

## **Behind the Smile Transcribed Audio**

### **Quack Pirihi**

*"Kia Ora. My name is Quack and I am a Voice of Hope.*

*I'm a proud descendant of Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Wai and Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Whātua o Kaipara, and I'm a voice of hope. I grew up in Panmure with my four siblings and my single mum. My dad lived up north. I never really understood what was going on when I was growing up, never understood the- the battles that both my parents were facing in their own right, and as the young naive little pōtiki in the room, it was often hard to grasp why these raruraru existed in our whānau, why I couldn't just go and see my dad. And so a lot of my childhood for me is centered around displacement and a sense of- of not belonging, a sense of carrying everyone else's demons, a sense of their innocence being touched far too young and being forced to- to mature or grow up sooner than I wanted to.*

*You could hear and see and feel the different types of violence that existed in our neighbourhood. I think that forced me to really desensitise myself in order to survive in that- in that childlike space. Last year was a huge tipping point. My mum had passed a couple years back and there was a- there was a moment where I was heading off to mahi and out of nowhere this wave of mamae, of happiness, of guilt, of anger had turned up at my front doorstep and I didn't know how to regulate or process or deal with them. It was evident that myself and my tinana and my hinengaro wasn't being prioritised.*

*I think I only first started identifying as māori a couple years ago. Growing up in high school, never wanted to do kapa haka because my only connection to Te Ao māori was through an absent father. Never wanted to speak te reo, never wanted to change the pronunciation of different place names in Tāmaki Makaurau because my- my connection to my whakapapa was severed through violence, through violations of whakapapa, through my childhood. And so now being able to- to stand without my reo but as a proud takātapui māori, has deepened my connection to te taiao, to the people around me, to our whānau māori around me, to the importance of what it means to be a kaitiaki, not only a kaitiaki of the whenua and my people but myself. And so the earliest memory I can think of when it comes to my hiding away with healing myself from my healing aro is being takātapui, is identifying as māori where my expression of gender and sexuality is fluid.*

*I recall being forced to- to out myself by someone very, very close to me and although looking back on it now I've been able to heal that mamae at the time, I think it was one of the most distressing points in that- in that little Quack's life. Moving through navigating what a takatāpuitanga looks like for me over the past couple years, holding a social platform expressing*

*different things about how I speak or how I present myself to the world or the type of people that I fall in love with continues to be a challenge.*

*In order to survive, I've had to give myself really clear goals and targets and for me right now that's creating opportunities for rangatahi māori. And so when I think about who I do this all for, who I- who I am proud for, who I- who I turn up to protest for, currently that's the whenua that I'm on and that's the rangatahi around me. I think being proud of myself for making it to the end of the day has been huge. Even if I don't make it to the shower or make my bed or keep my whare clean, if I don't go to mahi, if I don't turn up to any of my hui, I'm proud of myself just for making it to the end of the day.*

*I really want to emphasise that you don't have to wait for all the loud, all the violence, all the screaming to stop until you start looking after yourself. The sooner you start the healing process, the sooner you'll be content. And so if I could- if I could say something or give advice to people who are scared or who may be putting off their- the hiding of- of healing is nobody is going to do it for you. The healing starts with you, the healing starts with your first footstep, and so if you take the tiniest, tiniest step just to see what happens, you can always step back, you can always run ten steps further back, you can always start just running in the other direction and never stop. But if you allow yourself to- to fall, to fall and to stumble and be clumsy and just see what it's like, I think you'll be able to surprise yourself."*