place was the birthing place of rangātira – you actually could see the imprint of female feet on the rocks where they, the pregnant chieftanesses had chosen to squat to give birth. There were impressions in the rocks of their backs where some had leaned into when the time came to push. I kid you not there was a rock for every birthing position – even one for having twins. An eerie feeling to the tour had come upon us that day and I felt that prickly feeling on the back of my neck.

It was quiet and peaceful in this less than an acre section of trees and rocks – you could almost imagine the human cordon of people who surrounded the area to stop the bulldozers and you could hear the thundering clash of diesel engines against the chants of the people fighting for their ancient rite of passage of red earth. They had fought them off and won against the corporate might of the pineapple plantation owner. Merata celebrated this fact with us and I seem to recall she had filmed something on this very issue. I am not too sure.

After this recollection by Merata, we left feeling the weight of the tapu we had experienced lift. We looked down to our feet and we saw that the red dust had clung almost annoyingly to the soles of our feet and it was very difficult to remove it and then you noticed that the red earth only started and ended in the birthing area of enclosure by the coconut palm trees – the pineapples that surrounded this sacred haven were growing in brown soil and not the ochre-red earth we had just walked through.

Merata had noticed our observation and she smiled that knowing smile and said no more. We left in the back of Geoff's truck with Miles and his girlfriend of the time – whose name for this story will be Debbie – as no woman is invisible. ■

Kia ora Merata.

Sharon Aroha Hawke



Merata – Hineani Melbourne

What struck me at Merata Mita's tangi is how she had touched so many lives in so many different ways. This is my little story of Merata's affect on me.

The cloud swirled around and below the house, we floated above the world. Hinewehi's CD played softly in the background and I tapped, trying to shape a short film script on my laptop. It was early in the morning. I'd jumped out of my bed to start writing, still in my pjamas. I had been handed a gift and there was no time to waste.

Merata Mita was a lecturer at the University of Hawaii. At a Ngā Aho Whakaari hui she talked of her work with Indigenous groups around the world. Ngāhuia Wade asked her why she didn't run any here? What about us? Merata laughed and smiled.

Merata agreed to run a workshop. I was flattered and thrilled to be one of the people invited. Four of us turned up ploughing through the rain sodden Coromandel to her home in Tairua.

Merata organised her sister to cook. All we had to do for five days was write and talk films. At the time I was Executive Producer of Internal Productions at Māori Television. I wasn't sure why I wanted to go except I love writing and wanted, vaguely, to write a film. To the disbelief of my children and their father I packed my car and drove off for a week "to write".

Ngāhuia and Karlite Rangihau were already there when Jillian White and I arrived. Merata has a big rambling house. We all found a place to write during the day and a bed. For the next four days we wrote during the day, only stopping for meals. Then in the evening we would gather at the kitchen table to read out what we had written. Merata would talk to us about where we were at and suggest ways forward.

What a collection of scripts. Karlites was totally in te reo Māori. She and Merata completed the film at the end of last year. Ngāhuia's is in Japanese, Māori and English. Mine was in English with 'some' Māori, Jillian's in English with a strong Christian theme. Then we would kick back and watch and discuss short films.

The Australian Aboriginal films in particular for me were striking and fascinating. Merata talked about how they worked developing projects over a series of workshops designed to take each project from concept to a completed film.

I returned to Auckland and to earth. A few months later I resigned from Māori Television. I wrote a short film script for the 2008 First Draft competition. No, not the same script, that script I worked on at Merata's was now part of something else, my novel.

I wrote another script Te Hokingā Mai. I had the basic tools learnt under Merata. Te Hokingā Mai was a finalist in the First

Draft competition that year. In 2009-2010 I produced a beautiful short film, *The Winter Boy*, from a script by new comer talented writer Kylie Meehan and directed by the multi-talented Rachel House.

For years I had followed Merata's career, in many cases literally. She had been in TVNZ before me and ploughed a furrow through rocky ground that made things easier for us, particularly the Māori women who followed.

But Merata really made her mark with films. She picked up a camera and covered events as they happened and made stories so powerful that even today decades later, still hurt.

She was one of the trail blazers with Don Selwyn, Wi Kuki Kaa, Tama Poata and Barry Barclay who believed passionately that we Māori should tell our own stories in our own voice. Now they have all gone.

Tairua with Merata was a pivotal moment in my life, one I'll never forget.

Last month I swore I wouldn't do any more films, "there's not enough money. You and your team work hard and barely get paid," I bleated to anyone who would listen. But Merata's gone and our voice still needs to be heard. There's important stories that have to be told.

I'll do one more, just one... I can hear Merata laugh. I can see her smile... ■

Hineani Melbourne

Merata – Melissa Wikaere

To me, Merata was whanau. An essential branch of film making whakapapa, forever reaching for new horizons.

Back in the day, I was introduced to her by Don C. Selwyn as a wide-eyed student of He Taongā I Tawhiti, when Te Manu Aute was the only roopu in existence that represented Māori in Film and Television. Along with a few others, I would get to train under their wing, make their tea (hospitality/kaimahi trainee) and be their occasional secretary (agenda/policy/kaupapa trainee) and taxi driver (transport/tipi haere trainee). It was definitely the best training course.

There was Merata, Don, Barry, Wi Kuki, Tungia, Tama and more. These people would form the realms of independent, marae filmstar status ready to "fly their kite of dreams" and they were prepared to fight for it like it was their last bastion.

Their main fight was for their dreams and

the dreams of others to come true,

That since Māori weren't being serviced we would be better off writing our own films, Running our own television channel and that Māori and the world would love it.

Fighting for the cause! (Māori telling Māori Stories for Māori People)!

Fighting for each other!

Sometimes fighting with each other over whose story was better!

The stories. Merata had great stories. Some would quiver at the thought and others be entertained, by her poetic, mischievous delivery of the best dialogue a script could hope to have. All told through her beautiful lips, broadening smile and laughter.

Her love of children would bring on that smile, sometimes choosing to play with our babies when she could have been giving a lecture to a wharenuī full of eager listeners.

This is where her next story is leading us. To teach others to love. Love each other, our children, and each other's children. To hear her speak and see her face light up on this take, reminded me of Don's love for *Merchant of Venice*. An absolute passion for one's story, to help others tell their story, that it might evoke understanding and a change for the better.

My morning view, and everything that is great about her greets us everyday at Whakaata Māori and without knowing she pushed me to realise my potential once again.

Her laughter and awahi on that Monday morning is still wrapped warmly around my shoulders.

I miss you my sister, our Wahine Toa. Arohanui ki tō whanau ■

Melissa, Neil, Manaia, Waka.