

# Quakers

The Religious Society of Friends - Te Hāhi Tūhauwiri  
Aotearoa/New Zealand

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18 May 2021

Greetings to Friends everywhere

Some 90 Friends gathered at Waikanae, 14-17 May 2021 under the care of Palmerston North and Kāpiti Monthly Meetings. In welcoming us to Waikanae they began by acknowledging the tāngata whenua, the local first peoples.

We rejoiced in the opportunity to be fully present 'with each other' after 2020's online-only meeting for worship. While giving thanks for the privileged position of Aotearoa/New Zealand, we were reminded of the perilous state of other nations, especially as we heard of the serious impact of Covid-19 in India.

The value of connection was strongly felt among Friends and we heard how the new use of technology had enabled the Quaker community, as never before, to extend its reach to remote and unwell Friends.

The importance of connection was explored further in the Quaker Lecture, "Stories of Belonging", delivered during Yearly meeting by Anjum Rahman, a founding member of the NZ Islamic Women's Council. She made reference to the whakataukī (Māori proverb) of the tōroa (albatross) that journeys out onto the ocean and then returns to the land, its nesting place, where it regenerates.

She challenged us to go forth like the tōroa, to listen and change, and to endure the discomfort of confronting our privilege. Those in dominant positions need to be willing to give away some power to allow others to resource their own communities. Her words lent weight to a call by Young Friends, for Yearly Meeting to be active in the move towards decolonisation, which requires more equitable sharing of power with the first peoples of Aotearoa.

The same sense of community and spiritual strength that Quakers at Yearly Meeting valued, was enhanced by the input from Young Friends on a number of subjects. Their creative and thoughtful contributions were heard and showed us a clear way forward.

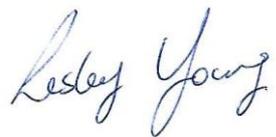
Wiki Walker, a recipient of the Loxley award, spoke of self-healing to help ourselves and others, seeing the feminine in our culture and politics, understanding the impact of colonisation on us as a people, and connecting ourselves and others with the natural world. Her project, *Te Reo o ngā te Whāaea (The Voices of Mothers, Grandmothers and Aunties)*, sought to preserve the wisdom and the place of Māori women in nurturing community.

We were captivated by the story of how the board game called "Kaupapa" came into being supported by our Quaker Testimonies fund. The game, developed by Kuruho

Wereta and Rosie Remmerswaal, a Young Friend, aims to make learning Te Reo Maori fun. We also experienced our own brief moment of fun in a lively impromptu session on pronunciation

As the meeting drew to a close we remind ourselves that we should let the Spirit guide us and that we must have faith that we will be given the means to follow such promptings. Like the tōroa, we now go back to our Quaker communities enriched by the aroha that has embraced this Yearly Meeting, and its attendees, both present and remote.

In Peace and Friendship

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lesley Young". The ink is black and the signature is centered on the page.

Lesley Young  
Yearly Meeting Clerk