



**Launch of *Ngā wāhine kaipakihi: He tirohanga / Māori women in business: insights***

**20 November 2019**

**Remarks by Maia Wikaira, Tumuaki (Director), Whāia Legal**

Tēnā koutou katoa,

Ko Maia Wikaira tōku ingoa. He uri ahau nō Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāpuhi me Te Rarawa. Ko māua ko Horiana Irwin-Easthope ngā Tumuaki o Whāia Legal. My name is Maia Wikaira and I am a co-director, together with Horiana Irwin-Easthope (Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Kahungunu, Rakaipaaka), of Whāia Legal.

Tuatahi, me mihi ka tika ki a koutou kua tae mai i tēnei rangi. Ki a Minita Julie Anne Genter, tēnā koe. Ki a Traci Houpapa, koutou ko ngā mema o te National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women, tēnā koutou. Ki ngā wāhine e kōrerotia e te ripoata nei, to the women featured in the report, tēnā koutou. Ka mutu, ki ngā roopū e tautoko ana i ngā wāhine kaipakihi, Māori Women's Development Inc, Poutama Trust, Te Puni Kōkiri me Te Minitatanga mō ngā Wāhine, the Ministry for Women, tēnā koutou.

Whāia Legal exists because my co-director Horiana and I believe in the power of the law to be transformative for whānau, hapū and iwi. We also know that the history of the law evokes legacies of loss and exclusion. We aim to be change agents; to create new legacies of inclusion, empowerment and transformation in the experience of the law, through a kaupapa Māori-based practice.

This report, *Ngā wāhine kaipakihi: He tirohanga / Māori women in business: insights* identifies that wāhine Māori are agents of social change. Indeed, Horiana and I know this to be true because, as legal service providers, we cannot do what we do without others sharing our vision of transformation. Whāia Legal will be one and half years old in December 2019, so we are still a young business. Ours is the archetypal story of wāhine Māori entering into business. Whāia Legal was the beneficiary of overwhelming support from wāhine Māori business women in our initial stages, and they continue to be valued clients today. The mahi that we are asked to participate in is bold, courageous and innovative, and we are grateful to be taken along on the journey. Nā reira, ki ngā wāhine nā koutou i waihanga i te huarahi – to the women who

forged the path, nā koutou i whakairo i te papa tū waewae – who carved the platform on which we wāhine Māori business women stand, e mihi ana.

The data in this report is a source of inspiration but more so, a source of validation of a matter that we already know to be true – that the economic, social, cultural, environmental and spiritual contribution of wāhine Māori to their communities and their nation is significant. We are excited that the multiplier effect on whānau, community and economic well-being of te ringa mahana o te wahine Māori, which often remains unquantified, is given visibility, elevated and celebrated in this report. It reminds us that engaging with wāhine Māori-led businesses will not just yield a good return on investment; it is a positive exercise in social impact investment.

The wāhine Māori-led businesses the subject of the data and case studies demonstrate that wāhine Māori are elevating the national economy to its full and as yet unrealised potential. And so I thank you, those who had the vision to see the need for this report, those whose stories it tells, and those who have stories yet to be told. For as the report acknowledges, he timatanga tēnei, and what comes next is up to all of us.

Nā reira, ki a tātou wāhine aumangea mā – mua te haere, ki te hoe.

*Whāia Legal is a Wellington-based law firm offering tailored legal and strategic services through a kaupapa Māori lens. They look to the past to address the challenges of the future. Their areas of expertise are public law, environmental law, corporate law and governance, Te Tiriti o Waitangi and general litigation.*