



Toni is a Māori songstress, actor, performer, director and producer whose talent allows her to perform at various music and dance festivals both nationally and around the world including support to The Neville Brothers (USA).

She affiliates to Ngāti Kahungunu and Rongowhakaata tribes and is also of Lebanese, German, Scandinavian and Irish descent. Toni is also a mother of two, a motivational speaker, vocal coach, stagecraft tutor, event producer and the Director of Māori Music at SOUNZ Centre for New Zealand Music.

- **Where did you grow up?**

Hastings

- **Have you ever failed at something?**

When learning something definitely. I started out in hairdressing after school and throughout my apprenticeship, there were a couple of hairy moments lol.

- **Who was your favourite teacher and why?**

Year 5, Mrs Bartlett. She read prolific stories to us, like *The Lion Witch and the Wardrobe* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. She also taught maths to us by chanting the times tables around a clock. This in turn has helped with being methodical and good at managing project budgets, our own business and I think being solution focused. My family also showed me their amazing work ethic and what it is to work hard, no matter what the industry - the arts, teaching, labouring, governance, leadership, anything they set their minds to. I'm very thankful.



- **What is your favourite whakataukī?**

***"E rere e te huata hopukia
e rere e te manuka tomokia"***

When the huata spear flies grasp it, when the manuka flies, enter it.

This is taken from the act of my 3x great grandfather Whakaaha who caught the huata in a battle in Tauparanui (now known as Rāmoto), saving his leader Haenga. Whakaaha then threw the huata back into their enemy.

When an opportunity presents itself, capture it! Enter it and make it happen!



- **How did you get into your mahi?**

Whānau was a great influence and in particular my grandparents who brought me up. Throughout primary, intermediate and high school I was involved in choir, kapa haka and productions. Turakina Māori Girls College was stunning in their singing too. I started hairdressing (because I left school in year 12). Some of my cousins and friends (some Pahauwera) started involving me in music performances as a backup singer and percussionist. I was asked to do a few spots by some artists and this led to a course in music at Whitireia Polytechnic. After that course I was invited into a theatre company that toured the country - Te Rākau Hua o te Wao Tapu. This later led to our own entertainment business, productions for shows, tours and albums in Māori music.

- **Can you share your whakapapa from a Pāhauwera ancestor?**

Ranapia Aranui and Ruiha Henrici had Ropine Aranui (my great grandmother). Hemi Huata and Ropine had Te Okanga Kahutapere Huata (my grandfather). Te Okanga and Ngaro Rangi had Ropine Hera Te Hoangaro Huata (my mother). Ropine and Jeff Beacham had me. Adrian Wagner and I had our tamariki, Te Okanga Maihi Metekingi and Ropine Anihaka Huata-Wagner. Both are teenagers now.

- **Where can we find out more?** <http://www.tonihuata.com>
https://www.tiktok.com/@toni_huata
<https://www.facebook.com/tonihuatamusic>
https://www.instagram.com/toni_huata?hl=en



What do you recommend to help someone get through a bad day?

Take a moment to breathe and reflect. Never say or send any coms in the heat of the moment as you may feel and communicate differently with a bit of time and space.

Toni