*“I have searched my mind and heart to find words to express what Hinewirangi Kohu meant to her International Indian Treaty Council family, speaking on behalf of the IITC Board of Directors where she served for many years as Vice President, and all of us who had the great honor to share her life with you. From around the world, we are standing in love and spirit with her family and friends who are gathered today at Huria Marae to support her on journey to the home of her ancestors, the beautiful flower world, the Sewa Ania in our Yaqui language.*

*I am sure you know how much Hinewirangi meant to us and how much we value the time she spent with us. She taught us, inspired us, scolded us, sang to us with that incredible voice, laughed and cried with us and always challenged us to think about ourselves in a decolonized way. We were so amazed by her talent, artistry, depth of knowledge, clarity of vision, kindness, beauty and unique style. She was a tireless defender of Indigenous women and children, demanding justice and protection for all those that have suffered and been abused. She loved her plants and all of Nature, and reminded in no uncertain terms that a woman’s womb is the original sacred site, our first home that must be protected. In that spirit Hine helped us organize and lead the Indigenous Women’s Network on Reproductive Health and attended many gatherings to share the impacts of environmental contamination on the health of our future generations.*

*Hine was women of rare courage, unfailing generosity and unfettered honesty. I remember when she and I were invited as experts at a UN Conference on Indigenous children in State custody in British Columbia Canada. For her presentation, she shared her own story of extreme abuse in a church-run boarding school in New Zealand as a young girl, and how she found the strength not just to survive but to thrive and shine. I saw how her words and the courage it took to share her own story inspired others who had gone through the same traumas to see the possibility to transform their own lives and be more than just survivors. She saw those women, and men, who she had never met before as her family too, and she cared about them with all her heart. In that same way, she took time to share gifts, advice and encouragement with each of us. Her belief in the absolute need to build unity among the Indigenous Peoples around the world, her love, and her amazing voice and spirit will always be with us in our thoughts and actions, on the path we have chosen together.*

*Hine was my friend and teacher over many years and her unwavering support and love will continue to sustain me. She was one of a kind. Although we will miss her physical presence among us, we also celebrate her new freedom from illness and pain in the next stage of her life. We know we will see her again, and in the meantime, she will be with us in so many ways. We join you in your sorrow today and pray for healing and comfort for you, for ourselves and for the world, and for the strength to follow in her mighty footsteps. We are with you today, and we thank you with all our hearts for sharing Hinewirangi with us. We will always be her family, and yours.*

*With love, on behalf of the International Indian Treaty Council, Andrea Carmen, Yaqui Nation, IITC Executive Director, February 18, 2023*