



Sleeps Standing Moetū

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Book Title: Sleeps Standing Moetū **Author:** Witi Ihimaera **Translator:** Hēmi Kelly **Year of Publication:** 2017 **Publisher:** Vintage **Number of Pages:** 220 **ISBN:** 978-0-14377-111-1

Moetū by Witi Ihimaera with Hēmi Kelly is written to honour Ngaati Maniapoto and the other *iwi* (tribes) who fought beside them at the battle of Ooraakau in 1864. This book reminds all of us who descend from these *iwi*, the determined strength of the people we originate from. It comes with a balanced perspective which on the one hand, acknowledges that the *iwi* who fought made mistakes and were poorly resourced, which meant many people died. This book also shows that the battle of Ooraakau was a triumph of determination and survival.

You learn from *Moetū* that our *tuupuna* (ancestors) were heavily outnumbered, were in an underresourced *Paa* (fortified village), had women through choice fighting alongside the men, were reduced to using fruit pips and sticks as bullets, and had their children running supplies in the trenches. Yet, our *tuupuna* fought on with determination, while running out of ammunition, food and water. And in the end, even though our *tuupuna* faced all these challenges, the British colonial forces were still unable to destroy them at Ooraakau in 1864. It was said that our *tuupuna*

had *haka* (chants) and *karakia* (prayers) on their lips as they chose death on the battlefield rather than submission or surrender.

This book also discusses how the actions of our *tuupuna* were held up globally as an ultimate example of valour. The deeds have been revisited and reintroduced again and again throughout the past, often by outsiders to *Te Ao Maaori* (Maaori world), and through the lens of outsiders.

Moetū in a lot of ways highlights how the achievements of our *tuupuna* were hijacked, forgotten, or interpreted in the past, by a non-Maaori lens. It does this simply, with an undeniable fact. The battle of Ooraakau in 1864 retained the *mana* (authority) of the land not for our ancestors own personal gain, but for those of us who were yet to come. All of us who *whakapapa* (are related) to the incredible people in this book can stand tall because of their *mana* and strength. If we hold on to their example, they will live on in us, and we can all journey forward as one. All *iwi* and indeed Indigenous people throughout the globe will have similar inspirational stories of their *tuupuna* and the importance of their lands, to be shared with their descendants.

Ka whawhai tonu maatou, ake! Ake! Ake!
We will fight on for ever and ever!

Vincent McClintock (Ngaati Maniapoto, Ngāati Paretekawa, Ngaati Urunomia, Ngaati Waiora) is a currently studying Te Reo Māori through Te Wānanga o Aotearoa and has passion for learning about his *whakapapa*. Vincent holds a BA (Religious Studies) and is currently a full time *pāpā* to Īhaka.