Hon Tā Pita Sharples

The honorable Sir Pita R Sharples is from Takapau, Te Kikiri o te Rangi, Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Pāhauwera.

Described as the ‘kaumatua of the nation’ and known as Pāpā Pita, Tā Pita Sharples has played a key role in the Māori renaissance during his lifetime - an academic, race-relations commissioner, politician, governor, kapahaka and cultural expert, well-respected in both Māori and Pakeha worlds.

He was first an educationalist, training as a teacher, then earning a Masters and PhD in Anthropology and Linguistics in 1976, later carrying on to be a Professor of Education at the University of Auckland. During this time he also helped establish the Office of Race-Relations, becoming the CEO in 1972.

Tā Pita Sharples established Hoani Waititi Marae in 1980, a marae which would became the foundation of a number of Māori initiatives leading the charge in Māori reclamation & decolonisation. Following the Kohanga Reo renaissance, Tā Pita established the very first Kura Kaupapa Māori & Wharekura of which there are now many throughout the country, creating a new generation of thinkers known as Raukura, unapologetically Māori & affluent speakers of the language. Earlier, he would also help establish the Māori Education Trust in 1961.

His greatest passion and love has always been culture, language & the arts especially kapahaka. He established Te Roopū Manutaki in 1968, who went on to win 2 national titles in 1975 & 1990, winning the most male leadership titles and is a lifetime member of Te Matatini.

Tā Pita Sharples played a lead role in organizing & accompanying the original Te Māori Exhibition in New York in 1984. As Te Tumu Whakarae he established Te Whare Tū Taua o Aotearoa, The National School of Ancient Māori Weaponry, playing a major role in the revival of Māori fighting arts. Addionally he commissioned the Te Ao Māori Tukutuku Panels to the United Nations Headquarters in 2014.

In 2003, Tā Pita Sharples helped form the Māori Party in response to the Foreshore and Seabed controversy becoming one of the inaugural Co-Leaders. In 2005 he became the MP for Tāmaki Makaurau and between 2008-2014 he was the Minister of Māori Affairs, Associate Minister of Education and Associate Minister of Corrections. One of his main achievements was changing the NZ Governments position and adopting the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

He received a CBE for services to Māori in 1990 and then knighted in 2015.

Throughout his extraordinary life and contribution to Māori, Tā Pita Sharples has moved with grace, gentleness, humility and with an open heart and is loved by many throughout the kohanga, education and kapahaka worlds & indeed Te Ao Māori.

Tā Pita Sharples is a worthy admission to the National Iwi Chairs Forum Whare Pūkenga.