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# Nanaia Mahuta's moko makes history

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Maiki Sherman



Labour's Nanaia Mahuta (Supplied)



Labour MP Nanaia Mahuta has made history by becoming the first female MP to wear a moko kauae - a traditional Māori tattoo located on the chin.

traditional Māori practice whereby a group of people come together to receive a moko.

Ms Mahuta said it was a great honour and a privilege.

"I thought about the legacy of the past and those tupuna (elders) whose footsteps I certainly would like to follow. I also thought about those years to come, my own children obviously, and my mokopuna in years to come. That was at the forefront of my thinking, it was a very special occasion," she said.

Ms Mahuta says her decision to receive a moko was based on a number of significant milestones this year, on a personal note, marking 20 years as a Member of Parliament.

"I wear my kauae tehe (moko) proudly and I want to be part of a generation that seeks to normalise kauae tehe, who seeks to make a contribution, and who seeks to bring the most positive aspects of what we have as a Māori culture, our mātauranga (knowledge) Māori, our world view, into New Zealand."

During her time as an MP, she's had to advocate on behalf of Māori who have been marginalised because of their facial moko.

"Probably a lot of the most unhelpful perceptions was that the moko was associated with being a member of a gang and all the negative connotations that are in society.

"We've just got to take one step at a time. I'm pretty hopeful that as the momentum grows to normalise kauae tehe, mataora, within our society, people will see it as very normal and part of the daily fabric of our lives and the negative perceptions will dissipate very quickly."

Ms Mahuta says the decision by the women to receive a moko was also in celebration of the 10 year reign of Māori King Tuheitia Paki, while also in remembrance of the passing of the late Māori Queen, Dame Te Arikinui Te Atairangikahu.

"As a whānau we had a wānanga to say well how could we celebrate some significant milestones for this 10 years and this was the kaupapa that we had all agreed that we would carry as recognition of this 10 year milestone."

The women received their moko at Waahi Pā Marae, on the banks of the Waikato River in Huntly.

Waahi Pā Marae has a significant relationship with the Māori King Movement - the Kingitanga - in that the marae was the home of two past Māori Kings and of the late Māori Queen.

Also part of the group of women who received a moko kauae was current Māori King Tuheitia Paki's wife Atawhai and their daughter Ngawaihonoitepo Paki.

"Obviously for Te Atawhai as a main support for Tuheitia her role is a very important one and to be able to have this opportunity at Waahi to recognise her important role, first and foremost as a pou for Tuheitia, I think was special for her.

"For Ngawaihonoitepo that was a special occasion for us as a whānau. It gave a clear signal to the next generation that their contribution and their talents no matter where it is across the tribe will be needed in order to strengthen us as a people," Ms Mahuta said.

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