

**Address at the investiture of Justice Joe Williams at Manaia Marae
Chief Justice Helen Winkelmann
10 April 2021**

NB: This paper is unedited and may have differed in delivery.

Te Whare e tu nei, e tu

The house that's stands here long may you stand

Ngāti Pūkenga tenei te mihi

Ngāti Pūkenga I greet you

E Te kaa wana tia nara

The Governor-General

E Te honore Nanaia Mahuta

The honourable Nanaia Mahuta

E Te mareikura o Whanganui, Tariana Turia

Our grand lady from Whanganui, Tariana Turia

Tae atu ki a koutou e ngā mana e ngā reo

And to all distinguished guests

Tēnā koutou

Greetings to you all

Tēnā koutou

Tēnā koutou katoa.

E Tā Joe nohou tenei ra

Sir Joe this is truly “your day”

Kua tae mai to whanau, te Whanau Wiremu

Many of your Williams family have joined you

Ki te whakanui i te te kaupapa o te ra

To honour this day

no reira tenei te mihi e te whanau Wiremu

I therefore greet you, the Williams family

I am delighted to be here, at Manaia Marae in this beautiful location. Sir Joe asked me to speak today but instructed me not to speak about him. He said he didn't want a fuss made of him. Sorry Joe, I think somebody didn't get that memo.

In any case, really, how can I avoid speaking about Joe? This is a day on which we celebrate his accomplishments – and they are many. It is also a day on which, at his invitation, we start to imagine how things – our systems of government, law, and management could be better. That work of imagining and working toward a better society for Aotearoa New Zealand has been the work of Tā Joe's life. I am glad there is a crowd here to celebrate his accomplishments so far – even if his work, our work in this regard is not done. And we know that Joe may not like to hear people speak about him...but he does love a crowd.

I am grateful to have been welcomed by Ngāti Pūkenga as I walk on your lands for the first time. But the courage and ability of Ngāti Pūkenga is known well beyond these lands. In the words of Ngāti Pūkenga your sacred footprint or 'Tapuwae Kura' spans the length and breadth of New Zealand, because you were a warrior race. You have a proud history of helping other iwi. In the past you were called upon to fight for others – that spoke to your prowess as

warriors. It also spoke to Ngāti Pūkenga's commitment to interests other than its own – as I come to a commitment that continues to this day.

For the last 150 years however, the battles that Ngāti Pūkenga have fought have been for justice.

Given all of this, it is fitting therefore that the first Māori judge of Te Kōti Mana Nui, the Supreme Court, should be a Wiremu from Ngāti Pūkenga.

I mentioned that Tā Joe didn't want me to speak about him too much today. It is true that although Tā Joe has risen to the top of the law, he remains humble. He understands that the power he has thereby acquired is a burden and not a benefit. He understands that as a judge the power he exercises is over the lives of others. He is resolute in accepting responsibility for the consequences on the individual and for society of his judging.

Like his Tipuna toa, Sir Joe is fierce. But this fierceness is well directed. He is fierce in his passion to build a just society, and in his belief that the law can and should play a part in building that society. He is fierce in his expectations of others that they show similar tenacity in their pursuit of what is right, including and especially when doing what is right is the harder choice. Sometimes, frankly, he is challenging to be around – but that is important – he challenges us all to be better, to think harder.

I described Tā Joe as humble, but as we all know that is not one hundred percent accurate. Because he is something of a former, I won't say ageing, rock star. What you might find harder to believe is that some of the same skills that are required to be a rock star are also required to be a great judge. Being a great judge takes legal skill. But it also takes imagination and ambition – the legal skill to understand what the law is and how it operates, the imagination to see how the law could change to better serve our society and the ambition to believe that can be accomplished.

Tā Joe is also a charismatic communicator. That is a rare skill – in our society generally, and rarer still amongst lawyers. Joe is selfless in his determination to use all these skills that he has been blessed with for others. With his intellect and drawing on the wisdom of his tipuna he has described for us all a vision that draws on the best of the law the English settlers brought with them and

draws on Te Ao Māori to create a unique law for Aotearoa. He imagines a law that protects all within society, including its most vulnerable. He uses his charisma and his skills as a communicator to excite others about the possibility of that better future. This work that Tā Joe does is selfless. It exhausts him, but he still gives more.

That is because a dream or a vision of a just society is worth working for...but Tā Joe can't achieve it on his own. Others must help. It is no coincidence that the kaupapa for the wananga that he organised for this weekend is "Iwi Visions" and that it is structured around imagining a better future. Because a large part of Sir Joe's vision is for a society in which iwi are given the space to use their wisdom and manaakitanga toward building that just society.

This is a vision which I wholeheartedly support. Because I believe that we have a unique opportunity to find our own way to a society in which justice is available to all. This future that I imagine will be built on the great partnership between two peoples on which this nation was founded.

I conclude by recording my thanks and those of the judiciary, to Ngāti Pūkenga and to the Wiremu whanau for lending Sir Joe to us for a time. Just as Ngāti Pūkenga have always been prepared to lend their greatest warriors when the fight is for justice.

E ai ki o tipuna e Tā

Sir In the words of your ancestors

Nou te tapuwae kura

Yours is now the sacred footprint

e hokai nei i te ara o te tikanga, te ara o te ture

that strides the pathway of the law

kia pai ai te noho a tou Iwi Māori ki te ao nei

so that your Māori people can live in peace and prosperity

Tenei ka mihi.