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**NATIVE HEALTH NURSING
IN NEW ZEALAND 1911-1930:
'A NEW WORK AND A NEW PROFESSION
FOR WOMEN'**

THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN NURSING
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ABSTRACT

The focus of this thesis is the practice of the nurses employed in the Native Health Nursing Scheme in New Zealand from 1911 to 1930. These nurses were a vanguard movement for change in community nursing services as they established a new role and developed innovative ways of practising nursing while claiming greater autonomy and accountability for nurses who worked in community settings. Consequently they contributed to an increase in status for nurses in New Zealand.

The Native Health Nursing Scheme was established by the Health Department to replace the Maori Health Nursing Scheme, an initiative by Maori leaders for Maori nurses to provide nursing care for their own people. The original scheme had foundered amid under-resourcing, a lack of support from hospital boards and administrative chaos. Government policy for Maori health was openly assimilationist and the mainly non-Maori Native Health nurses carried out this policy, yet paradoxically adapting their practice in order to be culturally acceptable to Maori.

Their work with the Maori people placed the Native Health nurses in a unique position to claim professional territory in a new area of practice. As they took up the opportunities for an expanded nursing role, they practised in a manner which would develop the scope and status of nursing. The geographical isolation of their practice setting provided the nurses with the challenge of practising in an environment of minimal administrative and professional support, while also offering them the opportunity for independence and relative autonomy. Obedience, duty and virtue, qualities highly valued in women of the day, were expected especially in nurses. These expectations were in direct contrast to the qualities necessary to perform the duties of the Native Health nurse. The conditions under which these nurses worked and lived, the decisions they were required to make, and the partnerships they needed to establish to be effective in the communities in which they worked, required courage, strength, organisational ability and commitment.

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*GLOSSARY*¹

hui	a meeting of people for a particular purpose
kainga	a village inhabited by a subtribe
pa	a fortified place where Maori lived. The enemy could be seen for miles around. It was fenced with large posts as a protection from the enemy.
pakeha	white skinned people not of Maori extraction
tangi	crying at the time of death; shortened version of tangihui, a funeral
tohunga	a spiritual leader

¹ Prepared by Terahingahinga Reti to reflect the contemporary usage of 1910-1930.

ABBREVIATIONS

AJHR *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives*

KT *Kai Tiaki, The New Zealand Nursing Journal*

NZG *New Zealand Gazette*

NHNS Native Health Nursing Service

NZANS New Zealand Army Nursing Service

TACSA Te Aute College Students' Association

PHOTOGRAPHS

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