



Suffrage stories

Born in Panguru in the Hokianga in 1868, Meri Te Tai Mangakāhia was rangatira born and used her influence as an advocate for Māori women, including having the right to vote.

She made history by being the first woman to address the House of Paremata Māori in 1893 and challenged the assembled leaders:

"...ki te Tumuaki Honore, me nga mema honore, kia mahia he ture e tenei whare kia whakamana nga wahine ki te pooti mema mo ratou ki te Paremata Maori..."

Meri proposed that *"...the chair and honourable members formulate a law in this house that gives mana to women to allow them to elect their member to the Paremata Maori Parliament."*

This was a step further than her Pākehā sisters in the suffrage movement. This proposal underscored the point that within Māori culture women were rangatira or ariki in their own right, whereas in Britain at that time women did not vote or have any say in important issues. Meri emphasised that Māori women owned and administered their own lands under the new land tenure system, either because they had had no male relatives the colonials 'granted' land to, or simply because the women were more competent.

Meri Mangakāhia remained involved in Māori politics and welfare issues until her death in 1920.

Meri Te Tai Mangakāhia

1868-1920



■ Meri Te Tai Mangakāhia. Credit: Mason, Frederick W., photographer. [Copy of Portrait of Meri Te Tai Mangakāhia], PH-NEG-C5101, Davis Collection, Auckland War Memorial Museum Tamaki Paenga Hira.



HERITAGE NEW ZEALAND
POUHERE TAONGA