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Whina Cooper's Impact

Whina Cooper was born on the 9th of December 1895 and died on the 26th of March 1994. Cooper was 98 years old when she died having done so much in her lifetime. She inspired people to act and people looked up to her because of her mana. This report will be about the impact that Whina Cooper had on her community and her people.

The change of Whina Cooper's actions impacted and helped many people in her community. Whina Cooper became the first president of the Māori Women's Welfare League in the 1950s. Whina Cooper had moved into Auckland city with her children after the death of her husband who had wanted them to move there for a better education for their children. The Māori Women's Welfare League wanted to come together and see what they could do to help their own families with their motto being "let us be united." (nzhistory website). The league was popular and during the time of Whina Cooper's presidency had more than 160 branches across the country. Whina Cooper went around houses of Māori in Auckland surveyed them to see their living conditions and ask about what their needs were. Then Whina Cooper would take the information to those in power and try and get help for them. They helped Maori women and children giving information about health, education and how to look after themselves. Providing information is important because it gives people power to make decisions and form their own opinions. The Maori Women's Welfare League and Whina Cooper's leadership of it was important because it gave them a platform to speak publicly and nationally about the issues facing them. Then, Whina Cooper would take the issues of health and housing to the leaders and parliamentarians to discuss.

Another impact that Whina Cooper had was leading the 1975 Māori Land March. This is a land march that is famous and the picture of Whina Cooper and her granddaughter, Irene, is probably one of the most known in New Zealand's history. The picture was taken when the marchers were leaving Te Hāpua. In 1975 several groups came together under the name of Te Rōpū Matakite o Aotearoa. The members knew they needed to find someone with great mana to lead it. So, Whina Cooper was chosen as its leader. The group wanted to work in protest of the alienation of Māori land. Whina Cooper accepted. The march began from Te Hāpua far in the far north island to Parliament in Wellington. So, they did exactly that and had delivered the memorial of rights signed by 60,000 people to Parliament. The march made national news headlines and was on the newspaper for a month, from September to October of 1975. This meant that people in New Zealand were debating and discussing the issues of land alienation at a level that had not been seen before. The march was a success and showed the government that they needed to take action to deal with the issue of Maori land. As a result the Waitangi Tribunal. The Tribunal was made to investigate claims from Māori against the crown but only from 1975 onwards. This was a problem for Maori whose claims against the government can be traced back to pre 1840s before the Treaty of Waitangi and Te Tiriti o Waitangi was signed.

Another impact of Whina Cooper is that she inspired people from around the motu to go home, after the land march and take action. This includes Joe Hawke of Ngati Whatua o Orakei and

Eva Rickard. Joe Hawke was the secretary of Te Ropu Matakite and had seen how successful Whina Cooper's land march was. He went back home to Ngati Whatua and took action there. Eva Rickard was also part of the 1975 Maori Land March and she had her own fight back home in Raglan. Both of these two leaders with mana, took part of the land march and were inspired with the success of it that when they returned home they too had their own protests. During the land March Whina Cooper had encouraged activists to go back home and take action there. That is just what Hawke and Rickard did.

Whina Cooper is an inspirational person because she was able to lead both young and old people. She was a bridge between the two worlds of the younger and older generation of Maori who held so much mana.