

A Kind
of Shelter
Whakaruru-taha

An anthology of new writing
for a changed world

Edited by Witi Ihimaera
& Michelle Elvy

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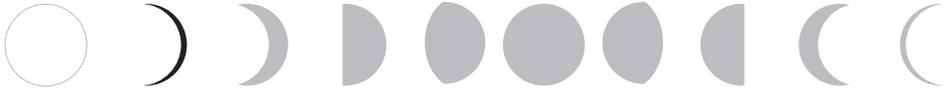


Hinemoa Elder
He karakia ki
a Papatūānuku

Dr Hinemoa Elder MNZM (Te Aupōuri, Ngāti Kurī, Te Rarawa, Ngāpuhi) is a Fellow of the Royal Australia and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, and works as a child and adolescent psychiatrist at Starship Children’s Hospital’s Haumarū Ōrite Child and Family Unit and Mother and Baby Unit. Her Eru Pōmare HRC Postdoctoral Fellowship examined traumatic brain injury from the perspective of mātauranga Māori and developed resources for those affected as a whānau — approaches that are now used in rehabilitation. She writes forensic reports for the Youth Court and has been a deputy member of the New Zealand Mental Health Review Tribunal for more than 10 years. She is the bestselling author of *Aroha: Māori Wisdom for a Contented Life Lived in Harmony with Our Planet* and *Wawata Moon Dreaming: Daily Wisdom Guided by Hina, the Māori Moon*. Hinemoa had guidance from Professor Sir Pou Temara in writing this, her first published karakia.

E Whae, e Papa e hora nei,
te whaea o te tangata
whakarongo mai rā
ki te ruahine
ki te pūkenga
ki tō whakahina
ko Hina i te pō
ko Hina i te ao
ko Hina āmio ki runga
ko Hina whakarite tai
kia puta ko Tai Tamatāne,
ko Tai Tamawāhine
ko te Tai o Rehua e . . . i.

Rāhiritia atu rā te ūkaipō
kua hua ko te hiringa
te hiringa tapu
te hiringa ā Nuku
te wahine pū o te ao
hei ora mō te ao
hei mana mō te ao
tū i te ao
ko te tū nui
ko te tū roa
ko te tū tē ū
ko te tū tē ea
ko te tūrangawaewae
ko te tū oranga tonutanga.
Haumi e, hui e . . . Tāiki e.



Introduction

1.

When Ranginui the Sky Father was separated from Papatūānuku the Earth Mother, the landscape became a place of cyclonic dust storms and whirling debris.

Subterranean fires burst through Papatūānuku's skin. Solar winds rushed into the space between the parents, creating gaseous clouds. Sheet lightning crackled across the sky and shattered across a broiling sea.

This was the turbulent environment into which the 70 god brothers came, crawling and bloodied. Immediately assailed by the intense cold, they took shelter in a cave formed from one of the curving sides of Papatūānuku's body. Called whakaruru-taha, Māori still apply the term to a warm and cosy haven away from winds and cold. It was from this place that the god brothers finally moved out into a new world.

2.

This whare pukapuka is, similarly, a whakaruru-taha.

Here, 76 creative thinkers — poets and fiction writers, anthropologists and biologists, musicians and visual artists, and more — gather at a hui in the shelter, which you might visualise as a magnificent cave-like dwelling or meeting house.

In the middle is a table, the tēpu kōrero from which, from time to time, the rangatira speak; they converse with honoured guests, and their rangatira-kōrero embody the very tāhuhu, the over-arching horizontal ridge pole of the shelter. They provide the strong spine for *A Kind of Shelter*. Sitting around them, or on either side of the wharenuī, are other members of the iwi. Every now and then they join the conversation, talking story, singing story, energetically contributing to the kaupapa or performing for the enjoyment of the iwi: this is who we are. Their audience listens in, laughing, singing along or pondering further when the talk gets serious: sometimes they agree, sometimes they don't.

What is this world we live in, and where is it heading?

3.

The title of this anthology comes from a poem by Craig Santos Perez. The book's contributors look out from the shelter upon our world in the second decade of the millennium. This is what they see.

It's not only about seeing but also a greater sensing. It's about the way we gather knowledge; the way we hand it down, or over, to each other; the way we accept and examine and hold that knowledge. It's about exploring for ourselves, and thinking critically about the world we inhabit. It's about the cave, going all the way back to Plato's metaphor in all its realities (understood and misunderstood), and the idea of emerging from it.

In this manner, the book you hold carries far-reaching goals, not in the way it delivers answers, but rather in the way it asks questions. We hope the contents can be thought of as a dialogue, from writer to writer, and between the written word and the visual works included here: story and poem weave together thematically and pull at the edges; fiction and non-fiction ponder climate change and political urgencies, historical weights and cultural challenges, family structures and race and class. Painters and photographers suggest realities and un-realities.

In dialogues across space and time we look from Aotearoa New Zealand outward to the world, inviting individuals from Hawai'i, Japan, South Africa, Brazil, Italy, Rwanda, Spain and Sri Lanka to engage in conversations that explore identity and change, motherhood and healing, war and legacy, ancestry and shared history, art and music and the natural world. Artworks from Ghana, Singapore, the United States, Sāmoa and Aotearoa call out with our histories and stories. And all this occurs during our continued isolations in this Covid world. As Singapore-based photographer Steve Golden strolled through the streets of Tokyo after the first intense lockdown, he observed teens posing in kimonos and a solitary man praying before an altar. He writes: 'It struck me that however much we have been locked inside, however much we have been stopped from travelling, however much we have been digitally tracked, vaccinated, nasally swabbed, masked and monitored, we will emerge with what was always there: our traditions. Our cultures. Our families. Our heritage.'

A print by Noa Noa von Bassewitz features on the cover of this book. In an interview

about her work, she notes the relationship between the creator and the viewer, the energy that translates across the space between them: ‘I have come to realise that what I see and feel in my creative process is my own story. I hope that the energy of it is what is conveyed to the viewer. Others do not have to see what I see, and I welcome the viewer’s curiosity and personal connection. I write stories as a part of my completion process — it is when I become the viewer of my own work that I can see my stories reflected back at me. It’s a circular process, a reveal not too dissimilar to the reveal of block to paper: the negative becomes the positive and something new can be seen.’

This cover print is called *Embrace*, which might be looked at, in the words of the artist, as ‘two clouds that take shape and are seen as commingling creatures, dark and light entwined’.

4.

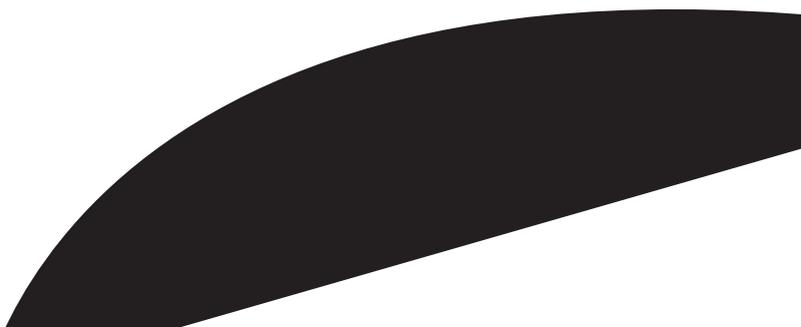
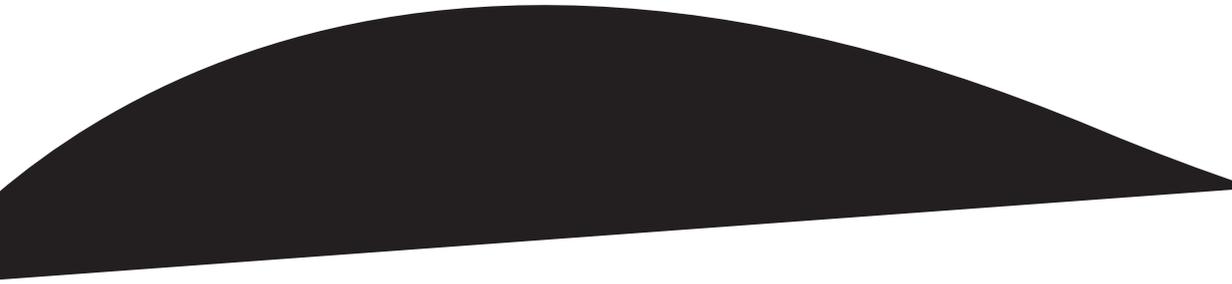
Which brings us to the final note: that this book also suggests dialogues between its contents and you, its reader. Seeing, reflecting, sensing more, seeing again: this is the art of creating. A circular shape, like the koru whose presence is also reflected in this book.

We are very grateful to the book’s contributors for sharing their creative voices and visions. We are grateful, too, to Creative New Zealand for funding this project. We offer our heartfelt thanks to Nicola Legat and the team at Massey University Press for believing in the project and seeing it through. Finally, we remember our elder Moana Jackson (1945–2022), whose energy and sense of justice also rings out in these pages.

The cave is full of shadows and light. Reality and truth are fragmented at best, influencing our intellectual, spiritual and philosophical wellbeing. So it is with an anthology: the contents are fragments of individual views — it contains sparks of inspiration and serious questions that might help us consider our own wellbeing. We must keep asking questions to examine what we know and do not know; we must keep asking questions as we move, out of the shelter, forward towards tomorrow.

Witi Ihimaera and Michelle Elvy

May 2023



Part one

The sheltered curving side of Papatūānuku

Ko te pae tawhiti whāia kia tata,
Ko te pae tata whakamaua kia tīna.

Seek to bring distant horizons closer,
and sustain and maintain those that have been arrived at.



Nina Mingya Powles

Woven triptych

after Pema Monaghan

The sun is white.
The sea is woven.
Harakeke bend towards
the waves.

The sun is white.
The sea is woven
through with blue.
Harakeke bend towards
the waves.

The sun is white
and I can't see.
The sea is woven through
with blue.
Harakeke touch
my knees
above the waves.

At night I watch
the weaver's hands
turning her basket
through the screen.

She says,
*if you look after the plant
the plant will look after you.*

At night I thread
the needle,
hold two strands
in one hand.
I do not let
go.

Harakeke
bend towards
a distant sun.
The white waves
do not
let go.

Handwork
is the night work
of women
and memory.

My memory
is a stone fruit
cut into quarters
by her hands.

Nina Mingya Powles is a writer, poet and librarian from Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington and of Malaysian, Chinese and Pākehā descent. Her food memoir, *Tiny Moons: A Year of Eating in Shanghai*, was published in 2020. In 2021 her debut poetry collection, *Magnolia* 木蘭, was shortlisted for both the Mary and Peter Biggs Award for Poetry for the Ockham New Zealand Book Awards and the Royal Society of Literature Ondaatje Prize. Her essay collection, *Small Bodies of Water*, was also published that year. She lives in London.



Tina Makereti
Ātea

The first thing Aunty Ivy asks them to do is sit in a circle and talk about their previous experiences.

Leila is the first to volunteer. ‘I’ve done it once. There was no one else, and Papa Ronnie asked me to, and helped me with the kupu. I can’t remember what happened. None of it.’ She grins, shakes her head, clearly horrified. The other women mirror her, wide-eyed.

After a long pause, Amorangi speaks. ‘I started to last year. At the wā’ it’s something they teach us. But I feel too young to do it at home, and away from home. I’m not sure rangatahi should do it yet.’

Into the next pause, Lisa eventually says something, her voice shaky, uncertain. ‘It comes up for me through my work more than any other situation. But I never know what’s right.’ She thinks then of the colleague at her office in Wellington, the loudness of that other voice. The quietness of her own. ‘I’m the right age. I can feel the need — that I will be called on soon. But the whakamā is so deep. I don’t think I’ll have a strong enough voice.’

‘That’s it with our generation, eh? It takes so much to get through that whakamā. We’re in between our nannies and these confident young ones, the last generation to be raised without kōhanga or kura.’ Her cousin is right, although Lisa wouldn’t have had access to kura even if it had existed when she was a kid. She feels the barrier almost as if it is physical. ‘I just want to feel some ease around it.’ Her words are urgent now. ‘The karanga, the reo, all of it. I just want to feel like I’m OK, where I am.’

The aunties look on, impassive, nodding. Then they start coaching, but there are no instructions, no pointers, no methods.

They tell stories.

Their own first times. Without exception, they were put on the spot. Told when to do it and given a gentle shove. They’d been watching, sometimes for years, but that was all the training they got. Lisa understands then. There can be no easing into something like this. But also, they’ve all been where she is, these kuia who carry the whole hapū in their calls back and forth across the marae ātea: apprehensive, full of trepidation, daunted at the incredible responsibility. What if they make a mistake? What will befall the people if they screw up?

Aunty Ivy is the last to speak. ‘Remember, you’re at home. You can’t be wrong when you’re home.’

Something inside Lisa slides into place at these words. She has been feeling lesser than since she walked into the whareniui, not because anyone has made her feel that way but because they are all ahi kā, keeping the home fires burning, while she has been a city Māori all her life. It is her home as much as theirs, but they all have their roles, they know their place, they know each other. She is a latecomer, one of the few to return since her grandfather was forced north by the need for work, thrice estranged after her parents’ separation and her removal from the family as a baby. And then there are the more recent blows: the constant tension at work, her ideas shot down by the only other Māori in the Compliance Team, who is fluent and confident in te reo.

Tension with Pākehā colleagues doesn’t bother her, but she has only ever found allies in Māori co-workers, especially wāhine. Somehow her failure to earn the respect of this one woman has pierced the soft ball of shame that she hid long ago within many layers of thick defence. Lisa knows her own record, knows that she’s earned her seniority — the long hours, the constant battles with a system that isn’t built to help her people, or even recognise their needs. But none of it matters. In the public service world she feels herself defined not by what she has achieved but by what she lacks. Even the reo she knows fails her when the time comes: she chokes and stutters, the words strangled in her throat.

You can’t be wrong when you’re home.

They go outside. Now the practical instruction begins. They are given some words to call — some will be hau kāinga welcoming the visitors and some manuhiri replying to the welcome. Lisa knows her voice will be quiet, and she doesn’t know if she can make the right sounds. Her voice disappears whenever she is called on to waiata by herself. Still, she feels no anxiety; she cannot fail even if she sounds terrible. Everyone is just as scared as she is. She has decided, for these few hours, to do only exactly as she is told, stepping into the safe circle the aunties have created, where nothing about her is wrong.

They stand in a literal circle, arms linked, facing outwards.

‘We’ll go around, one after another, repeating the same lines,’ Aunty Ivy tells them. Lisa closes her eyes. She can’t see anyone, but she can feel them through their

linked arms, and suddenly, she can hear them. The voices calling, progressively getting closer to her. Finally, her cousin's voice directly to her left. She knows she is ready. She feels calm.

‘Hāere mai e ngā manuhiri e-ii-eee!’ Her voice is strong and clear, and *loud*. She had no idea she could make that kind of sound — so sure, so clean. This is who she is, then, someone with a voice like this. The call goes around the circle again and again, and each time, as the women's confidence grows, they begin to make different calls, adding complexity. A couple of times she stumbles, but that's OK, they all do.

Later, the men rejoin them and they organise a mock pōwhiri. Lisa joins the manuhiri side, where six novice women will karanga for the first time. They line up and decide the order of the callers. The nerves hit then. Will her voice disappear when she has to face the marae ātea and all the people?

‘I don't know if I can—’ She doesn't even finish the sentence. Aunty Ivy is immediately beside her, linking her arm through Lisa's.

‘I'll go first,’ she says. ‘You call after. What are your kupu?’

Lisa takes a breath. She looks out at the expectant faces on the other side framed by the mahau of the wharenuī, the tīpuna curling up the pou, the wide expanse of green in between, and thinks about what she's going to say.

Tina Makereti (Te Ātiawa, Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Rangatahi-Matakore, Pākehā) is author of *The Imaginary Lives of James Pōneke* (2018) and co-editor, with Witi Ihimaera, of *Black Marks on the White Page* (2017). In 2016 her story ‘Black Milk’ won the Commonwealth Short Story Prize, Pacific Region. Her other books are *Where the Rēkohu Bone Sings* (2014) and *Once Upon a Time in Aotearoa* (2010). She teaches creative writing at Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington.



Lisa Matisoo-Smith
We are family

I am a biological anthropologist. My academic training and research for more than 30 years has focused on understanding human origins and diversity.

I started studying this subject at a very interesting time, just as scientists realised that we each carry the information about the history of our species in our cells, and DNA technology had developed to the point that we could easily access that information. In 1987 Allan Wilson, a New Zealand scientist at the University of California, Berkeley, and his students Rebecca Cann and Mark Stoneking published their revolutionary research on modern human origins. They focused on a small part of DNA called mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), which is passed down directly through the maternal line, and, using DNA collected from women of diverse ancestry from around the world, they were able to reconstruct our family tree.

The results of that study, dubbed the 'Mitochondrial Eve' theory, shook the scientific community and the broader public, because it suggested that all humans share a common maternal ancestor who lived in Africa some 200,000 years ago. Perhaps more surprising was that the DNA also suggested that our modern human ancestors did not start spreading out of Africa, to disperse across the globe, until about 70,000 years ago.

Research undertaken over the subsequent years, including further DNA studies and archaeological research, has confirmed and clarified our global migration history. Within a few thousand years of leaving the African continent, humans had arrived in New Guinea and Australia, presumably by spreading across Asia, following the coastline until they reached the southern edge of the continent. At this point, they figured out how to create some kind of watercraft to cross the deep-water passages of more than 70 kilometres to reach New Guinea and Australia by around 60,000 years ago.

Our ancestors didn't start settling in Europe until about 40,000 years ago, and didn't cross the frozen land-bridge linking Asia to the Americas until about 20,000 years ago. Our own part of the world, the great Pacific Ocean, was not settled until the past few thousand years, culminating with the arrival of Polynesian voyagers on the shores of Aotearoa only about 750 years ago.

It is this last leg of the great human journey, the human settlement of the Pacific, that has been the topic of my research for the past 35 years. My own personal journey started in the Pacific. I was born in Hawai'i, grew up in Japan and moved to Berkeley,

California, to start university. After graduating with a BA in Anthropology in 1985, like so many other middle-class kids I decided to take some time off to backpack around Europe. I wanted to figure out who I was and what I really wanted to do with the rest of my life. I arranged to do some volunteer work on a couple of archaeological excavations in France but, before that, I decided that I wanted to reconnect with my own Estonian heritage.

During the first week of that voyage of discovery I met my New Zealand husband, who was also on an OE. After I finished backpacking, he flew to France to meet me at the archaeological site I was working on in Nice. We got married a year or so later, and moved to New Zealand in 1987, where I started postgraduate studies at the University of Auckland. For my PhD I wanted to see if I could use this newly discovered DNA technology, combined with archaeological and linguistic evidence, to reconstruct the settlement of the Pacific islands using mtDNA.

Instead of studying human mtDNA, I decided to study the DNA of one of the animals that travelled with the Polynesian voyagers as their canoes crossed the Pacific Ocean. In addition to carrying people, dogs and important food plants, the waka that arrived on the shores of Aotearoa beginning in the thirteenth century CE also transported the kiore, or Pacific rat. I realised that if we could look at mtDNA differences in the different populations of the rats in Polynesia, and determine, for example, which islands the New Zealand kiore came from, it would tell us where the waka came from.

During my research, I have been incredibly lucky to be able to visit many Pacific islands, and to meet people who were intrigued enough by what I was doing and my research questions that they were willing to talk with me. They knew where their ancestors came from, and they very kindly shared their stories. I was told that if I trapped rats from around the marae of Taputapuātea, on the island of Ra'īātea, for example, I would find the source of the rats in Aotearoa. And, indeed, I did. We found that the kiore here likely came from a large number of islands in the Cook and Society Island archipelagos, including Ra'īātea. None of this is a surprise to many Māori or other Polynesians I speak with. I was telling them something that they already knew from their oral traditions and whakapapa.

Over the next 20 years or so, I was able to continue my research, reconstructing ancient human migrations using the DNA of plants and animals carried by the people as they settled the islands of the Pacific. There was general scholarly interest in my research, but not too many people beyond academia would normally engage with the subject of DNA and human migrations.

In 2007, the biotech company 23andMe introduced the first direct-to-consumer home DNA ancestry test. In 2008 it was declared by *Time* magazine to be the invention of the year, as so many (mostly Americans) were willing to part with \$100 to find out ‘who they are and where they are from’. While the popularity of these tests may have reached its pinnacle in the subsequent 15 years, over 25 million people, including many from Australia and New Zealand, have taken a DNA test to find out ‘where they are from’ or to ‘uncover their ethnic mix’, and even ‘to connect with relatives’, and no doubt many more are still considering ‘having their DNA done’. What has driven this mass engagement with DNA technology and the sudden need for information that it might be able to provide? Are we so unsure of who we are and where we come from?

In 2008 I was approached by the National Geographic Society and asked to join its Genographic Project to further investigate the dispersal of humans worldwide. I was to engage with Pacific communities to see whether they wanted to participate in the study. This project, of course, coincided with the development of direct-to-consumer ancestry tests, and the Genographic Project not only sampled DNA of Indigenous communities around the world, but also incorporated a ‘citizen science’ component — volunteers could pay to have their DNA tested and then have their data added to the Genographic study and database.

Tens of thousands of people bought the Genographic deep-ancestry tests, and of course many more bought other DNA ancestry kits. So, again, why were people suddenly so interested in ‘doing their DNA’? What was driving this need to know, to reconnect to some location or group of people they have never known? I keep coming back to one answer — it is about identity. So many of us have lost our connections to people and place. Some, sadly, have had those connections and history stolen from them through colonisation and colonialism, but many have disconnected by choice

or — perhaps even more commonly — they have disconnected without realising the consequences. We have been so busy trying to ‘get ahead’, to buy the right house or the right car, to wear the right clothes or send our kids to the right schools, that we seem to have come to a point where we think that these things project or even determine who we are. They have become our identity.

If we look back to our primate ancestry, we see that we are social animals. As humans we have, for most of our existence, belonged to a tribe. We knew where we were from and who our people were. When we eventually settled down in villages we lived in the same places as our parents and grandparents, or perhaps in the next village. But, as villages became cities and rapid transport became possible, we began moving further and faster than ever before. The result is not only the wonderful multicultural cities and nations that exist today, but also the threat of monoculturalism — the McDonald’s-isation of the world.

In the quest for a better life, we often moved away from family. We are less likely to live in multi-generation homes, so family stories and histories are not being passed down. The more we move to cities, the more likely we are to become isolated. The more we are connected by technology, the more disconnected we seem to become. By focusing so much on the future, we have forgotten about our past. We need those connections to anchor our identity. People who are not connected to people and place are not likely to look after that place or other people.

Perhaps it is not too late for us. Recent events may have woken us up just in time. I would like to think that perhaps the lockdowns that so many of us endured during the first year or two of the Covid-19 crisis gave us the shake-up that we needed. When we weren’t allowed to go out and socialise, we realised that we really wanted to do so — in fact, we needed to. We realised that if we were sick, we needed people who could provide meals or who would call to make sure that we were OK. We realised that our kids needed to be outside playing, and that spending all day on the computer was not good for anyone.

People did go out and spend time walking the dog or riding bikes with the kids. Instead of avoiding looking at the neighbours as we drove past their houses, we put signs and stuffed animals in the windows for people to see. We realised how much more time we had when we weren’t sitting in a car commuting to our cubicle office

in the city. We bought local, which we could see benefited not only ourselves, but our neighbours and our communities, too. Perhaps now, before we all rush to ‘get back to normal’, we can look back and learn from the past — from the past few years and the past 200,000 years. We need to reconnect and ground ourselves.

The ‘Mitochondrial Eve’, or ‘Out of Africa’, story surprised both scientists and the general public because it showed that, despite the physical and cultural differences we see in people from around the globe, our DNA is virtually identical. We all share a remarkably recent common ancestor. Her descendants undertook amazing journeys, whether it was crossing the desert 70,000 years ago, on a canoe that crossed the Pacific Ocean 750 years ago, on a ship that arrived 150 years ago, or on an airplane that landed 35 years ago. We can celebrate that tiny bit of DNA that connects us to some geographical location where one or more of our ancestors might have lived 10 or 15 generations ago, but we can also celebrate the shared history that is told in all of our DNA.

For some people, having their DNA analysed may be the only way that they can connect to lost family members or particular aspects of their ancestry. However, for most people, the information that they need to link them to a culture, a place, a history, an identity will be found not in their DNA but rather in the stories and the people close to them. If you are lucky enough to have family members around, talk to them about what they know about the family history. Make sure you pass that information on to the next generation. They may not be interested now, but they will eventually want to know. If you don’t have access to those people or that information, start with today. Today will be history tomorrow. Get involved in your local community and celebrate that sense of belonging. Get to know your local history and the stories of the people and the place where you live. Reconnect, and together we will create the future.

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