



Media Release
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Waikato-Tainui returns for inspirational leader's final journey

A large contingent from Waikato-Tainui accompanied the whaanau of Lady Raiha Mahuta this morning, as they returned with her on her final journey home to Karetu marae in the Far North.

Co-negotiator of the Waikato River Settlement and wife of the late Sir Robert Mahuta, Lady Raiha passed away peacefully on Monday. She was 67.

"We have lost a woman of great mana, strength and inspiration. The passing of Lady Raiha Mahuta leaves us with heavy hearts and great sadness not only for the people of Waikato-Tainui, but for the motu," said Tukoroirangi Morgan, fellow co-negotiator and chair of Waikato-Tainui's governance board Te Arataura.

"Her endearing legacy as a leader, mother and grandmother will long be remembered by the many whose lives she touched," Mr Morgan said.

A key leader of the Waikato River Settlement, Lady Raiha Mahuta was a dedicated member of the Kaahui Ariki and Kiingi Tuheitia's representative on Te Arataura.

Born Eliza Irimana Edmonds of Ngaati Manu and Ngaati Rangi descent, she and Robert Te Kotahi Mahuta were married in 1963. Following Sir Robert's death in 2001, it was Lady Raiha who sought to realise her late husband's aspirations for the tribe.

Despite her illness and testament to her character, Lady Raiha's conviction and tenacity were instrumental in the signing of the Waikato River Deed of Settlement in 2008. She was also leading progress on the development of the Waikato Endowed College.

"The return of our awa tupuna and the restoration of the river was a vision both Sir Robert and Lady Raiha shared. Their belief and drive has paved the way for our future generations to take up the mantle and continue the path forward," Mr Morgan said.

"The whakatauki, 'Tooku awa koiora me oona pikonga, He kura tangihia o te maataamuri – the river of life, each curve more beautiful than the last', parallels the

milestones Lady Raiha accomplished throughout her life. Like a river, she last left behind a legacy of wonderful triumphs one can only aspire too.”

Mr Morgan said it was appropriate for Lady Raiha to spend time at Waahi Paa in Huntly for two days, before returning to her people for burial on Friday.

“This is where she and Te Kotahi were married, and where they raised their whaanau together. At this time we look to unite as a people, and support the wishes of her children and mokopuna. Her legacy will continue through them.”

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