

# Karena Hart

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*Ruia ruia, opea opea, whiria whiria, kia hemo ake te kākoako, kia herea mai te kawau korokī, kia tātaki mai i roto i te pūkorokoro, whaikaro, he kūaka marangaranga, kotahi te manu i tau ki te tāhuna, tau atu, tau atu, tau atu.*

*We cut ourselves loose from what is destructive, we bind ourselves to what is life giving. In the eternal present of ritual, we become one with the atua.*

*Te piko o te māhuri tērā te tipu o te rākau.*

*The bow of the branch is indicative of how the tree will grow.*

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I'd like to take you back to 1996, seems a long time ago now. I was but a young 16 year old girl from the far north of Kaitiāia and was finishing my 6th form year at Kaitiāia College and freshly announced as the head girl for the following year. I was working part time at Kaitiāia warehouse as a checkout assistant. I'd just been offered a position at the information desk - which was more responsibility. So I thought life was working out pretty good for me. If I never managed to get out of Kaitiāia I'd probably have a really good job anyway, probably as a team lead or one of the manager roles at the warehouse Kaitiāia.

I was then nominated to receive a scholarship from McDonald's. I don't remember the details of how I was nominated, or what that process was, but at the time I knew that it was a big deal to be able to receive a sum of \$10,000 to go towards study.

I am now one of 17 children, however at the time. I was still only one of 14 so we had a number of kids in the house, one income and my parents had just recently separated so to receive the news that I was the lucky recipient of this \$10,000 was unimaginable.

I never saw myself leaving Kaitiāia unless I somehow worked my butt off to get money. My previous thought was that I would probably stay in quiet little Kaitiāia for the rest of my life. So when I think of the scholarship, I think of how grateful I am now to have been awarded it...because it changed my life. It shifted me into a new direction, opening new opportunities.



# Karena Hart

“ *E te tuhi māreikura, kia ora rawa  
ngā rā rau kei mua I a koe.* ”  
*May your many days ahead of you, our dearest, be  
filled with the best of health.*

Did I mention that I lived extremely rural and quite isolated, 1.5 hours to school and lived in the far far north for practically all my life? When you come from a large family with little to no money. You don't see the opportunities in front of you. You're not experiencing those opportunities like those who potentially have had a childhood/adolescence with more money to experience new things. To this day, I still look back and I am still so humbly grateful for what the scholarship created for me. I have it hanging in my house on my wall. I don't even have my degrees, or my diplomas, or any of those certificates on the wall. The only thing that hangs on my wall is my McDonald's Te Tai Tokerau scholarship award because I know that was the start of a new chapter, new beginnings. That was my journey towards creating a new page in my book, one with a higher education and new experiences in my life. I take my hat off to the McDonald's scholarship team for creating these opportunities.

I feel very fortunate to have known Alan Dunn CEO of McDonald's (at that time) and his story of success and coming up through the ranks. I looked up to him as a mentor and someone to aspire to, because of his struggle and real story. If you've had the chance to hear Al speak of his life story you will understand and it makes you realise that anything is achievable with a plan of attack and a mind-set of focus to achieve.

One particular part of my story that comes into my mind was that through the scholarship came networking opportunities and experiences. I was studying; at the time a four year diploma in marketing with AIT, they hadn't yet made the switch to AUT. In my 3rd year they became AUT, this also came with changes in the credits and the amount of time that you had to complete a diploma.

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So, my four year diploma was cut to a three year diploma, pretty much the equivalent to a degree. AUT credited half a year towards the Degree in Business Management. I had completed up to my 4th and half a year in study. However, by this stage, I failed my first ever paper. This triggered me to realize that perhaps I needed a break from studying and that's when I took the opportunity to sit and chat with Alan Dunn. We spoke about what it was I wanted and where I wanted to be in terms of work and in terms of being out in my field of expertise.

We went to a networking meeting where I was introduced to one of his good friends CEO of DDB. Douglas Faudet.

He didn't have a position to offer me at his company at the time, however I still gave him my CV and not long after that meeting I was working for DDB marketing and advertising agency. Such an amazing experience working in all avenues of this agency and learning how by just being a humble and kind and somewhat clever person (but mainly doing the work) can open new doors and opportunities.

I worked with the agency from the age of 21 to 25 and ended up leaving to travel. I was earning \$130,000 per annum - not bad for a young 25yr old from Kaitiāia.

I will forever be grateful for those opportunities and those networks given to me.

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***Ko koe tērā, he toki matakikoha.  
Hei aha noa iho te noho mai ki konā manako  
kōura ai! Mahia ngā mahi!***

*You are that of razor sharp intelligence.  
Don't just sit there wishing for crayfish! Do the work!*

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I'd also now like to take you back to one of our other dear friends, mama, a very special woman, he toka āhuru. A massive part of my experience with AUT and the McDonald family. Harriet, Hariata Mareroa. You have been a special part of all of the recipients of this award; you kept us, looked after us, like a mother would do. You gave us every piece of advice that we needed at the time. Even when we didn't know we needed it. You gave us a sense of home.

Just like all the many students and ex-recipients over the years I spent so many hours in your office with you, whether it was just for good chinwag session to catch up on the flat goss, because I was homesick or to get advice on how to get another manaakitanga grant or some form of assistance.

You were always there for us. Thank you.

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## ***Whāia te pae tawhiti, ko te pae tata, whakamaua kia tina!***

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*Seek out the distant horizon,  
cherish what you have attained!*

*(Remain persistent in your pursuit)*

I remember my first night in Auckland and my flat, there were 4 other students that were also from the Far North. Eli, Jaz and Lisa. We 4 were all scholarship babies and Sacha who was from the north got to live with us. We all went for a nosy down Queen Street. The Big Smoke! We just sat there on one of the benches and just awed at all the walks of life walking past us...so young, naive and back then the drinking age was 21. (Just thought I should mention - so we weren't drinking).

I recall having lots of fun times in our flat it was really cool being able to meet the recipients of the years before that were still there staying in the Mount St Apartments in the flat above.

We always enjoyed our catch up events (Head Quarters Dinners) because it seemed so flash when we were taken out to dinner or when our dinner was at the HQ. As I am sure you can all relate, sometimes in the flat we had bugger all food because we weren't great at managing our money at that age, I do recall Eli always being able to put on a good boil up as well as annoy the heck out of us with his guitar until all hours of the morning, although we loved him then and still do now.

I'm forever grateful for the friendships, connections and networks that we made during these times. I can only imagine how many other students have similar stories to myself. The debt of gratitude I hold and therefore, we all hold, again I want to express how grateful and humble and honoured I am to have received and have been a part of this McDonald's scholarship family thank you so much to everyone who made it what it is and what it continues to grow into.

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*Ka takakawehia te ara kia  
whakareia koe ki ngā tohu  
o te mātauranga.*

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# Katene Ericksen nee Nicol

## Graduate: Bachelor of Arts in Māori Development



“Twenty-four years ago, I remember being so nervous sitting down to get interviewed by māmā Hariata in our Māori block at Kaitāia College. I was nervous because I knew that if I got this scholarship that life as I knew it would change. I look back on that day now and I am in awe that you took a chance on a kid with big dreams from little old Kaitāia.

Thank you for believing in me and seeing my potential.

That day you gave me a scholarship to AUT you gave me the opportunity to be the first in my whānau to go to university. To broaden my horizons, to realize my potential and to change my life for the better.

During my time as a Macca's baby, I am sure I gave everyone headaches and loads of grey hairs. I think I probably hold the dubious crown of potentially being the most haututū Macca's baby ever. From the rooftop parties in the halls, kidnapping our brother Lucky, boat racing with Pāpā Al, to being responsible for the RA's having to visit the Macca's babies almost daily for a few years after my year just to name a few.

Our year was lucky enough to be the first to call Hariata māmā and Al pāpā. I know for me they were our whānau away from home. When we were homesick, when we needed guidance and even when we needed growlings they were there to manaaki us and look after us.

While at AUT I learnt a lot of life lessons:

- If you want to win a boat race, you want me as your anchor.
- How to critically think, how to debate and to negotiate.
- I learnt that if I was willing to work hard enough that anything was possible regardless of the circumstances you grow up in.
- At our BBQs with the McDonald's kaimahi I learnt how to talk to managers, executives and CEO's, a skill that has stood me in good stead my whole life.

That opportunity I was given from McDonald's, from AUT so many years ago continues to effect positive change for myself, but more importantly for my whānau and hapū. I look at the things I have learnt, the countries I have seen and the experiences I have had, and I am so very grateful.

“ ***Hapaitia te ara tika pumau ai te rangatiratanga mo ngā uri whakatipu.*** ”

*Foster the pathway of knowledge to strength, independence and growth for future generations.*

I am proud to say I got my degree at AUT, but also that two of my younger sisters have degrees, one sister has trade training and the other works for our iwi. My son was there the day I graduated, and he and his cousins have grown up seeing their mothers achieve their goals. For our tamariki kei a rātou ringaringa te ao (the world is theirs) the sky is the limit.

Thank you, māmā Hariata, pāpā Al, AUT and McDonald's for giving me that opportunity, thank you for the support and the aroha.

# *Toni Cooper nee McDowell*



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The McDonald's Te Tai Tokerau scholarship was important to me and my whānau because going to University was the only way I could see myself getting out into the wider world, to explore what lay outside my small community.

I first heard about the scholarship during a school trip to visit all the different Universities and Polytechnics where we could further our education and experience once our High School journey was over.

One of the highlights of the trip was getting to tour the apartment and meet some of the recipients from the previous years, and they all got on so well. It looked like a great support system, and I also loved how they had a Marae at school.

## ***Graduate: Bachelor of Communications***

I was actually chosen to do the Kai Karanga for our school, and to say I was nervous was an understatement. Especially because I wasn't exposed to a lot of Māori culture growing up, I was adopted and raised by a white family and any Māori culture activities that I may have been able to participate in clashed with my academic commitments.

So after that visit, I knew that that's what I wanted to do. To study at AUT and to try and get the McDonald's Te Tai Tokerau scholarship. I was a little unsure about applying for a Māori focused scholarship, because I always felt that I was viewed as being too Māori looking to be white, yet too white in my mannerisms to be Māori. But with the reassurance of my teachers, I filled in the application and applied.

And then, I got the news that I had missed out. And I was devastated, now completely unsure as to what I would study, or where I would go. But somehow, fate intervened and someone must've seen something in me, and they were able to create another scholarship, so I think from memory there were 6 of us rather than the usual 5. And I'll forever be grateful for being given that opportunity.

I successfully completed my degree in communications and have worked all over New Zealand, Australia and the United Kingdom. I've now settled in Australia, on the Bass Coast in Victoria, with my husband and two young children and am able to work from home with a focus on helping other wahine run businesses with their marketing.

This has all been possible because of the help and support I received from everyone who was involved with the scholarship, especially Kitea and Māmā Hariata, who always had warm smiles and heaps of enthusiasm and support.

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# Dr. Erena Wikaire

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My older sister Raumati received one of the very first McDonald's scholarships, and, following in her footsteps, I had the privilege of knowing what a scholarship was, and had heard names like Hariata and Al Dunn already. For the next 6 years, a McDonald's scholarship was a dream that became a reality.



When Hariata and Kitea came to interview me, my Principal had forgotten to tell me they were coming. I was having a particularly 'pyjama's to school' day, and I was so embarrassed, I tried to tidy myself up as best I could. Unprepared and under dressed, in that interview room was nothing but compassion and belief in a young girl who wanted to go to university.

I was the recipient of the McDonald's Tai Tokerau Scholarship in 2001. I was one of Kitea's baby's – he will remind you of that often. Having attended Bay of Islands College, and at the time, being a māmā to an 8 month old baby, I had high hopes of a bright future, and at the same time, had no idea what I was about to embark on. My AUT time was interesting. On my first day, Hariata made me sit up the front of the pōwhiri with her and Whaea Maaki. In our day, AUT had a McDonald's, and burger vouchers from māmā meant we never went hungry.

I quickly learned that people didn't wear 'farm clothes' to uni. And that the shuttle bus from the city to the north shore was \$2.50 one way (a big chunk of my budget for the week!). Our flat quickly became resourceful around all things kai and pūtea. Missy came from Dargaville so we had kumara chips often. Amy made the homemade pizzas, I had meat from the farm. We all shared rides back home on the weekends, and had new 'big city experiences'. On Thursday nights, Factory on High St had 50c drinks – those were good times. I don't think we lived up to the Mount Terrace legacy that Katene and them left for us, but we did OK.

The McDonald's Te Tai Tokerau Scholarship is different. A unique model that foregrounds whanaungatanga and manaakitanga, instilled both by the commitment from McDonald's head office, but also by Hariata, Kitea, Colleen, Angela, and all the staff who have contributed to date. They remember us, and it matters. Our names, our stories, our family, our struggles and our successes. It helped that māmā was close by. I'm sure everyone knows by now that whaea Hariata became everyone's māmā. A door that is always open, and a strong mana wahine to tell us how it is, and to be excited for us for every step we took.

## *Graduate: Bachelor of Health Science*

It has been nearly 20 years since I graduated with a Bachelor of Health Sciences (Physiotherapy). Since then, I have built a career in Māori health research, and now hold a Doctorate in Māori public health. My PhD research sought to revitalise Rongoā Māori. I am a Fulbright scholarship recipient, and am embarking on a postdoctoral fellowship in Māori health. Through these opportunities, I have the privilege of contributing to Māori wellbeing.

The McDonald's Te Tai Tokerau scholarship for me, was the difference between being able to provide a bright future for my daughter, and another reality. It was the difference between surviving university, and not. A difficult task to overcome. My particular scholarship was given by Mr Ray Stonelake and I am eternally grateful, for his generosity, and the vision (and persuasion) of Mr Al Dunn. To all of the people who have believed in this scholarship and made it happen and continue to happen – you have given me a much brighter future, you have made the impossible possible, and you have provided a pathway not only for me, but also my tamariki too.

In particular, I want to thank Hariata Mareroa, Al Dunn, Ray Stonelake, and Kitea Tipuna – for your enduring belief in us – I hope I have made you proud.

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