
Whina Cooper – Woman Who Made The Difference

“Dame” Whina Cooper was a New Zealand Maori activist who devoted her life to fighting for Maori land rights and improving living conditions for Maori women. She was the most remarkable Maori woman of the century.

She was born in northern Hokianga on the 9th of December 1895. As she grew up at Te Karaka, she was greatly influenced by her father’s leading role in the community and being a catechist in a catholic church. When she was 18, she led a successful protest concerning the draining of a local swamp, and this showed everyone that she has the capacity of being a leader.

The biggest movements that she got involved in is she became a president of Maori land rights and led the Maori land reform march in 1975. She also became the first president of a successful organization call The Maori Women’s Welfare League.

Ever since she was young, people admired her for her liveliness, intelligence and her matureness. She ventured into different fields occupations such as being a teacher, housekeeper, worked in a co-operative store and many more. Around 1923s, she resumed to a leading role at the church and their communities. She edified a women’s committee to organize conferences and fund-raising. She was also once dubbed the 'Amazon excavator' for her drain-digging abilities, she was a crack rifle shot, a rugby coach and, in 1947, the first woman president of a New Zealand provincial rugby union branch.

Around 1950’s the New Zealand society started to change so Whina Cooper wanted to preserve Maori culture through their native arts and crafts while also promoting fellowship and cooperation among various women’s organizations. When European settlers started to come in New Zealand, it brought a big impact to the Maori people. It even came to the point where in the Maori language is on the verge of extinction. The process of industrializations and rationalizations started to increase too, and this led for some Maori to start migrating to the cities because their expectations of lifestyles, incomes and career in the rural area were unable to provide. Maori faced a lot of social problems regarding to the adaption of their new lifestyle. Whina has always been proud and values the Maori culture as she believes that it defines our evolutionary identity. So in 1951, she then founded the Maori Women’s welfare league which somehow helped them to perpetuate their culture. It is in their goal as well to help Maori success in the future. Within her six years of running this organization, they helped thousands of Maori families survive the mass movement from country sides to the cities in 1950s.

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

GET HELP

Another one of her biggest movement is the Maori Land Reform March that occurred in 1975. She became the New Zealand president of Maori land rights from 1975-1994.

She was concerned about the Maori land rights and this led her to a led a hiko (March) in 1975. She's fought for the Maori land her whole life because ever since the treaty was signed, pakeha has been taking all their lands. "Not one more acre of land to be lost" she said. She believes that they have rights to their own lands so she finally took and action and protest about their land rights. This was one the reason why she became one of the significant women here in New Zealand, she showed everyone that being a woman won't stop her from protecting her own rights. The land march that she led did not change much but it is still significant to New Zealand as it showed that this country care about the spiritual values of its citizens. It was shown that Maori people can stand up for themselves, it gave Maori a voice to raise awareness in the public about injustice of their land loss and how it affected them. Historian Ranginui Walker described the march as exercise in widespread politicization of Maori people and this made the public to pay attention about the Maori culture.

The march didn't achieve any return of the lands although she achieved nationwide fame seven decades later, in her 80th year when, crippled with arthritis, she led 5,000 people on a 700-mile march from her Northland home to Parliament in Wellington, to highlight the fact that Europeans had seized all but 2.5 million acres of New Zealand's 66 million acres of land in 135 years of British colonization.

She received many academic awards such as the Member of the Order of the British Empire in the 1953 Queen's Honors List, Commander of the Order of the British Empire in the 1973 Queen's Honors List, Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1980 Queen's Honors List and the Member of the Order of New Zealand in the 1991 Queen's Honors List for her services to New Zealand and these led for some Maori claiming that she had sold her heritage to the pakeha system since she's only the second Maori to receive an award from the queen. After all this issue this is what she said "They didn't understand that I'd have more power when I'd been invested, more power to fight for them and all the Maori people against the government". The awards didn't blind her from protecting the rights of the Maori.

Historian Michael King said "No Maori leader has attracted more public praise from Pakeha (European) people and more public criticism from sectors of Maoridom than Whina."

When she stepped down as a president in Woman Welfare league, she still continued to preside over Waitangi day commemorations and conferences. She was awarded as mother of the nation in the annual conference as she has always been genuinely continuous and consistent in protecting the culture and rights of the Maori. She believes that cultural heritage and tradition serve to link them with their ancestors, which is really valuable because that is

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

GET HELP

what makes them unique from other parts of the world. Her old age didn't stop her from doing what she believes in doing.

Conclusion

I believe that Whina Cooper made a difference in New Zealand. Two of her biggest achievements are the Maori Women's Welfare League and the Land reform march in 1975. The march showed that New Zealanders determined and would stand strong for their culture and rights. It helped raise the public awareness of Maori concerns. Most of the Maori were affected during the time, because after the treaty was signed, they literally gave Pakeha the power over them. That is why they experienced a big amount of land loss. Until now, not all the Maori here in New Zealand lives a great life. Although the government continues to show great support to Maori affairs that will affect their life in a significant way and importantly their culture is being brought back after the urbanization.

She created an impact by unifying New Zealanders together and spreading awareness of Maori rights.

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

[GET HELP](#)