



Cancer Society New Zealand
Te kāhui Matepukupuku o Aotearoa

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Awhitia Te Ukaipo

They were painted back in 1997 and now, 11 years later, six very special hand painted panels that were developed to promote Maori women's breast health have been framed and hung at the National Office of the Cancer Society and will be honoured with a traditional blessing.

The story starts back in 1994 when Maori community health workers identified the need for a new Maori education resource to underpin their work with wahine Maori and to create a platform where breast screening could be discussed within a kaupapa Maori framework.

The Cancer Society invited representatives of NGA Iwi O NGA E Wha (Maori women of the four winds) to a hui to seek advice on developing such a resource. The hui recommended a series of panels involving the concepts of Maori creation and the holistic and spiritual well-being of wahine Maori.

Four kuia from Te Tairāwhiti (Te Roopu o Uro Ao) were given the mantle to develop this idea, calling on several artists to submit proposals. Ngapine Allen was commissioned to develop the artwork.

In 1998 Maori health promoters working for BreastScreen Aotearoa (BSA) started to use the resource with Maori women's group.

Two years later Byllie-Jean Rangihuna composed a waiata using the words from Awhitia Te Ukaipo.

In 2003, at the request of National Screening Unit Staff, Awhitia Te Ukaipo was developed as a national resource and Byllie-Jean 'gifted' her waiata to the programme.

The original panels have now been framed and hang proudly in the foyer of National Office. On 16 October 2008 the panels will be blessed and among the guest list of those attending the blessing will be four of the group of Maori women involved in the original project, including the artist, Ngapine Allen, members of the National Screening Unit and the Breast Cancer Foundation.

"This is a very significant occasion as it not only honours the art work, the artist and those involved in the development of the resource but also demonstrates the Cancer Society's ongoing intention to support Maori initiatives to raise the awareness of cancer risk. The event also coincides with breast cancer awareness month and the partnerships the Cancer Society has with the Breast Cancer Foundation and the National Screening Unit." says Dr Jan Pearson Health Promotion Manager

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